

# RENewport Community Visit

Report and Action Plan ~ April 2018



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

# Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
II. The Newport Community Visit Process .....	3
III. Vision for Newport’s Future .....	4
IV. Priorities Chosen and Other Opportunities .....	5
V. Task Force Action Plans .....	11
Action Steps, Resources, Task Force Members, Resource Team Recommendations	
VI. Town Forum Notes .....	31
VII. Community Visit Participants .....	47
VIII. Resource Team Members.....	49



**Vermont Council on Rural Development**  
PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384  
802-223-6091 | [info@vtrural.org](mailto:info@vtrural.org) | [www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org)

Jon Copans, *Climate Economy Model Communities Program Director*  
Paul Costello, *Executive Director*  
Margaret Gibson McCoy, *Office and Communications Manager*  
Jenna Koloski, *Community and Policy Manager*

Front Cover Painting: DONNA WALSH WARREN  
Photos: MARGARET GIBSON MCCOY / VCRD STAFF



*Scenes from ReNewport Community Visit Day.*

# I. Introduction

Standing on the waterfront of Lake Memphramagog in Newport provides a stunning panorama any way you turn. To the left, is Newport's historic downtown lined with shops, cafés, restaurants, and offices. To the right, the rolling green hills of Vermont. From the north, Newport is the gateway to Vermont, surrounded by stunning natural beauty, ample outdoor recreation opportunity, and Vermont's iconic working landscape. From its scenic waterfront and marina to its historic downtown with excellent restaurants, the Tasting Center, and multiple galleries and community spaces celebrating arts, culture, and history, Newport boasts a long list of community and economic assets. This is a hardworking and dedicated community as well as a caring and nurturing place. Events celebrate the history of the community, schools are active center points, volunteers work to improve economic and community vibrancy, neighbors come together around common goals and ambitions, and a broad safety net of organizations and services provide care and support.

Newport may be a small City, but it is a City with big goals, big heart, and a big drive to move forward in the face of challenges. The City has been through a lot over the past several years. However, faced with setbacks and uncertainty, this City has set their sights on a path towards vibrancy and prosperity. On a snowy evening in December 2017, more than 150 Newport community members showed up at forums and the community dinner to celebrate Newport's strengths, identify key challenges, and think together about possibilities for the future. Over the next several months, a clear vision for the future emerged. A vision around a thriving economy that supports local businesses; a community with support, enrichment and activities for people of all ages; a City that showcases its assets and invites visitors; and a community where residents are there for each other.

Through the ReNewport Community Visit Process, an ambitious framework for action was built, and so was capacity, drive and momentum to succeed. With over 235 local people from all parts of the community participating in the process, over 80 volunteers now engaged in active Task Forces to advance priorities, and 4 excellent task force chairs taking the lead, it is clear that there is great energy in Newport for forward momentum and progress.

It is not easy to choose priorities, and there are many other good ideas for action listed in the 'opportunities' section of this report that can inform the ongoing work of the Task Forces, but in the end, Newport selected solid priorities for action that will lead to a stronger and more vibrant community and economy for all Newport residents. These initiatives set challenging but strategically achievable goals, and there is much work to do, but Newport is ready to take action and has the capacity, drive, and dedication to succeed.

We look forward to working with the ReNewport Task Forces as the priority projects identified in the process move forward efforts to:

- **Expand Community Events and Celebrations**
- **Support and Attract Businesses and Entrepreneurs**
- **Enhance and Market the Newport Tourism Experience**
- **Improve and Coordinate Health and Wellness Services and Early Childhood Care and Education**

The Task Forces advancing these issues are already hard at work—please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the action 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 Newport as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to the Newport Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Newport projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

VCRD provides leadership 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 this Community Visit effort possible.

