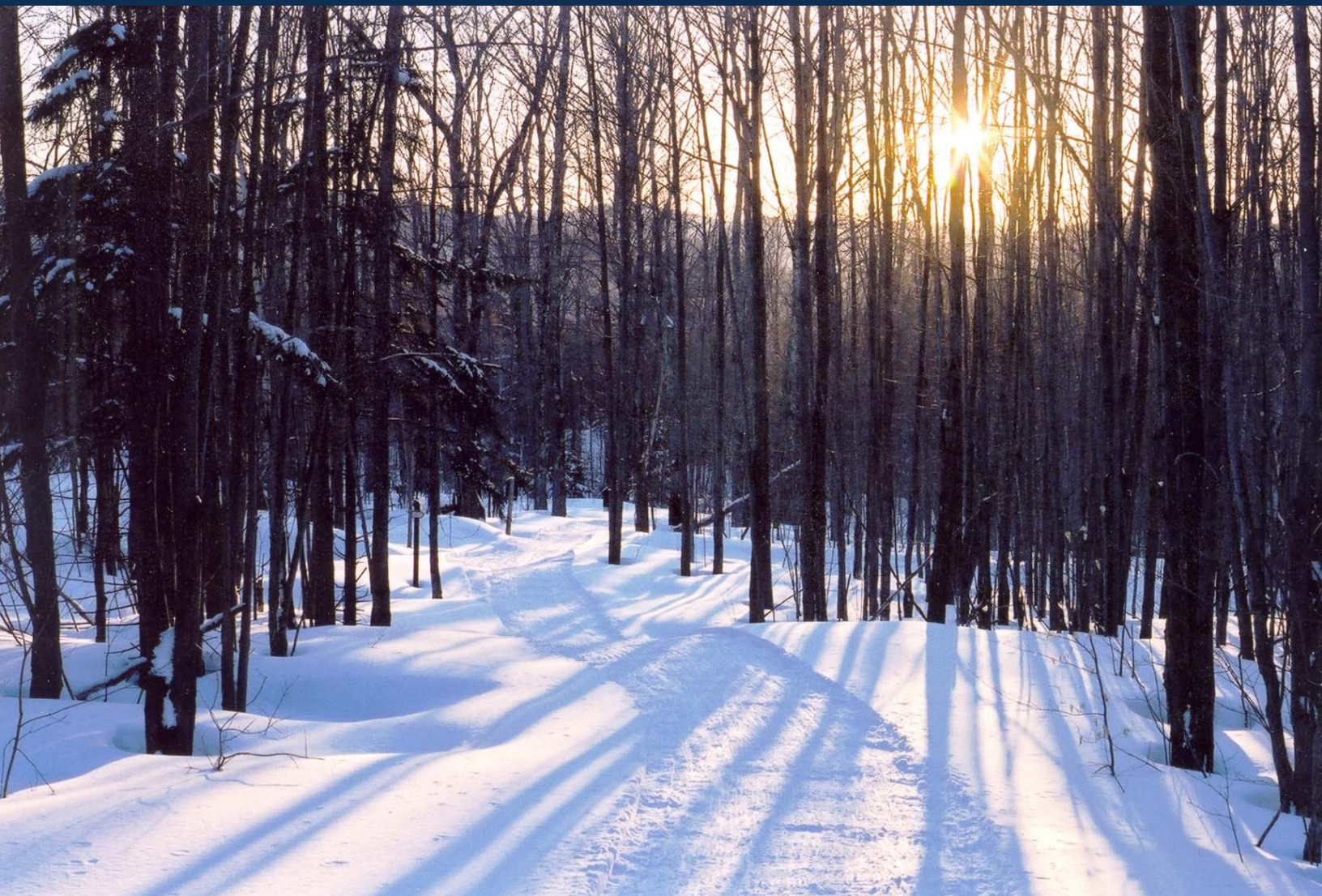




Community Visit

Report and Action Plan ~ January 2019



Montgomery "Winter Trail" photo courtesy ROLF ANDERSON

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

Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
II. The Montgomery Community Visit Process	3
III. Vision for Montgomery’s Future	4
IV. Priorities Chosen and Other Opportunities	5
V. Task Force Action Plans	9
Action Steps, Resources, Task Force Members, Resource Team Recommendations	
VI. Town Forum Notes	22
VII. Community Visit Participants	33
VIII. Resource Team Members.....	34



Vermont Council on Rural Development

PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384

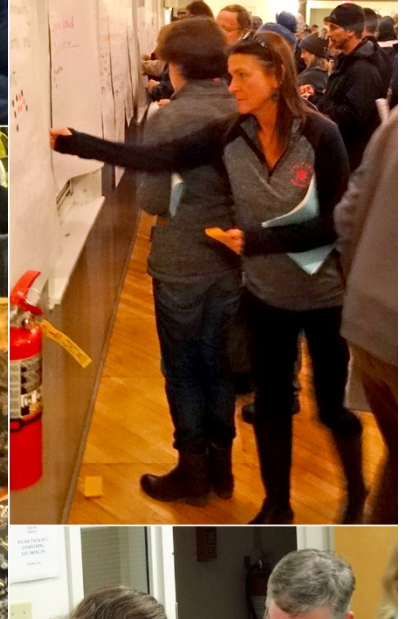
802-223-6091 | info@vtrural.org | www.vtrural.org

Jon Copans, *Climate Economy Model Communities Program Director*

Paul Costello, *Executive Director*

Margaret Gibson McCoy, *Operations and Communications*

Jenna Koloski, *Community and Policy Manager*



I. Introduction

There is something special about Montgomery!

The VCRD Community Visit Team was so impressed by the energy, humor and dedication of the members of the Montgomery community who participated in the Montgomery Thrives Community Visit process.

There is something special about the land, the meeting of open farmland and forested mountainside, the beauty of the Trout River and its tributaries, the northern weather! But even more unique are the creative residents of this community. Several participants called the people of Montgomery “eclectic;” others used the word “quirky.” One resident said, “We’re sort of like an adolescent community;” young at heart, with dynamic activities, outdoor recreation, and even a night life, but lacking some basic municipal transportation infrastructure, wastewater systems and cellular and broadband services.

Visiting Team members observed over and over through the process that Montgomery is a town that has fun, that welcomes native Vermonters and newcomers together and that creatively values the diversity of young and old, high or low income, all the various vocations of its residents. As the vision statement adopted for this process affirms, this is a “vibrant, active, eclectic community” that has also remained dedicated to the town’s, “history, traditions, character and rural qualities.” For all of us who traveled to Montgomery and listened and reflected with residents, there was a deep appreciation for this town—there is nowhere else quite like it!

The deliberations of the community were deep and thoughtful and built conclusions that no one on the VCRD Team could have fully foreseen. Focus forums identified great ideas around communications, housing, senior services, tourism, a community center, energy, public safety, municipal buildings, recreation, business association and the important partnership of the school and community. In the end, however, a strong consensus emerged around very strategic priorities for key foundations to the future strength and economy of the town.

The key Priorities established by the community and now led by citizen Task Forces include:

- **Improve Village and Center Traffic Flow and Pedestrian Safety**
- **Develop Community Wastewater Infrastructure**
- **Improve Cell and Broadband Infrastructure**

VCRD and all its partners look forward to working with the Montgomery Task Forces as they frame and implement these projects step by step over the course of the next year and beyond. They 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).

The Vermont Council on Rural Development helps Vermont citizens build prosperous and resilient communities through democratic engagement, marshalling resources, and collective action. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Montgomery as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to the Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Montgomery projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members (listed with contact info in the back of this report), when we can be of help.

VCRD works to facilitate the Community Visit process in partnership with the **Vermont Community Foundation** which is devoted to the progress of Vermont communities; VCF supports and helps guide visits, and provides significant resources to community projects throughout Vermont.

There are many people to thank for making the Montgomery Thrives Community Visit a success.

We would like to thank the Montgomery Select Board who initially invited this process and participated in such a positive way throughout it—especially Charlie Hancock who was a touchstone to the process, and Jacob Racusin who initially put Montgomery on the VCRD radar. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the many members of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process by developing the key topics and invitation process to start the effort: Sandy Alexander, Sebastien Araujo, Marty Cota, Suzanna Dollois, Ethan Dull, Brent Godin, Marlene Hambleton, Alissa Hardy, Parma Jewett, Mary Niles, Marsha Philips, Jacob Racusin, Deanna Robataille, Marty Vallender, Sue Wilson, and Sarita Khan. Thank you also to all of the community leaders and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the event and made sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

We are very thankful for the use of the Montgomery Center for the Arts, Montgomery Town Hall and Public Safety Building, and the Montgomery Elementary School for all of the community visit meetings.

Michael Moser and the UVM Center for Rural Studies are terrific allies in our efforts, and we appreciate their help building a briefing profile for the VCRD Community Visit Team.

Thanks must also go to the Northern Borders Commission, Jay Peak, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development and our partners at the Vermont Community Foundation who 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 Montgomery Visiting Team—they are the best of Vermont's public servants.

What a wonderful community dinner we had at the Elementary School on community visit day. Visitors loved the music, the "Montgomery Thrives" placemats, and the great food and fellowship. Thanks to the town for covering the expense, and to Sue Wilson and the team who put together the meal.

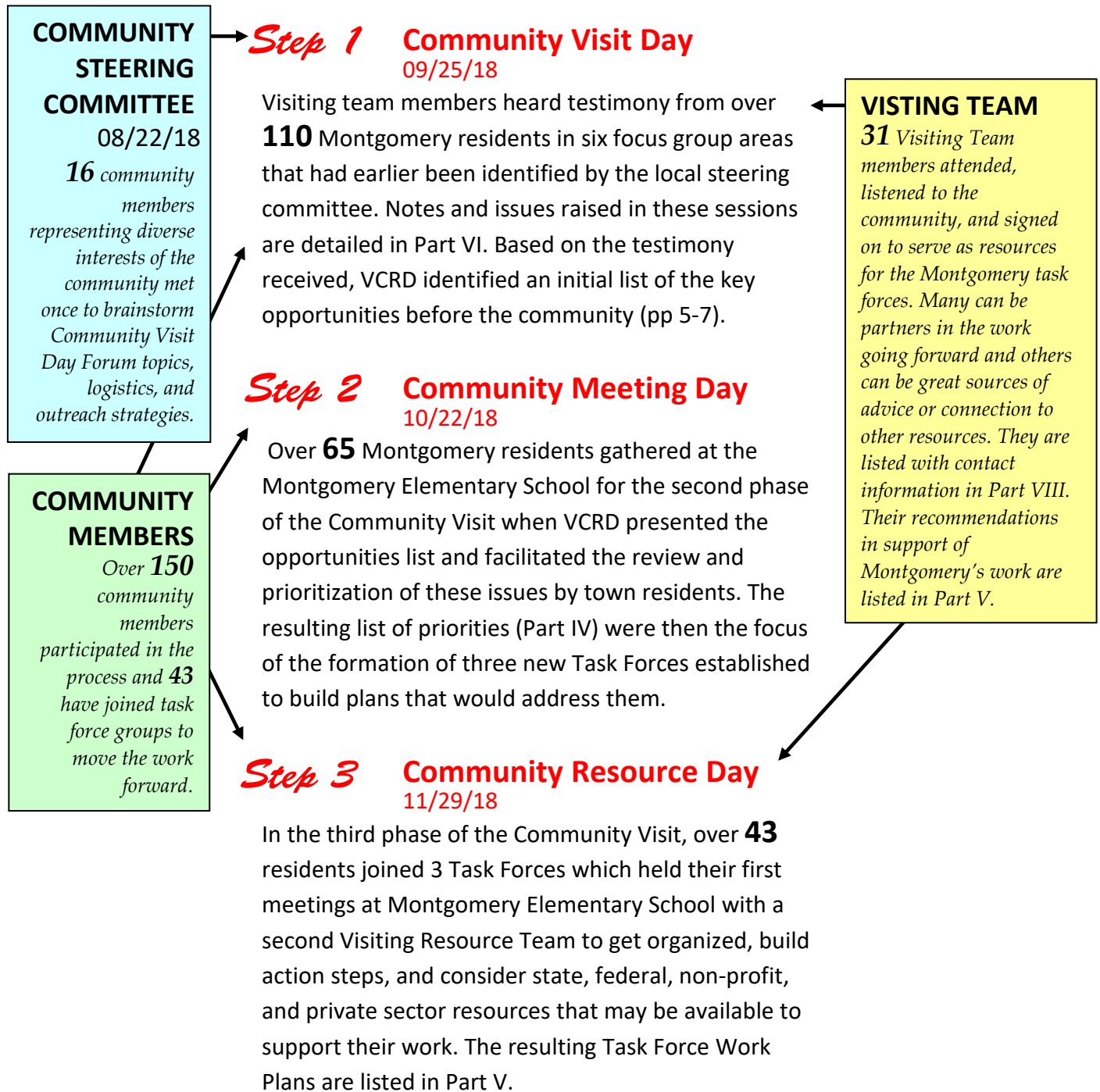
Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Montgomery should be grateful to those who've stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Darren Drevik: Improve Village and Center Traffic Flow and Pedestrian Safety; Ethan Dull and Walter Knight: Develop Community Wastewater Infrastructure; and Everett McGinley: Improving Cell and Broadband Access.