We would like to thank the Newport City Council and Mayor Paul Monette who initially invited this process. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process from the beginning including: Debra Beaupre, Louise Bonvechio, Mary Butler, Andy Capello, Andrea Carbine, Rory Carr, Presleigh Chase-Benway, Elaine Collins, Bob Currier, Laura Dolgin, Claudio Fort, Eileen Illuzzi, Iso Marks, Chris Miller, Paul Monette, Diane Peel, Bob Primeau, Julie Raboin, Michelle Rossi, and Chris Royer. Thanks also to Laura Dolgin for helping with outreach support and coordination of logistics, and to all of the community leaders, groups, and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the event and make sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

We are very thankful for the use of the Goodrich Memorial Library, United Church for Community Visit Day Forums, and City Hall for the community dinner, forums, and Community Meeting Day. The North Country Career Center was the perfect location for the resource day and action planning breakouts. Many thanks to Community National Bank for supporting the wonderful community dinner catered by the Eastside Restaurant and organized by Andrea Carbine and Louise Bonvechio. Thanks as well to “Young and Inexperienced” the very talented jazz trio that provided musical entertainment at the community dinner, and to the Newport Recreation Department for all their work on dinner setup.

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 Regional Commission, Community National Bank, and 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 ReNewport Visiting Team—they are the best of Vermont’s public servants. (See Section VIII for a list of Visiting Team members).

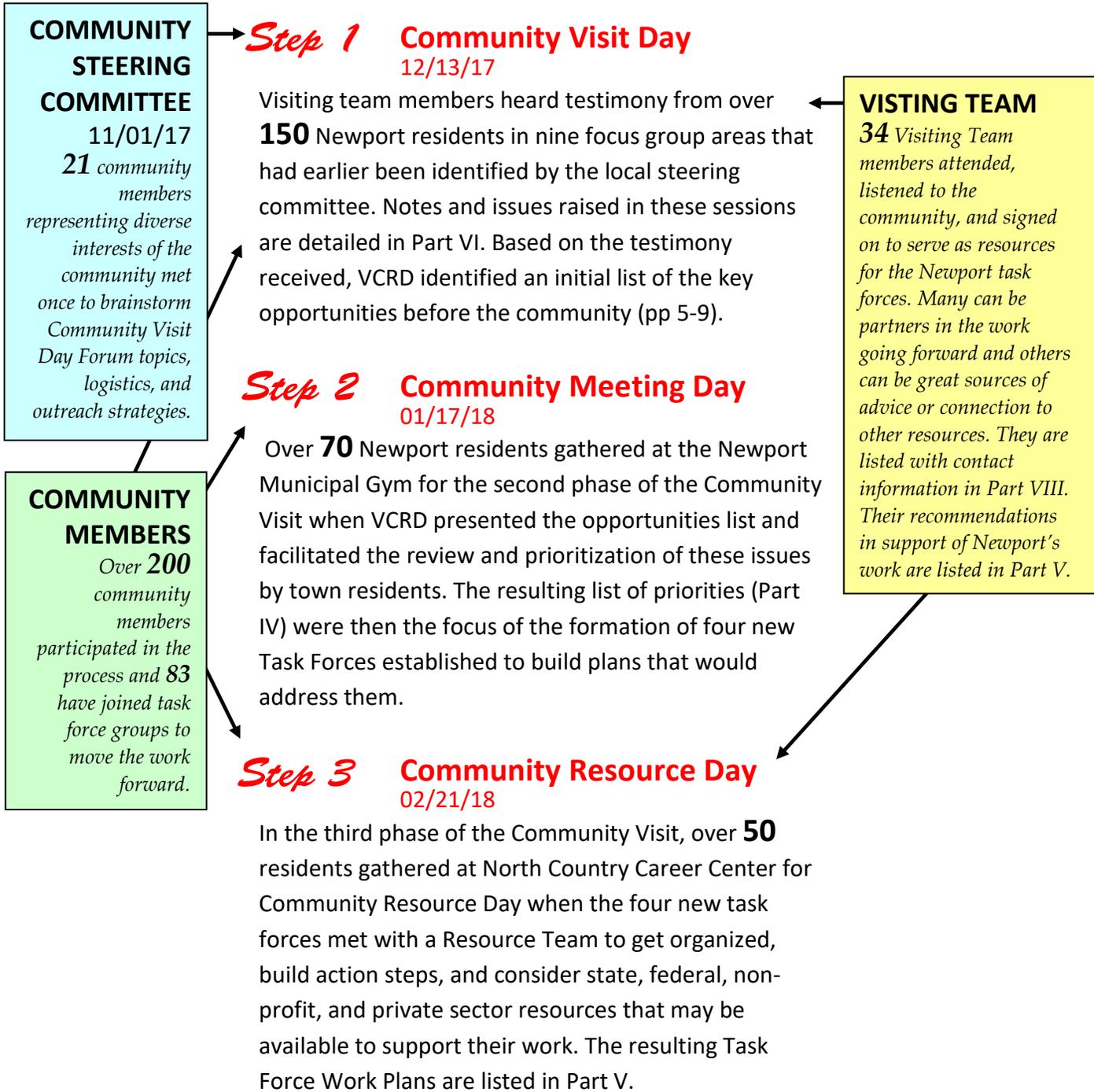
Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Newport should be grateful to those who have stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Richard Tetreault - Support and Attract Businesses; Shane Rogers - Tourism and Marketing; Melissa Tarryk - Health, Wellness and Early Childcare; and Penny Thomas - Events and Celebrations.

VCRD especially wants to thank Louise Bonvechio for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Chair. Not only does Louise have a leadership role in a local financial institution dedicated to community efforts, she also serves as a volunteer and leader in many other local organizations, groups, and initiatives. Louise is a true civic servant and a dedicated longtime member of the Newport community. From the beginning, many pointed to Louise as a compassionate, smart, balanced and dedicated leader. In the months ahead, we are confident that Louise will be an asset and resource to the new task forces as they forge ahead with their important work for the future of Newport.

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

## II. The Newport 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 Newport consisted of three phases depicted here:**



### **III. Vision for Newport'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 Newport community.*

#### **Newport residents look to a future for the community where:**

- ❖ The regional economy is vibrant and viable; it helps promote flourishing children and adults.
- ❖ Newport has a vibrant downtown and great local restaurants.
- ❖ There are fun things for families and kids to do, and community events for all ages.
- ❖ Newport is a hub for recreation; bikers, skiers, boaters enjoy the natural recreation assets that are here.
- ❖ Newport is a hub of the arts that celebrates and showcases works of our skilled artists and musicians.
- ❖ Newport offers top notch education and employment opportunities.
- ❖ The high school and college students that grow up here want to stay or return to Newport, and there are good paying jobs for those that want to stay or come back.
- ❖ Local merchants and small businesses and entrepreneurs are supported by the community.
- ❖ Residents know and support each other; when people need help, we are there for each other.
- ❖ Newport is accessible; it's easy to get to by train, bus, and car.
- ❖ Newport is a destination location for tourists.
- ❖ Newport builds on its connections with Quebec to provide opportunities for growth.
- ❖ Our kids can be proud to say they are from Newport.

## IV. ReNewport Priorities

Determined by Newport residents at the ReNewport Community Meeting, January 17, 2018

*Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Newport community members whittled down a list of 18 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with red, green, orange and blue stickers, over 70 participants chose four action ideas that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the January 17th meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.*

**Newport residents selected four priorities for future action:**

### ✓ Enhance and Market the Newport Tourism Experience

From the Lake to the bike path to the Tasting Center, downtown restaurants, natural beauty, proximity to Canada, and the airport, Newport residents built a long list of assets that attract visitors to the City. Many are concerned, however, that Newport is not taking full advantage of these assets and missing opportunities to attract visitors and provide necessary services and experiences. A task force could come together to build a Newport tourism plan to celebrate and showcase the town's cultural and historical identity while providing quality information, tours and guides, and year-round activities for all ages. The group could build and share the Newport brand and message, improve signage, revitalize support and resources for the Chamber, plan events and activities to attract visitors with diverse interests, build a Newport tourism brochure, build collaboration and regional experiences, coordinate tourism services and events with Jay Peak, and provide other activities to enhance a positive tourism experience. This group could also support the development of an Electric Vehicle charging station in downtown Newport in order to provide convenient charging for visitors to the downtown.