VCRD especially wants to thank Alissa Hardy for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Chair. Alissa has already shown a wonderful dedication, and balanced practical leadership, and we appreciate how organized and effective she is at each aspect of the work done to date. She gives us great confidence in the success of the work ahead.

Some towns are paralyzed by their lists of problems and deficits—not Montgomery. VCRD has the wonderful opportunity to see towns where residents recognize the challenges ahead, but line up effectively together to set vision and practical efforts to overcome the obstacles to their optimal future. The work of community and economic development is never done. It is refreshed by the renewed leadership of those who step up and who commit to the historically crucial effort to advance the best possible future. Built from strong local assets, and that key ingredient, local leadership and commitment, we see towns build new destinies. We commend all of Montgomery and we will be eager observers and supporters of your successes!

II. The Montgomery Thrives Community Visit Process

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visit Program is a structured process that enables a community to identify and prioritize goals, fosters local leadership, and serves as a catalyst for the development and realization of concrete, achievable action plans. **The program in Montgomery consisted of three phases depicted here:**



III. Vision for Montgomery'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 Montgomery Thrives community.

Montgomery residents look to a future for the community where:

- ❖ Montgomery residents maintain the history, traditions, character, and rural qualities of the town.
- ❖ Montgomery has a vibrant Main Street with retail shops and things to do that draw people to the downtown.
- ❖ The streetscape is well designed with easy access to parking and safe ways to get around.
- ❖ We have a thriving business community so kids and grandkids have a good reason to stay and live here.
- ❖ We actively engage young people and families, and provide opportunities and infrastructure – including recreation and community events, good parking, and cell service – that make it possible for people to live, and even work from home, here.
- ❖ Montgomery has a foodie atmosphere with restaurants, services, and entertainment unique to Montgomery.
- ❖ There is a diverse agriculture community in Montgomery that produces food for local consumption, improving our health.
- ❖ There is a great elementary school in town.
- ❖ Montgomery works to maximize recreational opportunities for business and pleasure, such as creating more bike paths.
- ❖ With all the pressures on the land, we work to preserve large tracts of land in Montgomery and the northern forest.
- ❖ We value our waterways and make sure the waters are protected for all uses, and we communicate that to the people here.
- ❖ We capitalize on our connection with the watershed and the woods and we advance projects that build our economy and benefit our way of life.
- ❖ We capitalize on things we already have.
- ❖ Montgomery has the needed broadband access and cell communication infrastructure to support businesses and residents, and a modern sewer system which enables businesses to locate in the downtown.
- ❖ People want to stay in Montgomery because of its unique and eclectic vibe.

IV. Montgomery Thrives Priorities

Determined by Montgomery residents at the Montgomery Thrives Community Meeting, October 22, 2018

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Montgomery community members whittled down a list of 17 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with orange, blue, red, and green stickers, over 75 participants chose three action ideas that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the October 22nd meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Montgomery residents selected three priorities for future action:

✓ **Improve Village and Center Traffic Flow and Pedestrian Safety**

Montgomery has an incredible asset in its two village centers, local businesses lining Main Street, area attractions and scenic beauty drawing visitors to and through town. Many are concerned, however, about the ability of the village and center to handle increased traffic and are worried about the safety of locals and visitors alike. A task force could come together to address these concerns by designing and implementing streetscape and sidewalk improvements as well as traffic calming and pedestrian safety strategies. Efforts may include working with regional and state partners to develop and implement a streetscape redesign plan that could include improved lighting, sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes and parking. Additionally, the group could work to implement shorter-term traffic calming strategies such as creative signage (enlisting the help of local artists and youth), flashing speed lights, temporary speed bumps, and other measures to reduce drivers' speed through town. Many residents expressed the desire to incorporate creativity and beautification efforts into any streetscape redesign plan.

✓ **Develop Community Wastewater Infrastructure**

Many residents believe that Montgomery lacks the wastewater infrastructure needed for businesses and homes in the village centers, and that developing this infrastructure will be essential to a healthy future for the community. A group could come together to develop a plan for a new wastewater treatment system for Montgomery. A task force could form to work with regional, state, and federal partners to survey current needs, evaluate what is needed for desired growth, identify funding sources, and work with the Select Board to design and implement a Montgomery wastewater project.

✓ **Improve Cell and Broadband Access**

Montgomery residents would like to have better access to cell coverage and broadband internet access. Montgomery could convene a partnership of local residents, municipal officials, businesses, school leaders, and others to work with regional, state, federal, and private sector partners to bring improved cell and broadband coverage to the community.

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 Community Communications and Engagement

A task force could come together to make sure that more community members are connected to community meetings, events, and activities. Residents expressed a concern that, while events take place throughout the year, there are parts of the community that do not hear about events or don't feel invited to take part. A task force could work to engage more residents in events and meetings by activating Front Porch Forum participation, developing a community calendar, making the newsletter and website more widely available and accessible, building community bulletin boards and an electronic message board, and more. The committee could even consider resurrecting past gatherings such as the Variety Show that brought people together from across the community.

Improve Road Maintenance

Many residents are concerned about paving needs in Montgomery as well as winter snow removal and maintenance. A group could come together to work with the Town to identify road maintenance needs and develop a plan and funding to address those issues. Strategies could include working with neighboring towns on roads that connect communities to improve paving, maintenance, and snow removal, as well as reviewing past road reports to determine needs. The group might also evaluate seasonal and class 4 roads for potential upgrades.

Assess and Improve Water and Air Quality and Conserve/Preserve Land

Some Montgomery residents are concerned about the water quality and resiliency of the Trout River and the air quality effects of manure spreading on large farm fields. Residents also want to consider and preserve the health of the forest ecosystem. A group could form to work with regional and state experts to assess risks and impacts on water quality through testing and monitoring, and identify ways to prevent water pollution and stabilize riverbanks, as well as consider whether air quality is impacted by manure spreading and how that effect could be mitigated.

Address Housing Needs

Many residents see a crucial need for more affordable housing for young people and seniors in Montgomery. A task force could form to assess current needs and explore options to increase affordable housing options that fit within the character of the community. Many residents are interested in exploring options for new co-housing or other multi-family units in the Center that offer affordable housing for mixed-age and incomes. Others would like to explore renovations of older homes into small multi-family units, improving rental housing options. There is also a need for senior housing and assisted living facilities so older residents can age in place. This task force could also help to bring resources and training to the community to assist current and first-time homeowners with financing, repair, maintenance, weatherization, and other needs.

Develop a Community Center

Montgomery is an active and connected community, but some feel that space is limited to bring the community together for programming and events, especially space for teens and seniors to gather. A task force could form to identify, develop, and/or revitalize a community space for multi-generational

programs and activities including music, dances, community meals, youth programming, and more. A new space may be needed to accommodate community events, or it may be possible to use or expand existing spaces such as the Montgomery Center for the Arts, the Grange, or the Public Safety Building.

Increase Access to Senior Services

Many Montgomery residents would like to see more services available to allow seniors to age in place and continue to engage with and participate in the community. A group could come together to develop senior services and a gathering space for regular events and activities. It could also explore ways to improve senior housing, and bringing health, nutrition and other services to Montgomery. A comprehensive “aging in place program” would better engage and include elders as well as make it possible for them to stay in Montgomery rather than having to leave or travel long distances to meet their needs.

Boost Tourism

Many residents see tourism as a key component of Montgomery’s economic success in the future. A task force could form to capitalize on the many outdoor recreation assets and local amenities to better map and market opportunities for visitors. The group could develop a plan for what the community would like to share with visitors and map those areas to draw attention and use to trails, recreation areas, restaurants, and other attractions. The group could also partner with local food, lodging, arts, and recreation businesses and organizations as well as Jay Peak to optimize and coordinate marketing efforts and tell the unique story of what Montgomery has to offer. The group could also develop and/or market local events to draw visitors to the area.

Advance a Montgomery Energy Commission

A group could come together to form a Montgomery Energy Commission to help the community identify strategies and resources to increase weatherization, implement municipal, business, and residential energy savings, and explore solar and other renewable energy alternatives that are holistic and sustainable for the long-term resilience of the community.

Improve Public Safety

A task force could come together to work with the Town and the community to increase public safety in Montgomery. Some expressed a desire for more robust rescue services and would like to recruit EMT volunteers for local response. Others are interested in engaging the community to develop a community watch program. This group could also explore expanded police coverage and help to address current needs such as radios for the fire department, and safety issues connected to limited cell service in the community.

Finalize and Implement a Plan for Municipal Buildings

Over the past several years, Montgomery residents have had deep community discussions around how to meet the need for space for municipal office space but could also meet community needs for childcare, a larger library, and community gathering spaces. Several unsuccessful votes have led to frustration on all sides, and many believe there are still needs to be met. A citizen task force could form to dig deep into community building options, through an inclusive and transparent process that engages stakeholders from across the community, and come to an independently developed plan to address priority needs. The task force could explore options such as expanding the Public Safety Building and current library, renovating historic buildings to make space available, or the

development of a new building that would meet the needs of the town yet fit with the character and scale of the community. Recommendations from the group could be presented to the community; and the task force could work with the Town and other local, regional, state, and federal partners to develop funding to implement the plan.

Advance Local Outdoor Recreation Access and Connectivity

Montgomery is a town with many outdoor recreation resources from the local mountain bike trail network and Grateful Treads bike club to the Trout River, access to State Forest land, Jay Peak, Hazen's Notch, several swimming holes, and so much more. There are new opportunities to expand recreation at the Town Forest and the recently conserved Burnt Mountain land. An outdoor recreation and trails task force could come together to better connect and improve access to trails, swimming holes, and river access. The group could work with local, regional, and state partners to clarify and map access to local trails and potentially expand trails in the Burnt Mountain land and the Town Forest that considers the health of the forest ecosystem. The task force could bring together representation from all parts of the outdoor recreation community, from mountain bikers and skiers to VAST trail users, fishermen and water sports to youth. This group could work to make sure that outdoor recreation opportunities are clear, well-mapped, and available and accessible to everyone in the community and to visitors to Montgomery.

Revitalize Historic Buildings in the Village and Center

A task force could come together to identify key historic buildings in the Village and Center and implement a plan to restore and revitalize them for housing, childcare, community gathering space, or other purposes. The group could work with the Preservation Trust of Vermont and other key partners to identify funding opportunities to acquire and revitalize priority buildings.

Form a Montgomery Business Association

A task force could form to bring together local businesses to improve coordination and collaboration and identify opportunities to share resources and lend mutual support. The group could help to market businesses, identify technical assistance and funding opportunities in support of local businesses, and could even explore a shared office space, or co-working space, to support technology-based or other currently home-based businesses and entrepreneurs.

Strengthen the Partnership Between the School and the Community

Montgomery residents are proud of their school, care deeply about their youth, and want to provide students with every possible opportunity for success. In recent years, Montgomery has faced significant challenges and controversies as Act 46 has forced the community to come together around tough decisions for the future of their school. Today, many residents see the school as a touchstone of community life and feel that connecting students more deeply into the community, and connecting the broad community more deeply with the school, would help to enrich student experiences and engage citizens in the school. A committee could help to better share information on school issues and systematically invite the community to engage with the school through volunteer opportunities, youth events, enhancement projects, creative programs, and mentorships.

V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, November 29, 2018

Montgomery 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.

✓ Improve Village and Center Traffic Flow and Pedestrian Safety

Community Chair: **Darren Drevik**

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

Resource Team Members: **Michelle Boomhower**, Director of Policy Planning and Intermodal Development, Vermont Agency of Transportation

Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Executive Director, WonderArts Vermont

Bethany Remmers, Assistant Director, Northwest Regional Planning Commission

Montgomery has an incredible asset in its two village centers, local businesses lining Main Street, area attractions and scenic beauty drawing visitors to and through town. This Task Force has come together to answer community concerns about the ability of the village and the center to handle increased traffic and the safety of locals and visitors alike. This task force will work to address these concerns by designing and implementing streetscape and sidewalk improvements as well as traffic calming and pedestrian safety strategies. Efforts may include working with regional and state partners to develop and implement a streetscape redesign plan that could include improved lighting, sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes and parking. Additionally, the group will work to implement shorter-term traffic calming strategies such as creative signage (enlisting the help of local artists and youth), flashing speed lights, temporary speed bumps, and other measures to reduce drivers' speed through town. Many residents expressed the desire to incorporate creativity and beautification efforts into any streetscape redesign plan. This team is also interested in building a bike and pedestrian trail between the two villages, producing a signage plan, and ensuring the safety of the three way intersection on the east end of town.

Short Term Actions

1. Survey the community on what people would like to see for the streetscape of the future (which will also contribute to the long term master planning effort).
2. Develop some crosswalks.
3. Test a speed feedback electric sign at the entrances to the village.
4. Improve the Grange and Post Office Parking lots by planning out the best arrangement for cars, painting lines, building Parking signs.
5. Develop a snow removal proposal for Select Board consideration that could potentially include sidewalk plowing by the municipality, an ordinance requiring property owners to clear the walkway, or another strategy.
6. Do a tree trimming campaign to eliminate low hanging branches and clean up the look of the corridor.
7. Involve artists in beautification, traffic calming, and safety efforts.

Middle Term Actions

8. Develop and implement a signage plan for the villages, including resources, businesses, and amenities.
9. Build a pedestrian/bike connecting trail between the Village and the Center with connections to the recreation area, school, and ball fields.
10. Work with VTrans to do a Road Safety Audit Review of the three road intersection in the Village.