### ✓ Support and Attract Businesses and Entrepreneurs

Newport has many economic assets including a scenic lakeside location, outdoor recreation opportunities, a vibrant downtown with restaurants and retail, supportive community banks and business resources, and a strong business community. A task force could form to leverage these assets and support entrepreneurs and boost economic development, attract new businesses, restaurants, and perhaps breweries. The group could look at business incentives, tax credits, and other financial tools to stimulate development and reduce barriers, and build a pitch packet to attract businesses to Newport. The group could also help to connect existing business owners and entrepreneurs with the startup and growth resources and technical assistance they need to succeed. Additionally, the group could explore the development of an incubator or makers space that would include shared resources and utilities, mutual support, cooperative marketing, shared tools and materials, and technical assistance from local and regional economic development organizations. The group could also work with the City to identify funding sources to hire an Economic Development Coordinator to provide additional leadership around events, grant writing, tourism and marketing, and economic development strategies to help the community move forward.

## ✓ Expand Community Events and Celebrations

Community events are a way to celebrate together, showcase local talent, and build engagement in Newport. Many residents value existing community events, including Wednesdays on the Waterfront in the summer, the 4th of July celebrations, Kingdom Games, and other events that bring folks together throughout the year. Many would like to see Newport expand and coordinate events both to bring people together locally and attract visitors. An events task force could come together in support of existing events and to expand offerings to include winter activities at Gardner Park, community dinners, downtown music and arts events, bicycling and other sporting events, contests and competitions, and more. The group could explore sustainable funding sources for events including local business sponsorship and perhaps the Walmart funds, and could explore the long-term idea of hiring an events coordinator to take the lead on community events, festivals, and celebrations.

## ✓ Improve and Coordinate Health and Wellness Services and Early Childhood Care and Education

Newport schools, the hospital, the wellness center, non-profits, and other service providers offer a wide range of resources to support health and wellness for people of all ages and backgrounds. However, some residents have concerns about access, coordination, and communication of these key resources. A task force could form to unite providers, community members, and key leadership to coordinate services and optimize the health, safety, and well-being of Newport residents of all ages. The group could build an inventory and coordinate resources and programs and effectively share information with individuals and families through family and community programming, education, and events such as an annual Wellness Week. The group could also work to boost community volunteerism in health and wellness services and seek funding and creative models to increase capacity and staffing to manage critical health issues such as mental health, nutrition, substance abuse prevention, and primary care. The group could also explore opportunities to improve access to early childhood care and education.



*Community members read the opportunities list together on Community Meeting Day.*

---

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

*Along with the four 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 Connection**

Newport residents are proud of their numerous community assets, but would like to find ways to better share events, resources, and community information. A Task Force could form to improve community communications including strengthening online forums such as Facebook or Front Porch Forum, building a community calendar, and developing a community bulletin board, kiosk, or newsletter. Improving communication tools could be an effective way to share volunteer opportunities, celebrate current volunteers, highlight success stories, and increase community engagement and participation.

### **Create Educational and Career Training Opportunities**

A task force could form to improve access to technical and career training opportunities for Newport community members of all ages. The group could identify and boost career development and skills training, improve access to existing programs through the North Country Career Center and CCV, and build connections with potential new partners such as Vermont Technical College. The group could also explore creative ways to improve access to skills and technical training through programs like a skill swap, timebank, ReSource program, or a shared garage or repair services space. Some residents were particularly interested in increasing the availability of education and training in the hospitality, food, and agriculture industries.

### **Improve Public Transportation**

A Public Transportation Task Force could improve access to and use of public transportation options for Newport, both in and around the city with links for commuters to and from Newport. The group could work with RCT to expand service, develop a transportation hub in Newport's downtown, and identify new transportation services such as ride sharing and Uber-like offerings and even explore the idea of a commuter train in and out of Newport. Additionally, the group could work to market and encourage ridership through strategies such as community marketing campaigns and free rides on RCT one day a year.