Long Term Actions

11. With RPC and other professional assistance, develop and Implement a Master Plan for the transportation corridor in both villages that includes parking, sidewalks, crossings, traffic calming, lighting, and other safety and aesthetic improvements.
12. Consider burying power lines as part of a streetscape redevelopment.

Other considerations and/or potential improvements:

- Streets with the maximum number of parallel parking spaces safety allowable.
- Sidewalks from Riverwalk to Jolley in the Village, and from the Rec Center to the MCA, and then north past St. Isadore's and South past Hazen's Notch Road.
- Traffic-calming street features, which could include raised crosswalks/speed bumps or subtle shifts in the road to require cars to slow to navigate them.
- Modern street lighting that improves safety while reducing light pollution.
- Buried utilities if at all possible in the Village and Center, to improve nightlines, safety and reduce power outages in bad weather.
- Maximized parking spots in the Post Office and Grange lots.
- Radar speed signs at the entrances to the Village and Center to improve safety.
- Crosswalks in the high-traffic 3-way MCA/Sylvester's/Snowshoe intersection, as well as other locations in the Center and Village.
- Traffic light at the MCA/Sylvester's/Snowshoe intersection, type as necessitated.
- Artistic design of directional and business-location signage to encourage those passing through to stop, shop, eat and stay.

Resources

- VTrans staff for Safety Audit and Evaluation.
- Ceilidh Galloway-Kane from Wonder Arts Vermont to help rally artists and to share what other towns have done.
- The Northwest Regional Planning Commission for transportation planning assistance, grant writing and staff support.
- The Bike and Pedestrian Grant program could help in planning.
- Vermont Arts Council has Animating Infrastructure grants.
- VOREC has Vermont Outdoor Recreation Grants that might help on the connecting trail.
- The Department of Health, AARP Livable Communities and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation could be potential sources of support.
- The UVM Center for Rural Studies may have some small grant resources.
- The VT Community Foundation could help seed projects.
- If projects scale up, to fulfill the master plan, USDA RD and the Northern Borders Commission would be potential grant supports.
- Local Motion could provide technical assistance around bike lanes, safety and trail development.
- The Missisquoi Wild and Scenic program.
- VTrans has Transportation Alternatives grant.
- The Congressional Offices can help negotiate potential federal resources and advocate for Montgomery.

Task Force Members

Bob	Barnard	thejollybarnyard242@gmail.com	326-4012
Leanne	Barnard	barnard242@hotmail.com	326-4012
Ted	Carrick	tec27213@aol.com	305-393-7604
Darren	Drevik	darren@drevik.net	
Lynne	Drevik	lynne@drevik.net	326-4306
Jessica	Gilpin	jessgilpin@hotmail.com	393-9120
Melissa	Haberman	melissa.haberman1@gmail.com	326-6003
David	Hanna	geourbs@gmail.com	326-3115
Jacob	Hartman	jacobheathhartman@gmail.com	326-2065
Roger	Langevin	duset@comcast.net	309-5046
Reif	Larsen	reifzlarsen@gmail.com	614-981-1221
Sabra	Massey	sabra_massey@mac.com	326-3905
Misty	McCartney	mistymccartney@gmail.com	760-7740
Kenny	Miller	buildercraftsmen.com	827-6148
Matthew	Paggi	mpaggivt@gmail.com	999-9090
Titus Henry	Presler	tituspresler@gmail.com	871-9489
Karie	Quintin	kqdreamer@gmail.com	970-222-7795
Michelle	Schaap	mschaa76@gmail.com	871-9489
Lindsey	Wight	info@vtwsr.org ; lindseya.wight@gmail.com	922-0544
Sue	Wilson	Sue_wilson@fairpoint.net	326-4189

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

Consider engaging artists to help with traffic calming. Contact Ceilidh Galloway-Kane of WonderArts Vermont, 802-533-9370, Ceilidh@wonderartsvt.org for ideas.

Contact Michelle Boomhower, Director of Policy, Planning and Intermodal, at VTRANS to raise awareness of issues to VTRANS: 802-505-3480 and michele.boomhower@vermont.gov.

A task force might visit the community of St. Albans which has done some fantastic streetscaping. Building a Better Bethel is an important (low-cost) model for helping a community identify what kinds of traffic calming/streetscape improvements are needed.

Consider level of coordination with other task forces particularly wastewater and possibility of engaging a common consultant. Significant streetscaping, traffic and pedestrian infrastructure could be coupled with wastewater infrastructure construction or at a minimum should be planned together.

The size of the road in the downtown is small but great for slowing traffic through town. The sidewalks are either in need of repair or need to be installed between the library and municipal space, recreation, schools and local merchants.

Build a trail that connects the recreation area to the school and the recreation area to the downtown. Creating a more moveable community is a great asset that can draw more residents and tourists.

Create a master plan or strategic plan for Montgomery to plan and sustain future changes.

The Town recently submitted a Municipal Grant Program (MPG) application to fund village planning and design work. If funded, the town should engage a consultant who specializes in this type of work. The Northwest RPC can provide knowledge and assistance on this. If the grant doesn't come through, the Town should ask the grant program managers at the VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development how to strengthen the application and resubmit under the Better Connections program.

Vtrans/ACCD's Better Connections program is an ideal planning grant that can combine both traffic concerns with streetscape: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>.

If a grant is obtained, develop a RFQ (Request for Quotes) and hire a consultant for planning.

If the grant application doesn't work out in the short term, the town should consider requesting technical assistance from Local Motion, or the Northwest RPC to get ideas and inspiration on how to move forward. There may be some short-term, temporary installations of bike and pedestrian improvements that would keep the momentum while the long-term solutions are sorted out. See examples presented at the walk bike summit for ideas about how to get a toe-hold into some complete streets and walkable community projects. Start small and build upon it.

Check in with other towns that recently went through this process. St Albans and Barre City did major streetscaping projects that made a big difference in pedestrian safety and beautification of village centers. As part of your planning for streetscape and sidewalk improvements, contemplate what type of growth you are hoping to attract in the next 5-30 years in terms of businesses, tourism, health services, etc., and coordinate with the waste water infrastructure team so that if this means you need more parking, lighting, signage or telecommunications, or expect more delivery trucks to need drop off space, you can have a plan that suits over a longer term. Keep in mind that you have seniors who have difficulty with walking especially with walkers, canes, or wheelchairs, that don't traverse well over cobblestone type surfaces or high curbs.

Keep in mind any special consideration for accessibility needs if there are services such as a health clinic, pharmacy, doctor or dentist coming to town.

Connect with regional planning commissions, state legislators, or other town leaders to explore funding options for a new streetscape design. In the meantime, enlist community volunteer support to address easier temporary fixes, such as speed signs.

Involve individual artists and/or the MAC staff in your planning efforts for the village center from the beginning, so that art and creativity will be incorporated in genuine ways.

Consider applying for an Animating Infrastructure grant from the Vermont Arts Council. The program supports creative placemaking projects that integrate art into existing infrastructure projects – from solar arrays to bike paths to downtown streetscapes. Letters of intent are due in December, and Michele Bailey, senior program director at the Council, would be happy to answer questions and to discuss your project ideas: mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org. Michele can also suggest projects completed in other communities that might serve as useful models as you re-envision Montgomery's village center.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

The 2018 Vermont Walk Bike Summit took place in White River Junction earlier this year. There were multiple presentations and discussions relevant to Montgomery. See: www.vtwalkbikesummit.com/speaker-presentations/. The resources under "Built Environment" and "Advocacy & Education" have concrete examples of communities in Vermont, and elsewhere, testing out concepts that might be applicable to Montgomery. Complete Streets in Small Communities, and Bethel Better Block, include examples of comparable scope and context to Montgomery, and numerous resources including contacts that might be able to provide advice or coaching. The 2020 Walk Bike Summit will take place in Middlebury. Montgomery should plan on attending to network and get ideas and inspiration regardless of progress made by then.

Reach out to Bethel, and other communities, that have done nice work on streetscape beautification to find out how they planned and funded their efforts, and get advice.

AARP has done some good work supporting walkable communities. They did a study in Jericho, a few years ago. <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/archives/info-2014/complete-streets.html>. Kelly Stoddard-Poor from AARP could help think about replicating the Bethel event: kstoddardpoor@aarp.org.

A discussion w/ VTTrans would be critical, in terms of understanding grant opportunities, funding cycles, etc. for sidewalks and the like.

Montgomery and Montgomery Center are both State-designated Village Centers. Benefits associated with this designation include numerous tax credits to encourage investments in historic villages like Montgomery, as well as priority consideration for state grants, including Agency of Transportation (VTTrans) Bike/Ped and Transportation Alternatives grants, and the VTTrans/VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) Better Connections program. The Better Connections program (www.vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections) is a good way to fund the type of focused planning and design needed to identify implementable improvements for the village areas. Contact Richard Amore: 828-5229, Richard.amore@vermont.gov.

The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development has all kinds of resources and grant opportunities for communities. Learn more here: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development>. Contact Ted Brady, Deputy Secretary, at ted.brady@vermont.gov.

ACCD offers Municipal Planning Grants that could help Montgomery create a master plan for village: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>. Contact Jenni Lavoie at 828-1948 and jenni.lavoie@vermont.gov.

Local Motion is a great resource for all things bicycling and walking in Vermont. They have prepared materials and information on how a community can take steps to make streets friendlier, and safer for bicycling and walking. Their website is a wealth of information, including examples of how other communities have planned for and implemented improvements, many of which do not require major capital investments. They may even be able to consult and or assist with assessment and planning for improvements. See: https://www.localmotion.org/community_action.

Tim Smith, RDC Director and Mayor of St Albans would be a good person to contact with respect to their process: tim@fcidc.com and 524-2194.

National Life Group has a Main Street Grant Program. Contact Ross Sneyd at rsneyd@nationallife.com.

There is potential to reduce costs by working with college students and/or faculty studying green infrastructure, such as Dr. Stephanie Hurley (Stephanie.E.Hurley@uvm.edu), to redesign the streetscape while incorporating good water quality and environmental practices, and beautification.

If there are utility (i.e. wastewater) improvements happening, they should be done in conjunction with the streetscape work. USDA Rural Development recently funded a similar project in Winooski that could serve as a model. Contact Eric Law, *Community Programs Director* at eric.law@vt.usda.gov or 828-6033.

USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Funding. Contact Misty Sinsigalli at 748-8746.

The Northern Border Regional Commission (<https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/Northern-Boarder-Regional-Commission>) offers grants for community infrastructure and economic development projects, and Montgomery is in their service area. Contact Tim Tierney, *Program Manager*, at 505-5496 and Tim.Tierney@vermont.gov.

Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) will do a travel plan for schools. Contact Amanda Holland of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission at aholland@nrpcvt.com or 802-524-5958.

America Walks has grants for community projects in this area: <http://americawalks.org/applications-open-for-2018-community-change-grants/>. They also have technical resources around pedestrian safety and crosswalks, etc. It's worth checking out for ideas: <https://americawalks.org/learning-center/technical-resources/>.

Rise VT has \$5,000 mini grants opening in March: www.risevt.org or email bcherrier@nmcinc.org.

A couple other state grant opportunities to check out include the VT Parks and Recreation grants: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/grants> and the Building Communities grants offered by the VT Agency of Administration: <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>

The Downtown Transportation Fund (<http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/downtown-transportation-fund>) is a financing tool which assists municipalities in paying for transportation-related capital improvements within or serving a Designated Downtown (<http://maps.vermont.gov/ACCD/PlanningAtlas/index.html?viewer=PlanningAtlas>). Past projects include streetscape improvements, electric vehicle charging stations, parking facilities, rail or bus facilities, utility relocation, street lighting and wayfinding signage.

Vermont Community Foundation “Spark! Connecting Community Grants” program puts building and nurturing community front and center. Grants that support people working and volunteering to help those in need and that help communities come together.

<https://www.vermontcf.org/NonprofitsGrants/AvailableGrants/SparkConnectingCommunity.aspx>.

Check out the organization grants offered by the National Endowment for the Arts: Art Works, Challenge America, Our Town—Project based grants for a variety of specific events/activities:

<https://www.arts.gov/grants/apply-grant/grants-organizations>.

For other info on placemaking check out the American Planning Association Creative Placemaking in Planning: <https://www.planning.org/research/creativeplacemaking/> or the Transportation for America Scenic Route Toolkit: <https://creativeplacemaking.t4america.org/> or even the America for the Arts Public Art Network – tools and resources for public art: <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-resource-center/> or, finally, ArtPlace America – Creative Placemaking Sample projects: <https://www.artplaceamerica.org/>.



✓ Improve Cell and Broadband Access

Community Chair: **Everett McGinley**

Facilitator: **Ben Doyle**, *Assistant State Director*, USDA Rural Development

Resource Team Members: **Michael Birnbaum**, *CEO*, Kingdom Fiber

Jim Porter, *Director of Telecommunications and Connectivity Division*, Vermont Department of Public Service

Montgomery residents would like to have better access to cell coverage and broadband internet access. Montgomery could convene a partnership of local residents, municipal officials, businesses, school leaders, and others to work with regional, state, federal, and private sector partners to bring improved cell and broadband coverage to the community.

Action Steps

1. Educate taskforce and interested community members about broadband/cell technology. This could start by inviting a team from the Public Service Department; they can share information about existing service in the region and potential options for address lack of coverage and public safety concerns. Additionally, providers should be invited to present as well as other towns who has successfully addressed similar challenges.
2. Look at grant options for public safety communications equipment (i.e. a satellite phone). This step might prove redundant depending upon additional information from PSD about FirstNet project's potential in the area.
3. Look at feasibility options for expanding service/coverage. This includes exploring all available options, their complexity and cost, and making a decision about which option to pursue.
4. Create signage around town indicating where current cell coverage exists (i.e. a cell phonebooth downtown) to help tourists know where they can place a call.
5. Coordinate communication with providers and congressional delegation.

Additional Potential Action Steps

- Conduct feasibility study/build new cell tower.
- Look at current tower capacity possibilities for improving service.
- Coordinate any actions with infrastructure group to ensure that if there is any underground utilities work planned that fiber could be potentially integrated into project.
- Explore additional telemedicine/distance learning options funding for school to increase student access at home.
- Consider building Wi-Fi hotspot for downtown.

Resources

Jim Porter, *Director of Telecommunications and Connectivity Division*, Vermont Department of Public Service is the key contact at the State and can help the community explore available options: 802-828-4003, james.porter@vermont.gov.

Michael Birnbaum, *CEO* of Kingdom Fiber, recently worked with Craftsbury on a similar project and can provide advice on various options: 272-1027, mb@kfiber.net.

Evan Carlson, *Entrepreneur in Residence*, DO North Coworking Space, NVU is the lead on an effort to expand e-connectivity in Lyndonville and could provide additional advice: 617-909-3405, evan@hjalmarcarlson.com.

USDA Rural Development has grant/loan programs might provide useful (in particular the Rural Business Development Grant, application due in March): <https://www.rd.usda.gov/vt>.

Northern Borders Regional Commission has grant funds available for telecommunications and economic development projects: <http://www.nbrc.gov/>.

VT State Connectivity Initiative has grant funding for internet service providers that agree to extend service to designated areas least likely to be served through the private sector or through federal programs. Towns are encouraged to work with an internet service provider to identify projects that will meet private and public needs: <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/connectivity>.

Firstnet system: <https://www.firstnet.gov/>.

Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC) has done a number of telecommunications projects in northern VT/NH: <https://www.ncic.org/>.

Task Force Members

Mike	Abramowitz	mabramowitz46@gmail.com	326-4239
Sandy	Alexander	salexander@montgomeryk8.net	207-651-2505
Susan	Baker	susanbakern@gmail.com	782-3836
Sarah	Borodaeff	sborodaeff@gmail.com	
Christina	Carrigan	christina.nicole.carrigan@gmail.com	415-505-4531
Marty	Cota	reachmor@gmail.com	988-0080
Jessica	Gilpin	jessgilpin@hotmail.com	393-9120
Brent	Godin	brentg63@gmail.com	309-3076
Marlene	Hambleton	marlenehambleton@gmail.com	326-2115
Nafis	Khan	nafis@fairpoint.net	
Monica	Ladd	monica.ladd@hotmail.com	
Everett	McGinely		
Jacob	Racusin	montgomeryselectboard.jacob@gmail.com	
Ian	Scott	ianpscott@gmail.com	829-1902
Timothy	Snider	tsnider1500@gmail.com	326-4803
Jean	Trautner	trautner@surfglobal.net	326-4265



The first meeting of the Improve Cell and Broadband Access task force group.

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

Work with the public service department to map the areas of town with no cell service and inadequate broadband service.

Create Wi-Fi zones in the two downtowns.

Create a cell "hot spot" using a "COW" or mobile hot spot in downtown.

Connect with other towns that have tackled this problem directly and invite them to present to the task force.

Connect with alternative providers (Mansfield Community Fiber might be a good one) to see if they can meet the community's needs.

Contact Dave Stoner from Craftsbury about the work they accomplished coming out of the VCRD process.

FCIDC and the Northwest Vermont Regional Planning Association will likely be key partners so invite them to the table from the beginning.

Contact USDA RD General Field Representative.

Based on the service issues of other local cell phone services, convene all the parties above and work to gain coverage from reliable national/regional companies and explore innovative ways to attach the cell towers or find other ways that are feasible technically. There were three people in the area at the evening meeting that were very knowledgeable about this and were clearly motivated to participate.

Use regional needs to work together in coordinating partnerships. Boost framing as economic potential for residents and businesses, as well as vision (or reality) of Montgomery as a haven for remote workers. Explore newer wireless options.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

Clay Purvis, Director of Telecom, 371-9655, clay.purvis@vermont.gov.

Dave Stoner, community activist in Craftsbury that helped get Kingdom Fiber going in his community. davestoner@gmail.com and 586-6913.

Leslie Nulty, Mansfield Community Fiber, 899-2044, leslie.nulty@mcfibervt.com.

Michael Birnbaum, Kingdom Fiber, <https://kingdomfiber.com/>

Potential Funding Sources

Northern Border Regional Commission grants.

State Connectivity Fund at the VT Department of Public Service.

Talk with East Central Fiber about their model and how they have been able to make community-owned fiber work in their neck of the woods.

USDA Rural Development has provided grant funding in the past to expand broadband coverage or create downtown Wi-Fi zones (Lyndon and Craftsbury). The funding came through a Rural Business Development Grant. Contact Business Programs Specialist Susan Poland: susan.poland@vt.usda.gov or Ben Doyle at benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov and 828-6042.

✓ Develop Community Wastewater Infrastructure

Community Co-Chairs: **Ethan Dull** and **Walter Knight**

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

Resource Team Members: **Jonathan Harries**, *State Engineer*, USDA Rural Development

Eric Law, *VT/NH Community Loan Specialist*, USDA Rural Development

Tim Smith, *Executive Director*, Franklin County Industrial Development Corp

Lynnette Whitney Claudon, *Chief Pollution Control Design Engineer & Clean Watersheds Needs Survey Coordinator*, Water Infrastructure Financing Programs, Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program, Department of Environmental Conservation

Many residents believe that Montgomery lacks the wastewater infrastructure needed for businesses and homes in the village centers, and that developing this infrastructure will be essential to a healthy future for the community. This task force group formed to develop a plan for a new wastewater treatment system for Montgomery. The group will work with regional, state, and federal partners to survey current needs, evaluate what is needed for desired growth, identify funding sources, and work with the Select Board to design and implement a Montgomery wastewater project.

Action Steps

1. Officially organize the group by establishing a schedule, communication platform, and designate officers. The meetings will include an agenda, and be short and goal-oriented with timelines of action. Subcommittees will be formed to work on projects.
2. Design and conduct a survey of current needs, opinions, and existing systems. Prior to designing the survey, contact Lynette at VT DEC for survey models to use.
3. Create factual 1-pager to include a mission statement, catchy name of the effort, and will articulate the economic development benefits, and the town-wide benefits to non-users/tax payers.
4. Promote age diversity of participants.
5. Build a non-binding resolution for 2019 Town Meeting.
6. Create an RFQ for a new wastewater consultant. (Get template from Lynette at VT DEC). The consultant will cull the old reports from 1989 and 2000 for data and best ideas.
7. Identify municipal and state and federal funding for consultant.
8. Do an RFP and engage a consultant – could be in conjunction with the pedestrian, traffic group.
9. Evaluate ongoing system management costs.
10. Finally, hunt for money, pass a bond as needed, and build a system.

Resources

- Eric Law and Jonathan Harries, USDA Rural Development WEP program, for up to \$30K planning grant for wastewater system, construction WEP funding, other loans and grants.
- Lynette Whitney Claudon at VT DEC/ANR for engineering planning advances (no repayment if no action); clean water state revolving fund (50% planning and design grant); pollution control grant (appropriated by legislature; don't pay back planning grant if you use this program). Lynette can also provide technical assistance. Contact Lynette at 490-6226, Lynnette.Claudon@vermont.gov.

- VT ANR has a guide for getting your wastewater project to move smoothly. Link directly to the guide here: <https://anrweb.vt.gov/DEC/IronPIG/DownloadFile.aspx?DID=127089&DVID=0>, or find the link to the guide and to other useful resources here: <https://dec.vermont.gov/facilities-engineering/resources>.
- Village wastewater solutions workbook on creating a sewer committee at <https://dec.vermont.gov/village-wastewater>.
- Nate Cleveland at VT Community Development Program for community development block grant to towns: nathan.cleveland@vermont.gov and 828-2998.
- ANR permitting help: <https://dec.vermont.gov/ps-essex>.
- Municipal planning grants through CP&R at ACCD: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>.
- Economic Development Authority planning/implementation grants. When plans are advanced, contact Matthew Suchodolski at the Pennsylvania EDA office for the region at Matthew.J.Suchodolski@eda.gov and 215-597-1242.
- Northern Borders Regional Commission for planning and implementation grants. Contact Tim Tierney at ACCD: 505-5496, tim.tierney@vermont.gov.
- Mark Johnson, Vermont State lead of RCAP Solutions: 505-1037, mjohnson@rcapsolutions.org. He is an engineer and works with rural Vermont communities on wastewater issues.
- Catherine Dimitruk of the NW Regional Planning Commission can consult and potentially help with grant writing. Contact Catherine at cdimitruk@nrpcvt.com and 524-5958.

Background/History

- 1989: basic maps, feasibility study.
- 1997: flooding, septic failure, wastewater study (\$80K) showed that soils “worked.”
- 1997/98: USDA \$1.x million.
- 1998/99: water system failed.
- 2007: water system done.
- 2000: watershed study for center or village (or both), never acted on.
- Wild and Scenic Designation (more expense? More resources?)
- Bernies and Snowshoe (mound system) putting systems in now. Both want municipal system.
- Growth restraint.
- No space for onsite systems.
- Trout River Brewery relocation.
- Constraints to existing business.
- Residential barriers at 58 Main St.
- Town office constraints.
- Depressed property tax.

Task Force Signups

Mark	Brouillotte	mbrouillotte@fairpoint.net	309-8574 (or 8874?)
Ted	Carrick	tec27213@aol.com	305-393-7604
Marijke	Dollois	hillwest@fairpoint.net	326-4404
Darren	Drevik	darren@drevik.net	
Ethan	Dull	info@thejaycloud.com	326-2055
Remi	Gratton	remigratton@gmail.com	309-5801
Charlie	Hancock	charliehanco@gmail.com	326-2093
Sarita	Khan	relax@vtsaltcaves.com	326-2283
Walter	Knight	skiknight@gmail.com	570-906-0005
Jesse	Robbins	jesse.robbins.vt@gmail.com ; jrobbins@ffinc.com	238-7351
Tosca	Smith	tocsmith06@gmail.com	

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

There are planning funds available at VT Agency of Commerce through the CDBG program that might be used both for infrastructure and perhaps for village traffic and livability. Contact Billy Coster at ANR (billy.coster@vermont.gov and 595-0900) or Commissioner Emily Bodecker at DEC (Emily.boedecker@vermont.gov and 828-1556) to see if there are planning funds within ANR. Similarly, check in with Agency of Transportation on funds to help with traffic flow. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission can be of help on all three items: <https://www.nrpcvt.com/staff>.

Though affordable housing is not discussed here, development of infrastructure would enable a future discussion about developing more housing in the village assuming zoning provided for a reasonable amount of density.

There are a number of planning grant programs that could help the community identify both the scope of need/work and the potential cost. Have an introductory meeting with Northern Borders Regional Commissioner, Department of Conservation's wastewater program, ACCD, and USDA Rural Development's Water and Environmental Program to see which planning product best fits the town's needs. Ideally, they wouldn't need to spend a lot of money on the initial planning phase.

Pursue USDA Rural Development planning grant and NBRC funds to fund and complete an engineering study.

Coordinate with UVM or other institution for possible project with the civil engineering college.

Invite the Vermont Rural Water Association to a task force meeting to hear from experts on suggested solutions.

See the action steps for the "Improve Village and Center Traffic Flow and Pedestrian Safety" Task Force on pages 8-10.

Coordinate with Resources for Communities and People (RCAP – Mark Johnson, Vermont State Lead, 505-1037) and Vermont Rural Water Association.

Engage in survey of properties in envisioned service area.

Tackling this issue is essential for the healthy future of the village. With any new infrastructure changes this is a top priority for the community to address.

Make sure to think about the type of growth you want to have now and in the next 20 years so that the system will be able to accommodate future needs. In the forums, people talked about wanting to have a brewery, for example. Having a brewery will take significant wastewater but also attracts tourism and other businesses to come.

Hire a consultant to assess needs; be prepared to ask questions and provide information about expectations (of residents and businesses), development and population forecasts, etc.

Many of the grant programs mentioned in the Traffic Flow section above (including the Vermont Arts Council's "Animating Infrastructure" grants) might support planning and/or implementation of a wastewater treatment system.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations and Potential Funding Sources

Northern Borders Regional Commission offers up to \$500K grants for infrastructure. Contact Tim Tierney, Vermont Program Manager, tim.tierney@vermont.gov and 802-505 5496.