### **Improve Downtown Traffic and Pedestrian Safety**

Some Newport residents expressed concern with the flow of traffic and the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians downtown. A task force could come together to plan and implement traffic calming techniques in the downtown as well as explore the potential for a roundabout at the end of Main Street. The group could also promote pedestrian safety by implementing "Complete Streets" principals and improving sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting. The group could work with residents and outside experts to develop a traffic and pedestrian safety plan to inventory what is needed, explore the cost, and seek out funding and technical assistance to implement the plan.

### **Develop a Community Center**

Newport residents would like to see a central location where the community can come together for programming and events. Many would also like to see a community pool, gym, and workout facilities available to the public. A task force could form to identify, develop, and/or revitalize a community space for programs and activities including music and arts events, dances, community meals, youth programming and more.

### **Expand Bike Tourism and Improve Bike-ability**

Many community members would like to build on the incredible asset of the bike path that runs to Canada by expanding the current bike network and improving the visibility and accessibility of the bike trails. A task force could plan for and work to implement improvements ranging from extending the trail network to improving signage, developing maps, and marketing resources. The group could also structure bike programming for all ages and produce events to support local cyclists and attract visitors to the area. One potential opportunity for expansion could be to build a bike route to connect Newport, Derby, and Jay.

### **Improve Housing in Newport**

Newport's schools, recreation opportunities, health facilities, walkable downtown, and other assets make the City an attractive place to live, raise a family, and retire. Some are concerned that adequate and affordable housing is limited for people of all ages. A Housing Task Force could form to convene partners and experts to quantify housing challenges and identify strategies to fill gaps from affordable and market rate housing to retirement options. The group could also implement strategies such as resource consolidation, homebuyer education, and home improvement workshops to ensure that tools and support are available to current and potential property owners.

### **Develop a Deeper Connection with Quebec Partners and Visitors**

Many residents expressed a desire to build a deeper connection to their neighbors across the border to attract visitors, make travel across the border easier, and boost business and economic development collaboration and partnership. A task force could form to focus on improving connection through customs information sharing and signage on roadways and at boat docks, building connections and relationships with partners across the border such as leaders in Magog and Sherbrooke, and working with border patrol officials to develop an ongoing collaborative relationship.

### **Address Substance Abuse**

Newport residents expressed concerns about substance abuse in the city and its impact on the community, especially youth. Residents recognize that the community is working hard to address this issue in schools, the medical community, and state and non-profit services, but are challenged to coordinate and communicate these efforts and unite around a common and comprehensive community-centered approach. A Substance Abuse Task Force could form to better coordinate and communicate existing efforts and serve as the focal group to unite the community to prevent substance abuse and support recovery. Tasks may include developing education and training opportunities for residents and those working with youth, identifying ways to make resources and support systems more accessible, and implementing events and programs focused on prevention.

### **Improve the Waterfront and Lake Access**

Many agree that Lake Memphremagog is an important asset for locals, an attraction for visitors, and a fundamental part of Newport's identity. To fully capitalize on this asset, many residents would like to see improvements made to waterfront amenities, access, and infrastructure. A group could come together to work to improve access to the lake for boaters, swimmers, and other visitors by improving boat docking facilities, making boat and kayak rentals available, revitalizing and expanding the boardwalk, evaluating community ownership opportunities, and finding other ways to face towards the Lake and utilize it to its full potential. This work could also include improving recreational access to South Bay for fishing, boating, and birding, and highlight access for locals and visitors alike.

## **Redevelop Bluffside Farm**

Working in collaboration with the Vermont Land Trust, a task force could form to engage the public in building and implementing a plan to redevelop Bluffside Farm in a way that best utilizes this beautiful resource. The Vermont Land Trust purchased the Bluffside Farm property and have held a series of public meetings and tours to plan for the property's future. A group could work with VLT to engage the community to advance ideas such as developing a "living museum" or educational working farm, a nature and science education center, a network of bike paths and trails, a community beach, an event venue, or other opportunities to redevelop the Farm for the benefit of Newport.