USDA Rural Development has both technical and funding resources. USDA RD's Water and Environmental Program offers loans and grants to plan and build wastewater systems. Contact Ben Doyle at 828-6042, benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov. Eric Law from USDA RD can describe opportunities for planning funds and then think about how to access implementation funds should the town decide to pursue a project: 802-828-6033 and eric.law@vt.usda.gov. Contact Misty Sinsigalli for USDA RD facilities funding information at 802-748-8746. And Jonathan Harries, USDA State Engineer, provides engineering and environmental oversight and advice across RD's grant and loan programs with an emphasis on water, wastewater, and renewable energy projects. He can be reached at 802-828-6035 and jonathan.harries@vt.usda.gov.

DEC / ANR Facilities Engineering Division for loans to build wastewater systems. Contact Eric Blatt at 802-585-4901 and eric.blatt@vermont.gov. And visit DEC's Watershed Management Division at <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/> for support and resources.

Connect with USDA Rural Development, the VT Rural Water Association, and/or VT Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) for advice on grants for planning and assessment, which runs ahead of construction and implementation.

Tim Smith of Franklin County RDC can tell you what other towns have successfully accessed funds for wastewater treatment systems. Contact Tim at 802-524-2194 and tim@fcidc.com.



The Wastewater Infrastructure task force group met on Nov 29th to create an action plan.

VI. Montgomery Thrives Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 110 Montgomery residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on September 25th 2018

Although the prioritization work of the Montgomery Thrives 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.

Infrastructure: Roads & Sewer

Visiting Team: Ted Brady, Darcy Carter, Ben Doyle (facilitator), Catherine Dimitruk, Kati Gallagher (scribe), Jonathan Harries, Dave Pelletier, Lisa Ryan, Tim Smith, John Tracy

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have a state of the art water treatment facility. This was a long process that was helped by USDA support with good outcomes, including a good water source.
- Relatively new elementary school, built in 1993.
- We have done a good inventory of roads, thanks to years of having the same “road guy” who is familiar with road conditions and needs. This provides strong groundwork to build on.
- We have a new town garage.
- The vacant town office building needs work (mold remediation), but the building is in a good location and could continue to be used in the future.
- The main highways through town are state roads and were recently rebuilt. This is also a benefit for the town because they can avoid that cost.
- We have swimming holes everywhere!
- Trout River provides recreational and ecosystem services. All but one of the town’s historic covered bridges have been rebuilt recently.

What are the Challenges?

- There is a desperate in need for a new sewer/ septic system in town.
- Businesses can’t add on or grow, because there’s no additional water. There are additional costs to businesses in paying for system failures.
- Aging septic system and town water doesn’t extend far beyond downtown.
- Efforts have been made to improve septic, but have caused frustration. After the 1997 flood, legislators secured a million dollar grant that sat until 2002 to improve the septic system.
- Studies were completed for the village and center that may still be useful, but since then the town has grown and needs more renovations.
- Issues are widely recognized in town. If the town wants to grow, it needs a new sewer system.
- Aging septic also pose a threat to the Trout River, which is designated as Wild & Scenic.
- Farm fields (that used to be family farms, now “manure disposal sites”) are also contributing to water quality issues.
- We need a crosswalk by Sylvester’s.
- We have no accommodations for pedestrian traffic, which is of major concern especially for children.
- Sidewalks are incomplete and poorly maintained.
- The sidewalks that exist are not plowed in the winter, forcing pedestrians to walk in streets.
- There is a huge need for downtown parking.
- Sidewalks are currently being used for overflow parking.
- Parking and sidewalk issues are a challenge for economic development since the town can’t accommodate the needs of new businesses.
- We need a blinking light at the intersection by Sylvester’s.
- A traffic study was conducted years ago in coordination with state, but nothing was done. The only recommendation by the state was a roundabout.
- Gravel roads face excessive erosion and culvert failures (Hill West, Rt 242 were named as specific challenges), which leads to costly maintenance, and safety and water quality issues.
- Class 4 roads are not maintained and unsafe for car travel, but homeowners are currently responsible (until 2020).
- Both the village and center have become very loud over the past few years. It seems this is due to pickup trucks with loud mufflers or air breaks.
- Speeding in the village has increased.
- Montgomery and Enosburg don’t coordinate with paving roads (Longley Bridge Road mentioned specifically).

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Revisit conversations with VT Agency of Transportation to address intersection improvements and bring new voices to the table to move agenda forward (i.e., NRPC).
- Think comprehensively regarding a full streetscape program including new sidewalks, lighting, septic, and crosswalks.

- Incorporate goals of revitalized downtown (vibrant, pedestrian-friendly) into renovations (i.e., design roads to slow traffic).
- Continue work on grant application for traffic improvements that is waiting on the outcome from this community process.
- Use Burke's community taskforce as a model.
- Research storm grates to determine where water goes and if treated.
- Conduct survey of local businesses to determine needs, specifically regarding infrastructure.
- Survey real estate agents on what they're hearing from potential buyers and sellers struggling to sell.
- Visiting Team will support working groups/committees by providing ideas and resources to focus in on goals.
- Rally around specific ideas to increase chances of winning state funding.
- Meet with state representative to discuss potential for new crosswalks.
- Address parking needs through paving and plowing lots.
- Create inventory of parking.
- The Town could purchase space for public parking and/or green space.
- Explore opportunities for other pedestrian pathways (i.e., privately mowed paths for public use).
- Build a walking path from village to center.
- Look at Bethel's work with Better Block to test ideas for pedestrian walking.
- Coordinate with neighboring towns regarding town maintenance, including road paving.
- Review report on inventory of roads (to be completed soon) to determine needs.
- Speak with MRBA, wild & scenic for opportunities to address water quality.
- Explore options to fund seasonal and class 4 road upgrades.
- Find external funding to stabilize riverbank; circle back with planning associations and others already approached.
- Increase competitiveness for funding opportunities by raising money to match funds or in-kind contributions.
- Locate past infrastructure studies and assessments of what's already been done.
- Decide what level of growth town wants, in coordination with the planning commission and select board.
- Address speeding in the village with bigger speed signs, or other creative options like Burke's safety signs designed by students.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It feels like there is greater community involvement, which often leads to greater success. Everyone here agrees on the challenges, which is a plus; now decide what you want opportunities to look like.
- Don't let previous attempts and frustrations stop you. Improvements for crosswalks and other things can take a long time, and you need to keep communicating with legislators and others. Swanton, for example, voted for a part-time position to help implement these ideas.
- The regional planning commission is working with the town on public roads, but private roads are challenging; they will be doing educational outreach to those living on private roads.
- It sounds like the main ideas surround pedestrian vibrancy, in fact community members are already taking it on. Take advantage of this enthusiasm, get people excited about it, look at other community models and examples, and remember you don't need to reinvent the wheel.
- It is unprecedented to see so many people talking about infrastructure on a Tuesday afternoon! Lead from the bottom up; Show up and push issues you care about – there are many issues, and the town can't take on all of them.
- Entrepreneurs will be attracted by the "tipping point" and "turnover" that seems to be occurring in Montgomery.
- Collective visioning as a town could be useful; discuss how you can build and showcase your uniqueness (i.e. use recognizable symbols like the St. Albans statue).
- The institutional knowledge here is impressive and a great start.
- More heads together will make something happen.

Housing

Visiting Team: Will Belongia, Erica Campbell, Kat Conedera (scribe), Paul Costello (facilitator) Betsy Cherrier Fournier, Josh Hanford, Karen Horn, Jenna Koloski, Chelsea Lewis, Karen Mittelman, Tim Tierney, George Twigg

What are the Assets in this Area?

- There is a large housing stock in the town that can be renovated or converted to multi-unit homes.
- We have an excellent school system that attracts people to the community.
- There are several swaths of open land, such as an 11-acre lot that is privately owned, that could be the site of future development.
- Montgomery is improving, with new businesses opening and more people moving in.
- The creative "vibe" of the city draws people in, and a lot of new young families are moving to the town.
- The town is very creative.
- Jay Peak is an asset that draws people into the area.
- The school system in Montgomery is excellent and is drawing a lot of young families into the town.

What are the Challenges?

- Senior housing is an issue, as there are no retirement homes for seniors who can't live alone anymore but don't want to move.
- A lot of the homes are too big or expensive for older people to live in.

- The lack of public transportation to outside communities is a challenge to seniors who need access to services they can't get in town.
- Affordable housing for low- and medium-income people is hard to find and housing is cheaper in Jay.
- Young people are moving into town, but affordable rentals and homes are hard to find.
- This is both an issue for people who come for the mountain and decide to stay, and for locals who believe this in-migration is driving up housing costs.
- Young families and other people want to move into town because it is a vibrant community with a good school, but they can't find housing.
- The lack of year-round housing for seasonal workers who decide to stay has led to overcrowding in housing and social problems such as drug trafficking.
- Workforce housing is also needed.
- Housing is very seasonal, which has led to a 40% off-season vacancy rate for seasonal homes.
- People have started to rent apartments and spare rooms as AirBnB rooms which takes those spaces out of the market.
- There are many empty houses on Main Street that are in disrepair, and the town has very old and outdated housing infrastructure that is in need of improvement.
- This "dilapidated housing stock" makes owning and maintaining homes in Montgomery expensive.
- The bank in town could be a viable space for new housing but it is becoming dilapidated and the owner won't sell.
- A lot of housing is abandoned.
- These abandoned houses could be renovated and turned into apartments or single-family homes, but there is no crossover. People are not buying and renovating these homes, and this turnover is not being facilitated.
- Red tape makes it difficult to convert single family homes to multi-family homes.
- Large-scale/private development is a challenge because the community lacks public sewer infrastructure and it's expensive.
- Some of the houses have septic systems very close to Trout River.
- There are very few houses on the market but Fannie May is not making an effort to move properties and the bank is not realistic in its offer expectations, so the average amount of time on the market for a home is 312 days.
- The Canadian dollar is very low, so there are fewer Canadians visiting and buying second homes.
- There are very few services offering renovation or winterization for those who do wish to renovate.
- There is a big gap between the people who live inside and outside of the town, both politically and socially, so it's hard to get "outsiders" involved and they don't come to community meetings like this one as often.
- There is a lot of concern about the flood plains of the Trout River because people's properties are shrinking as flooding increases.
- There is no housing committee or anybody in the town working on housing even though there are a lot of housing needs.
- Parking is a serious issue, as some homes do not have parking and infrastructure would have to be expanded if more housing development occurred.
- We should have more affordable burial options or even green burials in the town.
- There are lots of new home owners, but it is very difficult for people to get loans for their first home.
- The lack of widespread public transportation is a challenge.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Incentivize people to renovate homes.
- Perform a needs assessment and feasibility study in order to determine what the town needs in terms of housing, what they currently have, and how feasible the ideas are. The town could work with the regional planning commission on this.
- A market study is also necessary to determine how much housing is needed, how much it should cost, what people in the community want out of housing, and whether or not new development is necessary for the community.
- There is a free housing data site by the Vermont Housing Finance Agency that the community could look at to see an overview of housing data and statistics and build a roadmap of what the community already has for housing and suggest future needs.
- We could purchase the 11-acre lot of open land (or any other lot of open land in the community) to develop a neighborhood with businesses and affordable, easy to maintain housing that is parallel to Main Street.
- This could also solve the senior housing problem.
- There is a hold-up on selling this land but some residents suggested providing tax breaks to people who want to sell their land to the Town.
- Housing could also be built outside of town.
- We should develop cohousing or condominiums like the ones implemented in other communities in Vermont.
- Aspects of a new development should include mixed ages, a central location so residents could walk into town, single-story homes, and smaller 950 square foot homes.
- There is the opportunity for additional development and construction, specifically multi-family housing due to the higher expense of building single family homes; these homes would be high quality and more affordable.
- The town could work with Champlain Valley Housing Trust or Agency of Commerce.
- Housing would need to be priority housing in order to avoid Act 250 and save costs.
- Tiny houses (or just smaller individual houses) built in town could be offered to seniors because they are small, affordable, quiet, self-contained, close to neighbors, and can share a septic system and other infrastructure.
- Modular senior housing could also be built quickly, with a main entry, senior center, basement with private party space, and laundry.
- The community could buy dilapidated houses from people to renovate.
- Some houses in the community could become multi-family home if the issue with red tape is bypassed.

- Make it easier for people to get information on how to rent out their house, since it can be expensive to rent and often a hassle due to the damage that happens to rentals.
- An organization such as Housing Vermont should be contacted to broker relationships between communities and developers and tap into the necessary expertise.
- The community could build a senior center.
- The community needs an energy commission to facilitate programs like Efficiency Vermont, aid in weatherization, implement solar in the community, and help keep utilities affordable.
- We should use solar or geothermal energy to make heating and electricity more affordable.
- An aging in place program on the municipal level would be useful to help seniors weatherize their homes and improve current infrastructure.
- The town could organize a group of people like Habitat for Humanity to improve or build housing.
- We should build a central list of resources for the community, such as who to talk to or where to go if they want to make their house more energy efficient.
- Workforce development and housing expansion is needed to attract young people to rural communities.
- If the community expands the village, they should compartmentalize, such as building a site for single family homes, stores, and others.
- Partner with Jay Peak to take on vacant housing restoration.
- Partnership and training with tech programs would be useful to build capacity and people to work on houses.
- Look at what the community needs and orchestrate training accordingly through technical programs in region.
- Assist first time home owners in getting loans to buy houses in communities.
- Look at existing models such as the Scandinavian Living Center and Agrarian lifestyles.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Jay Peak has an influence on the housing situation, causing seasonality and an abundance of seasonal homes which impact the tax base, but also providing a workforce opportunity and sparking commercial development in the village.
- Rural housing is a significant challenge across state.
- Bristol had a private housing project that took 3 to 4 existing homes and turned them into a small community of multi-family co-housing units.
- A program in Aspen that has expanded to Sugarbush provided residents with discounted lift tickets if they housed a resort employee in their homes. Affordable housing in ski communities a challenge, and affordable housing sometimes has the highest vacancy rates.
- The rental housing market goes up and down because of seasonality and there is a variable cash flow in new development of affordable housing.
- It is better to fix existing homes and infrastructure rather than build new homes.
- Consider contacting the Champlain Valley Housing Trust.
- Make sure people know there are loans and assistance in rehabilitating existing homes.
- There should be a loan product for Vermont housing stock that allows people to buy dilapidated homes, as it is hard to get loans for dilapidated homes but people sometimes can't afford others.
- It is good that people are energized by the influx of young people, which is unique in rural communities.
- There are funds on the state level to help communities in the planning process, such as developing a housing plan.
- It would also be useful to visit cohousing communities such as the one in Bristol, or the elderly housing in Franklin, to determine what would fit Montgomery the best.
- Is it possible to get to the level of scale necessary to draw in housing developers? This is usually 20 units of housing.
- AirBNB is an interesting issue that is not as pertinent in other communities. It impacts affordable housing in urban neighborhoods and the issue is now growing in Montgomery. This will be an ongoing problem that reduces the housing stock, especially considering that up to 40% of housing is vacant and likely offered on AirBNB.
- Montgomery is creative, funky, and fresh! Think about how outsiders see Montgomery and figure out how to develop on the scale that is necessary while still reflecting the community and maintaining its personality.
- Infrastructure is an issue, and the community must work with the state and collaborate between housing and infrastructure development to solve both issues.
- Include the MCA (arts council) in further discussions, as it can be used to link seniors and young people.
- There are lots of resources to utilize, and this is a good process to explore that: the power and energy in this community is great.
- Aging Vermonterers are staying here and young families want to stay here because there is a good educational system.
- It is a great idea to build a housing task force; there are great resources that should be shared with the community.
- The town is on the rise; build on the momentum but make sure that this benefits everybody and there is not a divide between younger and older residents.
- Housing is a challenge, but housing projects often come out of these sessions and Montgomery should work to get the state and nonprofits to collaborate.

Community Buildings & Services

Visiting Team: Ted Brady, Darcy Carter, Ben Doyle, Paul Costello (facilitator), Catherine Dimitruk, Kati Gallagher (scribe), Jonathan Harries, Dave Pelletier, Lisa Ryan, Tim Smith, John Tracy

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have a new school building and town library.
 - The firehouse, public safety building, and rec center with new playground facilities are in good condition.
 - Montgomery Center for the Arts is new and becoming a cultural hub for the town, providing arts and wellness, group space, and more.
 - Grange/Town Hall building is well-loved for community gatherings, parties to raise funds, and so on.
-

What are the Challenges?

- There are differences of opinion regarding the desire to revitalize main street and restore large, empty buildings.
 - Downtown improvements and historic buildings are threatened by flooding.
 - Significant lack of parking downtown.
 - Act 46 threatens school system and the town's multimillion-dollar asset. Town has voted twice against mergers.
 - No gathering place for teens or seniors. Two possible meeting spaces (grange, historical society) are too expensive to heat in the winter.
 - The Library is too small, with no way to expand.
 - Montgomery Center for the Arts is not wheelchair accessible.
 - No EMT staff, ambulance, or doctor. This has been cited as a reason current residents may leave. The Town decided to rely on services from Enosburg due to the expense of maintaining vehicles & equipment.
 - Lack of childcare options.
 - There are no public bathrooms for tourists.
 - The Town offices are temporarily relocated after finding multiple types of mold in the old space. Old and current buildings are too small for town office needs.
 - Post Office remains in same town-owned building as former town offices, but their own assessment found no mold problem.
 - There have been 3 bond votes to build a new municipal building defeated by slim margins, but became a very divisive issue because 1) some residents don't want to or can't spend the money needed, and 2) some residents distrust town leadership.
 - Cost analysis of revamping one of historic houses exceeded a new build out.
 - Geographic limitations of town (hills, streams) make it difficult to get community members in community center.
 - Lack of sidewalks from safety building/library to the center.
-

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Re-recruit EMT volunteers to rebuild staff for emergency services.
 - Create integrated plan for building renovations and town revitalization, instead of thinking one building at a time.
 - Hire a professional to help guide planning process.
 - There is potential for the safety building to be used for other needs and become a centralized place. One benefit is that it's out of floodplain.
 - The Preservation Trust of VT can help with seed grants to focus on revitalization efforts of historic buildings.
 - Create a task force to identify what buildings and needs the community thinks town should prioritize.
 - Use an existing space to show movies.
 - Incorporate childcare (or senior) center into new expansions.
 - Support the Montgomery Center for the Arts to take advantage of its space and facilities for more widespread community use.
 - Find ways to cost-share building renovations to remove burden on lower income folks.
 - Avoid resistance to select board leadership by creating a committee and team of stakeholders to frame platform and to develop plans separately from the SB leadership.
 - Develop a communications strategy to recruit a team of stakeholders and engage community members.
 - Bring diverse opinions to the table by engaging opposed community members at Town Meeting Day.
 - Encourage community members to visit the town website and sign up for emails.
 - Survey property owners, business owners, and real estate agents to identify needs and priorities.
 - Voters should communicate with the select board and school board to express their opinions of the potential school merger.
 - If the library could be expanded, it could be used for space for children, teens, or seniors.
 - Explore the possibility of allowing the public to use the locked-up bathroom in the old town building.
 - Create a citizen task force to gather data on existing buildings vs. building new and other options.
-

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- I would encourage Montgomery to look at possible private-public partnerships to meet goals.
- The Town has many assets, but not a clear understanding of needs or priorities. A capital needs assessment may be useful.
- Community members must be ready to re-engage when the time is right.
- Revisit the Town Plan as a possible resource to answer questions asked in these discussions. Is there guidance there for how to move forward?
- Utilize existing infrastructure and assets to address needs. For example, put volunteers at the Grange to open bathrooms to tourists.
- Focus on success: one success will build momentum.

- Build a coalition of people to make something happen.
- Focus on downtown Montgomery – it’s what makes Montgomery, Montgomery.
- Most people identified that growth is important, now you need to determine the order of events that need to happen first.
- Think about what attracted you to this town to attract others.
- This is a town that’s on the rise – energy, youth, growing population.
- To succeed, the community must have faith in its future. Structure a process that will help build that faith. Determine the sequence of events over the next 2-5 years of what needs to be accomplished.

Recreation, Trails & Tourism

Visiting Team: Will Belongia, Erica Campbell, Kat Conedera (scribe), Betsy Cherrier Fournier, Josh Hanford, Karen Horn, Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Chelsea Lewis, Karen Mittelman, Tim Tierney, George Twigg

What are the Assets in this Area?

- There is a beautiful network of brooks and “green cathedrals” which are indicative of the community’s history.
- Jay Peak is a huge tourism driver.
- The Trout River is an asset, as it is designated Wild and Scenic.
- The bike group Grateful Treads and its trail system. They do a good job of opening up new trails and maintaining current ones.
- Jay State Forest has backcountry skiing, the Long Trail, and hunting.
- The Catamount Ski Trail is in the community.
- There are opportunities for kayaking and other water recreation opportunities to pull people in.
- VAST Trail is in the community for snowmobilers.
- The rec center has a summer camp, ski rink, tennis courts, and sports fields.
- There are great Recreation Department activities such as the summer concert series.
- There is excellent mountain biking and road cycling.
- Montgomery is tied for the most covered bridges in the nation, which is a big draw for tourists.
- Hazen’s Notch has a summer camp for local and out of state kids in addition to a network of ski trails.
- There are a lot of hotels and restaurants, and the community is very lucky to have so many amenities.
- Tourism is the biggest economic driver, which supports local businesses.
- The fall foliage was ranked #1 by New England Magazine.
- There is good bird watching.
- Part of the 5500 acres recently purchased and conserved by the Nature Conservancy, including Burnt Mountain and trails, is in Montgomery.
- There are several scenic mountains: Jay Peak, Haystack, Belvedere, and Burnt Mountain (which is entirely in Montgomery).
- Cold Hollow to is working on land stewardship and wildlife habitat conservation in the region.
- There is a town forest that is available, but not widely used.
- There is a local swimming hole.
- The night sky is beautiful and there is very little light pollution.
- There is a growing youth population.

What are the Challenges?

- Privatization of brook access and many other town resources is a monumental challenge.
- The swimming hole is inaccessible without going through private land, and the landowner does not want people on their property due to issues with trash and degradation. There is also limited parking.
- There are many challenges of accessing certain natural/recreation areas, specifically Burnt Mountain.
- Ongoing management is a challenge, as cleanup is necessary and there is a trash problem in public recreation areas.
- What is the prevailing opinion on tourism in Montgomery? This isn’t really well understood and varies across the community.
- There needs to be a balance between tourism promotion and local preservation.
- Big and Little Jay parking lot fills up, and people park along the roads.
- A lot of mountain biking trails here are on private land and there are huge access challenges.
- The streetscape in town is a tourism challenge, as it is not easy to navigate or access shops and restaurants, traffic safety is an issue, there is no town center, and the big streetlights do not fit the small-town character.
- Many people don’t know where town forest is and there is limited parking.
- When sidewalks are cleared in the winter, there are very high snow banks and people walk down the middle of the road or don’t have the proper footwear to walk in the snow.
- There is little communication between the town and Jay Peak, so the resort does not know to send people to Montgomery for tourism.
- Due to increased opportunities at Jay Peak, there has been a decrease in winter recreation in Montgomery.
- Jay Peak has expanded snowshoeing and cross country ski trails and is pulling people away from Hazens Notch Trails.
- Global warming is a challenge for keeping trails open at Hazens Notch.
- No information is available for people to get for trails in Montgomery and Hazen’s Notch, and therefore the trails are an underutilized resource.
- The town’s identity as a “roughing it” tourism town has not changed much, but tourism the industry is leaning more towards polished vacations with many services amenities.
- There is a small market for the type of tourism Montgomery specializes in, and people want to be catered to when they are on vacation.

- How can the community make Montgomery appealing to tourists but maintain the roughness valued by residents? Should resident needs be catered to before tourists?
- Hazen's Notch is a thriving summer camp, but the Nordic trails are underutilized and although access seems to be improving, there is a lot of confusion and disinformation surrounding it.
- The use of ATVs is a controversial challenge, as they ride main roads and some people end up breaking the law.
- Several residents were unhappy about the speed and concentration of many ATV riders riding together, which also poses the issue of damage to the community's natural resources.
- There is limited connection between the center and village for pedestrians and cyclists besides the highway, which poses a safety issue.
- Socioeconomic status is a challenge, and many recreational activities such as skiing, snowmobiling, and ATV riding are inaccessible to lower income residents.
- Lack of adequate public transportation also limits access.
- People aren't always aware that the rec center and library offer free snowshoe rental.
- The community as a whole needs to determine community vs. tourism use of trails and other public recreation resources.
- Trails are not mapped, which is intimidating to tourists.
- Landowners are hesitant to provide access to trails to outsiders, and there are not many maps because they do not want their land to be exploited.
- Tourists come in for ATV riding because the group is marking trails, publishing maps, and advertising.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Expand bike lanes, especially connecting the village and center.
- There is a need to open up more state land for recreational activities, including hunting.
- Build a map and/or list of the covered bridges, public hiking trails, bike trails, and other information for visitors.
- Reach out to Jay Peak so people are sent out to Montgomery. A better relationship and connection with leadership is important, as they seem interested in being engaged but need to be purposefully connected.
- Enhance visibility of Montgomery in general.
- Centralize information about recreation on the town website.
- Incorporate kids into planning: provide educational information along the trails, consider roadside safety, and think about all ages when creating recreational opportunities.
- Improve and clarify public access to Burnt Mountain and Hazen's Notch. Explore current access and identify new access points. The trails already exist, access just needs to be improved.
- Redevelop the village and center streetscape for pedestrians and cyclists and build a connection between the center and village.
- Clarify public access on state land and look into the precedent regarding public access and private ownership: does the community have legal access or does it have to be negotiated with landowners?
- The group interested in river and pedestrian trails could work closely with the mountain biking club to create a trails collaborative working on the many existing trails and swimming hole access.
- Diplomatic and collective efforts should be made to reach out to private landowners to ask for access and hear their concerns to resolve issues together.
- VAST already has a landowner appreciation dinner.
- Trash is an issue and clubs have to police trails, so volunteers are needed to help clean up the trails regularly. This could be managed by a trails collaborative.
- The Town (or a trails collaborative) should develop a trails/tourism plan to determine how much of their public resources should be expanded or marketed to tourists. How much access do they want to give to outsiders and where? We could have some trails advertised and some just kept to locals, but this needs to be a community decision.
- Use ease of access to designate trails for tourist use, as people will go to the easiest spots that are promoted more.
- The community doesn't want to alienate people, as they bring money to community, so they should bring ATV people into the conversation.
- Rules should be enforced, especially for ATVs. There is no law enforcement in town, so this may need to be enforced by Fish and Game.
- Get kids out into nature by facilitating crossover through school; there are so many assets, so get kids out there (not just to Jay Peak).
- Parking should be expanded.
- Maintain roads in the winter.
- The town is working on applying for funding to improve the streetscape.
- Improve parking access and trails in the town forest.
- The mountain bike club is already working with the state to expand parking and access of state-owned trails (Big Jay).