## **Revitalize Downtown Newport**

Newport's walkable downtown, lined with local restaurants and retail, a market, cafes, an Arts Center and gallery, historic buildings, and state and municipal office buildings is a tremendous economic and community asset. Downtown development has faced setbacks and challenges. Many residents see this moment as a critical turning point to move forward with revitalization in a way that supports and engages local residents, supplements and boosts the work of Newport City Renaissance Corporation, attracts and accommodates visitors, and brings vibrancy and activity to Newport's downtown. A group could come together to implement downtown improvements including signage, improved sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure, beautification and improvements ranging from benches, flowers and trees, to downtown Wi-Fi. The group could also develop a plan for the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized buildings into spaces for new businesses, shared art studio or office space, event and performance venues, or other uses beneficial to the community and economy.

## **Attract a Hotel to Newport**

Some residents believe that to become a destination and attraction and provide the amenities visitors need, Newport should develop a hotel either downtown or along the waterfront. Some residents are also interested in finding ways a hotel could benefit locals such as exercise and pool facilities open to the public. A group could come together, in collaboration with the City and economic development leaders locally and regionally, to review the recent hotel feasibility study and determine the best path forward that meets visitors' needs and works for the local community.

## **Start a Newport Mentorship Program**

Residents would like to see deeper connections between youth, schools, and community members to foster social connection, recreation and wellness, and career skills. A task force could form to collaborate with local schools, statewide programs, community groups, and businesses to build a mentorship network pairing youth with skilled mentors in the community, local businesses and organizations, older students or alumni, and other community members.

## **An additional idea for action was added to the list by Newport residents at the January 17th**

### **Community Meeting:**

#### **Develop Universal and Affordable Internet Access**



*Scenes from Community Meeting Day.*

# V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, February 21, 2018

*Newport 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.*

---

## ✓ Enhance and Market the Newport Tourism Experience

Community Chair: **Shane Rogers**

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

Resource Team Members: **Wendy Knight**, *Commissioner, VT Department of Tourism & Marketing*

**Joe Short**, *Vice President, Northern Forest Center*

**Tim Tierney**, *Special Projects Director, Agency of Commerce*

From the Lake to the bike path to the Tasting Center, downtown restaurants, natural beauty, proximity to Canada, and the airport, Newport residents built a long list of assets that attract visitors to the City. Many are concerned, however, that Newport is not taking full advantage of these assets and missing opportunities to attract visitors and provide necessary services and experiences. A task force could come together to build a Newport tourism plan to celebrate and showcase the town's cultural and historical identity while providing quality information, tours and guides, and year-round activities for all ages. The group could build and share the Newport brand and message, improve signage, revitalize support and resources for the Chamber, plan events and activities to attract visitors with diverse interests, build a Newport tourism brochure, build collaboration and regional experiences, coordinate tourism services and events with Jay Peak, and provide other activities to enhance a positive tourism experience. This group could also support the development of an Electric Vehicle charging station in downtown Newport in order to provide convenient charging for visitors to the downtown.

### Action Steps

1. Collect existing resources (such as the regional agritourism brochure and others) and ensure that they are stocked in key locations (businesses, welcome center, gas stations, marina etc.)
2. Meet with key leaders in the downtown organization and the Chamber to understand the current capacity and vision for each organization and how this work might fit in and coordinate with existing efforts.
3. Develop and implement a marketing plan in order to leverage the existing "Genuine By Nature" brand. Use the plan to identify marketing channels (both digital and print) to push out the brand. The plan should also include a detailed implementation plan with potential funding sources as well as roles and responsibilities.
4. Develop a deliberate marketing relationship with Jay Peak. Jay could be a partner in web marketing efforts to help to tell the story of Newport, but also in developing strategies to draw people off the Mountain and into town to visit local businesses, restaurants, and other amenities.