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The Trail Committee/Collaborative is a great idea.
- It is a great idea to bring people together to talk about outdoor recreation, to collaborate resources, and expand on the already great assets this community has.
- Many talked about children and the outdoors – perhaps it would be interesting to talk more about seniors and access to the outdoors as well.
- I was surprised no one mentioned that there is a great bar scene in town!
- There is a grant program through the VT Arts Council for art projects related to infrastructure, which could help to remap the town, enhance pedestrian safety, design a pedestrian and cyclist walkway, and integrate art into the remapping and discussion of access.
- Keep an eye on Waterbury working on their downtown, as they are looking at improving access, parking, and better access to recreation and are a few years ahead in the process and could be a resource.

- The community could design a community asset map online for a one-stop information point to promote town access. Most people look up information on their phone and a focal point would be useful in getting people from Jay Peak looking for more recreation access into Montgomery.
- Focus tourism where you want it and encourage it in those spots, or it will just happen wherever and could lead to negative impacts.
- There is a great turnout at this meeting and a lot of people want to come here, and not a lot of rural communities have this. People want more access but don't want public recreation to be loved to death, so keep in mind that management of how people find the town determines where they visit.
- There are grants for land acquisition, which is great for expanding parking.
- The most successful trail recreation grows organically, so think about what people want in the community first and grow that.
- The bike shops are a major asset.
- Think about Paddle Fest, eBikes, and Gravel Grinder races.
- The town is authentic.
- ATVs have divided towns, so it may be helpful to look at allowing ATV access but regulating it and working together. You don't want to alienate anyone.
- Make recreation multi-use: don't have a bunch of different clubs (non-motor, ATV, biking). Focus energy and resources in a broader, bigger club.
- Go to the town forest, build trails from scratch, and put those on map so the community doesn't lose its secret stash.
- Pay attention to big land transfers: if you subsidize land and pay taxes, you should have access.
- It may take a while to form a partnership with Jay Peak, but it could be beneficial to capitalize on this asset. Consider something like the Wednesday Night Shuffle where Jay Peak busses people down to Newport and shops stay open late.
- The community has a downtown, which is a huge asset. Make it walkable and appealing to capitalize on it.
- The USDA rural development program has paid for equipment for community ski trails.
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund through state has active program to support town and city parks.
- People in Vermont are very excited about outdoor recreation right now. This is a great opportunity to have a moment, step back, and answer fundamental questions about who you want to be as a community.

Economic Development & Broadband/Cell Infrastructure

Visiting Team: Ted Brady (facilitator), Darcy Carter, Ben Doyle, Paul Costello, Catherine Dimitruk, Kati Gallagher (scribe), Jonathan Harries, Dave Pelletier, Lisa Ryan, Tim Smith, John Tracy

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The 6 bars and restaurants in town are great quality and a draw for skiers.
- We have good infrastructure for small town, including the municipal water system, supermarket, recently paved state roads, and fiber downtown.
- Hiking trails are a draw for residents and tourists.
- Broadband internet (FairPoint) has been reliable.
- Remote workers are common here, which is what many towns are looking for.
- Amazing natural resources and outdoor recreation for residents and tourists.
- We have a reputation for alternative health and wellness with massage, sound healing, salt cave, and other similar businesses.
- Booming creative economy with wellness business, Montgomery Center for the Arts, and others.
- Public school is among top in state.
- Tremendous pool of highly skilled professionals in the community.
- Positive political change in last 3-4 years; select board understands that part of government's role is to help business, which in turn helps everybody.
- Large share of second homeowners bring flair and new ideas.
- The Library is nice for a small town.
- We have a strong community shown through high rate of volunteerism (events, clubs, Selectboard).
- Key core of entrepreneurs brings new initiatives and vibrancy.
- Community is tolerant & progressive.
- We are only 25 minutes from Canadian border.
- Growing population.
- Recreation department frequently and successfully pulls community together.
- There is a Summer Farmer's Market, put on by the Historical Society, showcases local vendors, farmers, bakers, meats, and other diverse products.

What are the Challenges?

- Tremendous potential but no vision regarding development.
- No cell phone service poses safety and security issues for schools, outdoor recreation, fire department, and others.
- A cell tower would be difficult due to geographic location and small population.
- Limited Comcast service.
- Broadband quality is subpar.
- Some residents like it "dark."
- Many community members depend on internet in the library and other public places.
- No jobs.
- We have a significant need for dependable septic and sewer system for businesses to expand or start up.
- We need workforce development.
- Most young people leave the town.
- ATVs intrude on peace and quiet.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We need to discuss how to convert potential into jobs.
- Connect with the Department of Public Service to address cell service issues.
- Make the economic case for cell service by quantifying the number of people in town including second homeowners and visitors.
- Organize community members for broadband outreach.
- Work with the State to force wireless and internet companies to spend money to address rural communities.
- Plan for what cell service will look like in the future.
- Implement hot spots to pick up internet with cell phones, similar to Xfinity mobile business plan.
- Include internet as part of conversation about a new streetscape. For example, place Wi-Fi transmitters on top of new light poles.
- Create a group of high-use internet residents to develop plan, including if existing infrastructure could be reused or upgraded.
- Focus on tourism as a major element of economic development and job creation.
- Create a town beautification committee to volunteer for beautification efforts.
- Revisit town blight ordinance to address rundown buildings.
- Work with community member who maintains most town sites to ensure web searches for “Montgomery” provide enough and up-to-date information for visitors, good reviews for businesses, and so on.
- Develop destination marketing. Take advantage of proximity to Jay Peak.
- Create economic development committee to research these issues and present to the select board.
- Decide whether “economic development” and “broadband/tech” should be the same or different group.
- Revisit a Montgomery Business Association for marketing and general business support.
- Attract and keep young people through new tech businesses in a shared office building.
- Market events outside of Montgomery via VPR.
- Discuss how to support and increase manufacturing and other industries.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Montgomery has a strong creative economy with a lot to build on – it’s already a model for what can be done in other towns.
- A positive relationship with second homeowners is very helpful.
- Skills and ideas for tech improvements are powerful, they just need to be channeled.
- Recognize how many assets are here, and inspiration will bring you to where you need to be.
- Drill down on advocacy.
- Direction and vision are not necessarily clear, but we can get there.
- Sewer and broadband seem to be the connecting pieces to all these sessions.
- Community Economic Development committees have worked well in many other similar towns, and Montgomery can use a similar model.
- Don’t lose track of a regional approach. For example, St. Albans is including Montgomery in its materials.
- Montgomery is unusual for Vermont with how many newcomers it has; focus on what brought them here and how to replicate.
- Look to other town examples for bringing in broadband, Wi-Fi; can use some piece and build from there.
- Community members are talented and asset-laden, but need to be more strategically organized.
- Montgomery has a dynamic community and future!

Community: Identity, Connection, Engagement

Visiting Team: Will Belongia, Erica Campbell, Kat Conedera (scribe), Betsy Cherrier Fournier, Josh Hanford, Karen Horn, Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Chelsea Lewis, Karen Mittelman, Tim Tierney, George Twigg

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The school, both the education and the building itself as a community gathering space.
- There are a lot of social events in town.
- Summer concerts in the park
- Farmer’s market
- People’s Prom
- Halloween events
- Pumpkin carving
- Arts for the Parks auction
- Auction for the rec center
- Fourth of July celebration
- Parade
- We have a great little library.
- Both rec centers are great.
- There is a lack of community age gaps; the whole town comes together and there is no generational divide.
- The CEA – Celebration of Expressive Arts – hosts arts and dancing events.
- There is a strong arts community.
- There is economic diversity: lower and upper classes are dispersed throughout the community and interact with each other.
- Building Bright Futures brings young people and new parents into community.
- The community day camp at the rec center is free for residents.
- There is a three-day art camp at the Montgomery Center for the Arts in addition to workshops, meditation, and yoga for adults.
- There are quite a few camp options for kids.

- The recreational bike trails build, maintain, and connect the community both abstractly and physically.
- There is a strong sense of volunteerism.
- “This has always been a good community”
- People pick up the slack when others move on, and they’re engaged.
- There is a strong conservation ethic.
- There is engagement on social media, specifically Facebook.
- A monthly Town newsletter informs people about events, is posted on town website, and paper versions are available at library and throughout town.
- A lot of people in the community don’t have computers, so the newsletter being available in town is a serious asset.
- Community members can subscribe to minutes, notices, and newsletters from Town departments and committees.
- There is a town website.
- Local businesses form a part of the Montgomery identity.
- There is positive character and welcoming people who embrace and work with all kinds of people.
- The town has a unique town character with “a lot of characters.”
- There is lots of support for local farms.
- Democracy is strong, people turn out to voting much higher than the rest of Vermont.
- There is support and a community surrounding the school, on top of the fantastic education.
- There is a crazy fun identity, and people love coming here because it has a great vibe.

What are the Challenges?

- There is little to no cell service or Wi-Fi in town.
- The town website needs work.
- The smell from manure sometimes makes the town smell bad and affects local businesses.
- While agriculture is part of the history of Montgomery, there have been many changes in practices, farm, and land ownership and agriculture is declining in town to make way for large factory farms.
- The number of dairy farms went from 7-8 to 1 over a couple years, and there used to be as many as 79 a century ago.
- Community members are getting more into homesteading and there is more farmer’s market engagement, although there is less dairy production, making the community question its identity and the future of agriculture. The town is not really an agricultural town anymore, so we have to figure out what our identity is.
- There is undeveloped land because it’s working land, farming, grazing, forest, or flood plain.
- One factory farm owns most land and is not based in Montgomery.
- There are a lot of new people in community, so it is hard to pin the identity down.
- The new resurgence of younger people is because of skiing.
- There is a lively and dividing debate about the Act 46 intentional merger of the school.
- If the state decides to merge schools, the community has to sell building to new district for \$1. This is a bad business deal, as the building is worth millions.
- Act 46 is a very dividing conversation.
- Communication of information surrounding Act 46 has been very difficult, and there is a lot of misinformation leading to confusion.
- There is a group in town that is very active, but some people not engaged at all, are on the fence, or think the merger is inevitable.
- It is hard for people to engage with the issue when they don’t have kids in the school.
- A large majority of the town voted against the merger, but it is ultimately not the community’s decision.
- Some feel there is a strong suburban personality in the people who moved here from the suburbs, so they have different values, especially related to school and a willingness to send their children to schools outside of their community.
- It is hard to motivate the community to be dedicated consistently to a cause, as there are strong opinions but people don’t always participate in town processes.
- There are some challenges in engaging the younger generation.
- Town meeting day is not well attended and there are always the same people. There is better participation in the 40s-50s generation and changing the date to a weekend has not improved attendance.
- There is a portion of the community that is missed in outreach, and there are still some separations in the community such as the community in West hills and the village community.
- There used to be 12 schools and communities, so people tend to stick to that and don’t venture outside of those social scenes.
- New community members don’t know if they should be engaged and don’t know how to get involved, so they feel excluded from social traditions that are spread via word of mouth. You have to know people or make a friend, or you’ll miss a lot of fun events because it’s hard to get tuned in.
- The stores and restaurants close early, so if you leave town to work, when you get home at night everything is closed off already.
- There is an issue with year-round versus the transient population, as the population and residents fluctuate with the seasons.
- Childcare is very difficult to find.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- There should be better communication of what’s going on to connect residents to the community. Some people can’t make it to the meetings, so how can they tune in?
- Residents want to protect the school from the merger, although this is a dividing conversation and some residents do not feel the school needs to be protected.

- Improve community engagement on the school merger issue because school is core to a town's identity.
- Strengthen the connection between the school and community, strengthening the community around the school, and connecting school board meetings with community meetings to engage more residents besides parents.
- Combining the school board meeting and town meeting day may increase attendance – with a potluck in between.
- Slow down traffic through the center or village utilizing traffic calming strategies.
- Liquid manure spreading should stop or be decreased. Industrial farming is taking over fields in Montgomery and residents believe their liquid manure spreading is excessive and want it to be limited. We should get air quality testing during spreading.
- The Vermont Department of Health does not keep records of illnesses that result from the environment. We encourage the state to identify hotspots of diseases and publish this information.
- A needs assessment should be done for a community center. The aging population do not have as many resources, so a community center would be useful not only for seniors, but also to help children integrate when their families move to town.
- Develop an assisted living facility.
- The community could engage with Fish and Wildlife or other agencies that can police four wheelers.
- A community watch program could improve the divide between different parts of the community because many people do not want a police presence but they need to deal with the theft problem.
- Since firewood theft is a problem, the community could provide free firewood for those who cannot afford it.
- The fire department needs better radio systems.
- There could be a clearing house of volunteering opportunities that engage people, and there needs to be a way to promote this.
- The town website should be more user friendly and the newsletter should be more widespread.
- We should have a police and ambulance or at least a local rescue system, as there cannot be assisted living in the community without an ambulance system.
- Better activate Front Porch Forum in the community.
- The town should be able to disseminate information through automated phone calls to the community.
- The town should build a community billboard that doesn't get littered with junk, is better maintained, has tourist pamphlets, and advertises community events and the newsletter.
- We could purchase and install an electronic message board.
- Make invitations to community social events to pull people in, especially events that pull outsiders in that are not associated with Jay Peak. This could be a sporting event or a Gravel Road Race.
- There should be a central town calendar to coordinate because sometimes events overlap due to lack of communication.
- The community should produce clothing that says "Montgomery" on it to show community identity and pride.
- Bring back the Town variety show!

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Some communities have a Farm City Banquet where residents prepare food donated by local farmers and invite the entire community to a meal.
- Montgomery has a strong identity, is beautiful and fun, and creative, funky, and fresh. How do we bring more people into this identity?
- Why haven't poverty and substance abuse come up? Is it not impacting identity?
- The town has a great location, which is not something a community can just create anywhere.
- The community is still growing, and a rural community that has in-migration is a huge asset.
- The discussion of the school is very poignant. Community identity comes from deciding what you all want to do together. What do you choose is most important?
- Collaborate! Maybe work on community bulletin board, newsletter, etc. together. Communicating information is a challenge everywhere.
- A welcome wagon for people moving into the community could be useful.
- A regional calendar – collaborating towns in the region rather than just Montgomery. For example, there is a regional recreation meeting for Franklin and Grand Isle.
- Moving from agriculture to tourism in terms of identity will be a challenging transition. The identity will change, so don't assume the current identity will persist on its own. It has to be fostered.
- Keep ears open for dissenting things: how do these conversations impact how certain sections of the population feel about the town, and how do they start driving small changes in town identity?
- A community-based art project would foster a shared identity. Voting for creating a community art project had much more turnout than any election because people feel that it drives their identity. It also created bridges between newcomers and older generation: everybody comes out for community art projects.
- This community likes to have fun together and people seem to like that the most.

VII. Montgomery Thrives Community Visit Participants

Mike Abramowitz	Beth Crane	David Hanna	Roger Lichti	Deanna-Dee
Julie Adams	Rebecca Cummins	Alissa Hardy	Lynn Locher	Robitaille
Sandy Alexander	Robert Cummins	Chloe Hardy	Peter Locher	Martha Rocheleau
Sebastian Araujo	Sarah Cushing	Luke Hardy	Gabrielle Lumbra	Steve Rocheleau
Armand Auclair	Joanne Dennis	Rye Hardy	Casey Martin	Andrea Saborowski
Susan Auclair	Judith deRancourt	Jacob Hartman	Sabra Massey	Derek Saborowski
Susan Baker	Jessica Dillner	Bill Hildreth	Misty McCartney	Kyle Saltzman
Nicholas Barletta	Jade Dixon-Boles	Joan Hildreth	Jennifer McCluskey	Michelle Schaap
Bob Barnard	Peg Doheny	Ron Horton	Ryan McCluskey	Ian Scott
Leanne Barnard	Marijke Dollois	Bonnie Hovermann	Everett McGinely	Lutz Seborowski
John Beaty	Suzanne Dollois	Wendy Howard	Sue McGinley	Joe Sherman
Sandra Beaty	Elijah Draper	Danielle Howarth	Anthony Memoli	Sarah Silva
Sue Bennett	Darren Drevik	Ali Jackson	Kenny Miller	Tosca Smith
Jonathan Betts	Lynne Drevik	Daniel Jackson	Keith Montgomery	Charles Snedical
Diane Bocian	Ethan Dull	Barry Kade	Lara Morales	Timothy Snider
Richard Bociaw	Gretchen Eberle	Howard Kalter	Jim Murphy	Bob Soden
Kirk Borodaeff	Don Ellis	Jade Kelly Dixon-	Mary Niles	Jordan Sowa
Sarah Borodaeff	Carol Farmer	Bole	Karen O'Donnell	Tom Stanley
David Bott	Pat Farmer	Nafis Khan	Barbara Paggi	Carissa Stein
Mike Briston	Charlie Fichman	Sarita Khan	Matthew Paggi	Christina Suarez
Peggy Briston	Ellen Fox	Walter Knight	Curt Perry	Mary Temple
Wendy Brouillette	Karen Franela	Erin and Doug	Lisa Perry	Tom Tiller
Mark Brouillotte	Bob Gillmore	Kopucz	Sue and Tony Peters	Jim Townsend
Mark Brouillotte	Jessica Gilpin	John Kuryloski	Marsha Phillips	Jean Trautner
Eric Bruch	Brent Godin	Kathryn Kuryloski	Colleen Pratt	Mary Tryhorne
David Burns	Remi Gratton	Monica Ladd	Titus Henry Presler	Paddy Tuting
Ted Carrick	Melissa Haberman	Roger Langevin	Karie Quintin	Klaus Voos
Christina Carrigan	Heather Haddick	Judith Lapointe	Jacob Racusin	Jamie Walsh
Tim Chapin	George Hambleton	Reif Larsen	Janis Raffauf Hess	Cindy Weed
Craig Cimmons	Marlene Hambleton	Bobbie Larsson	Jesse Robbins	Lindsey Wight
Marty Cota	Charlie Hancock	Esther Lichti		Sue Wilson
				Anita Woodward
				Dean Zorn
				and many more...



One of the forums on Community Visit Day, September 25, 2018.

VIII. Visiting Resource Team Members

Will Belongia, *Executive Director*, VT Community Loan Fund, 802-223-1448, will@vclf.org

Michael Birnbaum, *Kingdom Fiber*, 272-1027, mb@kfiber.net

Michele Boomhower, *Dir. of Policy Planning and Intermodal Development*, VT Agency of Transportation, 802-828-5753, michele.boomhower@vermont.gov

Ted Brady, *Deputy Secretary*, VT Agency of Commerce & Community Devel., 828-3080, ted.brady@vermont.gov

Connie Burns, *Community & Business Outreach Specialist*, Franklin County Industrial Development Corp, 524-2194, Connie@fcidc.com

Erica Campbell, *Policy & Outreach*, Office of Senator Bernie Sanders, 802-862-0697, Erica_Campbell@Sanders.Senate.Gov

Darcy Carter, *District Director*, US Small Business Admin., 802-828-4422 x203, darcy.carter@sba.gov

Betsy Cherrier, *Wellness Specialist*, RiseVT, 802-527-5049, bcherrier@nmcinc.org

Lynnette Claudon, *Chief Pollution Control Design Engineer*, VT DEC, 802-490-6226, Lynnette.Claudon@vermont.gov

Kat Conedera, *Graduate Student*, University of Vermont, kconeder@uvm.edu

Paul Costello, *Executive Director*, VT Council on Rural Development, 223-5763, pcostello@vtrural.org

Catherine Dimitruk, *Executive Director*, NW Regional Planning Commission, 802-524-5958, cdimitruk@nrpcvt.com

Ben Doyle, *Assistant Director*, USDA Rural Development, 828-6042, benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov

Kati Gallagher, *Student*, UVM, katherine.n.gallagher@uvm.edu

Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, *Executive Director*, WonderArts Vermont, 802-533-9370, Ceilidh@wonderartsvt.org

Josh Hanford, *Deputy Commissioner*, VT Department of Housing and Community Development, 802-828-5201, Josh.Hanford@vermont.gov

Jonathan Harries, *State Engineer*, USDA Rural Development, 802-828-6035, jonathan.harries@vt.usda.gov

Karen Horn, *Director of Public Policy & Advocacy*, VT League of Cities & Towns, 802-223-4158, khorn@vlct.org

Jenna Koloski, *Community and Policy Manager*, VT Council on Rural Development, 802-225-6091, jenna@vtrural.org

Eric Law, *VT/NH Community Loan Specialist*, USDA Rural Development, 802-828-6033, eric.law@vt.usda.gov

Chelsea Bardot Lewis, *Senior Philanthropic Advisor*, VT Community Foundation, 309-1513, clewis@vermontcf.org

Karen Mittelman, *Executive Director*, Vermont Arts Council, 802-828-3293, kmittelman@vermontartscouncil.org

Dave Pelletier, *Planning Coordinator*, VT Agency of Transportation, 802-595-9675, Dave.Pelletier@vermont.gov

Jim Porter, *Director for Public Advocacy*, Dept. of Public Service, 802-828-4003, james.porter@vermont.gov

Bethany Haase Remmers, *Assistant Director*, Northwest Regional Planning Commission, bethany@nrpcvt.com

Lisa Ryan, *Field Service Representative*, Preservation Trust of Vermont, 802-917-2994, lisa@ptvermont.org

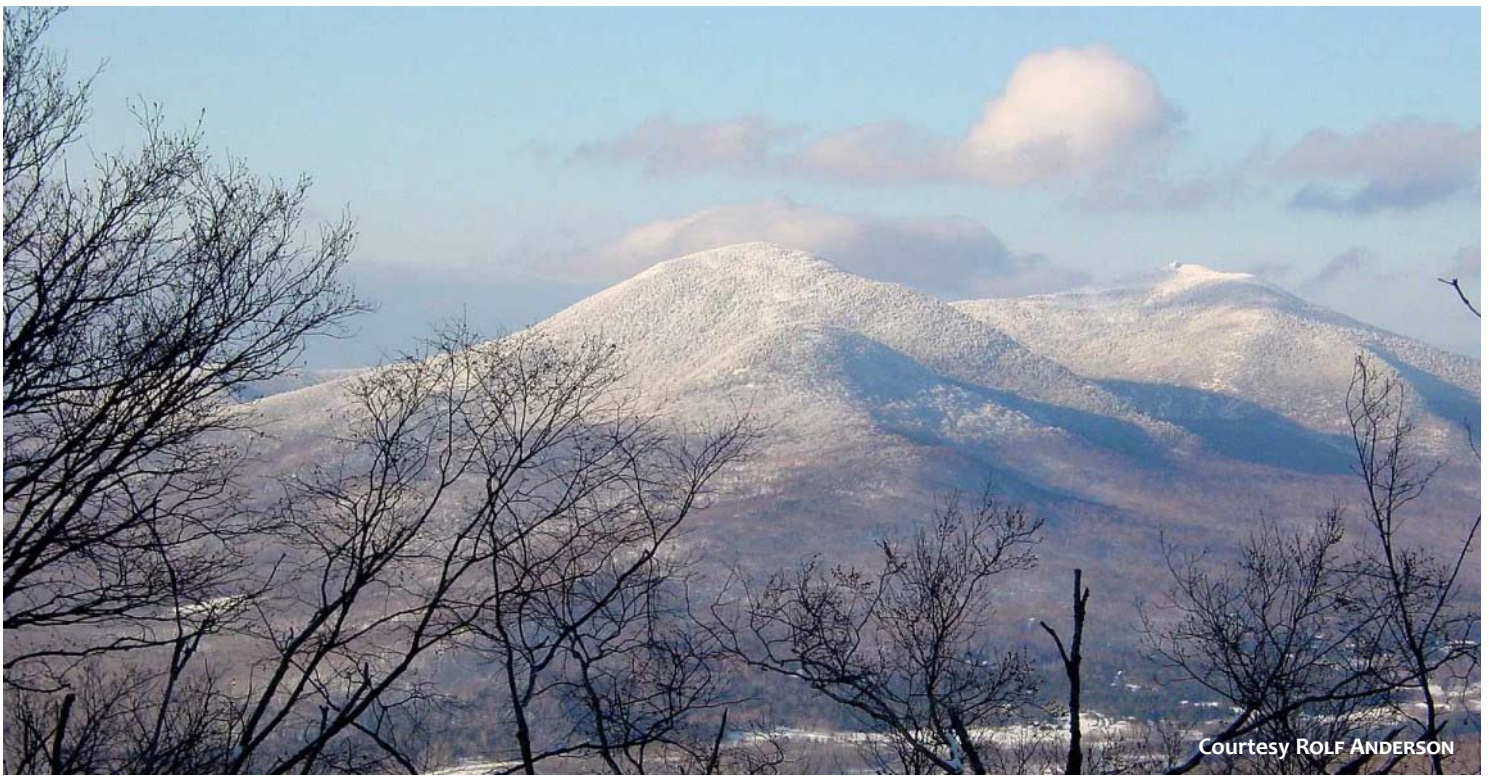
Gus Seelig, *Executive Director*, VT Housing & Conservation Board, 802-828-3251, gus@vhcb.org

Timothy Smith, *Executive Director*, Franklin County Industrial Development Corp, 802-524-2194, tim@fcidc.com

Tim Tierney, *Special Project Director*, VT Agy of Commerce and Community Devel., 802-505-5496, tim.tierney@vermont.gov

George Twigg, *State Director*, Office of Congressman Peter Welch, 802-652-2450, george.twigg@mail.house.gov

John Tracy, *State Director*, Office of Senator Leahy, 802-863-2525, john_tracy@leahy.senate.gov



Counterclockwise from top: View from Hazen's Notch, Montgomery; participants read the action ideas together on Community Meeting Day; and task force groups were formed on Resource Day to begin work on priorities selected by the community.



PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384
802-223-6091 | info@vtrural.org

<http://vtrural.org>



3 Court St., Middlebury, VT 05753
802-388-3355 | info@vermontcf.org

<http://vermontcf.org>