### Other Potential Action Steps:

- Develop signage at the Marina, Walmart, or other key locations pointing to Newport's Downtown.
- Develop a story pitch around local businesses such as the Pick and Shovel to showcase Newport as a down to earth, family friendly place.
- Reopen the information center and involve businesses in running the center and marketing collectively. Showcase local businesses at the information center.

- Identify major players in the tourism sector and reinvigorate coordination and collaboration. It may be helpful to have a single group or person helping to coordinate that collaboration.
- Update the Discover Newport website
- Develop a community calendar.
- Work with customs to install a video kiosk to reduce barriers at the border.
- Connect to the work at Bluffside Farm as part of the Newport story.

## Resources

- The staff position to be hired by NCRC in partnership with the city could be a key resource/partner in tourism and marketing efforts.
- NVDA could be a partner in marketing plan development and identifying and writing grants. Contact Dave Snedeker at [dsnedeker@nvda.net](mailto:dsnedeker@nvda.net) or 802-748-5181 ext. 15
- NCIC could be helpful in working with tourism-related businesses. Contact Mike Welch at [mwelch@ncic.org](mailto:mwelch@ncic.org) or 748-5101 ext. 2025
- Several years ago, Burke went through a major branding and marketing plan effort. Newport might be able to learn from their process. To learn more contact Laura Malieswski at [burkechamber@burkevermont.com](mailto:burkechamber@burkevermont.com) or 802-626-4124
- The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development could be a source for planning grants or other types of grants. Contact Faith Ingulsrud at [faith.ingulsrud@vermont.gov](mailto:faith.ingulsrud@vermont.gov) or 802-828-3119
- Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing could be a source for technical assistance. Contact Wendy Knight at [wendy.knight@vermont.gov](mailto:wendy.knight@vermont.gov) or 802-798-2191
- USDA Rural Development could be a grant source. Contact Ben Doyle at [Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov](mailto:Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov) or 802-828-6042
- Island Pond has done some great work with local, community driven marketing and tourism efforts. Mike Strait is the committee chair and local business owner leading on the work. Contact him at [mike@hearthandhomecountry.com](mailto:mike@hearthandhomecountry.com) or 802-723-0470.
- The Vermont Outdoor Recreation and Economic Development Collaborative (VOREC) may be launching a pilot program to boost outdoor recreation and economic development in communities. Keep an eye out for that program.
- Memphramagog Watershed Association volunteers could be potential greeters/ambassadors.
- Contact Joe Short at the Northern Forest Center to learn more about/participate in the Regional Tourism Partnership. Contact Joe at [jshort@northernforest.org](mailto:jshort@northernforest.org) or 603-229-0679
- Melissa Levy is a consultant backed by USDA funding that is looking to offer support to Newport initiatives using a value chain approach as a way to build your stocks of local capital, increase local ownership and control of that capital, and improve livelihoods and upward mobility for people, places and firms within a region. For more information about exploring and constructing a value chain contact Melissa at [melissa@community-roots.com](mailto:melissa@community-roots.com) or 802-318-1720.
- The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board has been leading the REDI initiative to offer grant writing technical assistance. To learn more contact Liz Gleason at [liz@vhcb.org](mailto:liz@vhcb.org)
- There are consultants in Vermont, such as the Northern Forest Center, who could be hired to draft the marketing plan.
- The existing work plans and brand development materials are a resource for future work.
- Jay Peak is a key resource and partner in this work. Contact Steve Wright at [swright@jaypeakresort.com](mailto:swright@jaypeakresort.com)
- The NC Hospital could be a partner in this work.

## Task Force Members

Sybille	Andersen	sybille.andersen@comcast.net	
Andrea	Carbine	andreaspates@gmail.com; andrea.carbine@ncsuvt.org	617-921-9936
Stan	Chop	chop.stan@gmail.com	
Bob	Currier	bcurrier@poulinlumber.com	673-6840
Tim	Daley	tjdaley@yahoo.com	334-5171
Rick	Desrochers	desrochersrick@gmail.com	673-2435
Thomas	Evans	tsevans1958@yahoo.com	334-7910
Maire	Folan	mfolan@gmfts.org	
Mary Pat	Goulding	cpgoulding@gmail.com	334-2444
Nicole	Gratton	nkms223@gmail.com	
Jennifer	Hopkins	woodhop75@yahoo.com	
Patricia	Kilday	patriciakilday@hotmail.com	673-5842
Charlie	Kremer	charles.kremer@comcast.net	233-9932
Pam	Ladds	laddspam@gmail.com	334-7498
Wendy	McGillivray	mcg.wendy@gmail.com	
James	Merriam	7jacobin@Gmail.com; james.merriam@newportvermont.org	
Paul	Monette	paul.monette@newportvermont.org	334-1021
Wesley	Nutter	nutter.wesley@gmail.com	484-356-8288
Dawn	Philip	dawnphilip14k@gmail.com	624-3435
Shane	Rogers	shane.rogers709@gmail.com	
Kathie	Sims	ksims100@gmail.com	
Bill	Stenger	bstenger@jayepeakresort.com	343-9208
Annette	Vallieres	timesavervt@gmail.com	
John	Ward, Jr.	joward1@myfairpoint.net	334-6022
Steve	Wright	swright@jayepeakresort.com	
Tracy	Zschau	tracy@vlt.org	745-6301

## 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.*

The Lake is a wonderful resource and could be an important focus and the heart of Newport Tourism. What are the assets and what are the needs to make the Lake more available and attractive to tourists? Do people get out on the water? The group could complete and execute a focused lake/waterfront recreation management plan. Expanding mooring and marina facilities may be desired to draw people for a full season, or at least a week at a time.

If you can build on the momentum created by the jazz festival and waterfront music events, you can brand Newport as the place to go locally for wonderful waterfront concerts.

Prioritize connectivity and collaboration between downtown and other successful partners such as Jay Peak and Magog. Are there events and promotions they are doing that the Newport downtown could tie into and build synergy with? A subset of this work may include identifying barriers to Newport's ability to "draft" off these other players' efforts, and a plan to overcome them. For example, Jay Peak says they want to bring guests downtown but none of the stores are staying open late enough, so how could this be addressed?

The group could work with Jay Peak to engage the captive audience of skiers and their friends and families who need other activities, places to eat and drink, etc. The group could develop cross-promotion campaigns and package deals that offer restaurant and shopping discounts for skiers.

In terms of downtown dining, cultural experiences, and shopping, it may be helpful to work with businesses to ensure that they are open when tourists are most able to visit them: on weekends, and later in the afternoons and evenings. Having more venues to visit will increase the appeal of Newport.

If the group is interested in capitalizing on Newport's outdoor recreational draw, the city could strive to have ample parking, necessary equipment rental options, and designated outdoor recreation spaces available. Much like what currently exists in Burlington at several locales along Lake Champlain and the Burlington Bike Path, visitors could park and rent bicycles, paddleboards, ice skates, or any other outdoor recreational equipment that can be used to enjoy the Lake and surrounding areas.

If funding becomes available, sophisticated marketing campaigns which produce high-quality videos and/or websites, as such those coordinated in Rutland, Vergennes and Bristol can serve as models to emulate. With limited funding, a steady stream of organic (non-paid) posts on Facebook and Instagram by people with good mobile phones can help promote a region with such stunning natural beauty as Newport and the NEK. From there, considerable reposting and sharing of such work will build momentum. Share your neighbors' posts. Also, consider settling on a single hashtag that helps define the region on Instagram and Twitter.

Geographically, Newport has some excellent advantages being situated at the end of Interstate 91 with proximity to larger population bases. Areas such as Lebanon and Manchester, NH, Boston and Springfield, MA, and Hartford, CT, could be considered primary markets for paid advertising campaigns. Additionally, populated areas off highways between Newport and Sherbrooke, QC, could be targeted with marketing and advertising campaigns. Any such campaigns could use imagery capturing the stunning natural beauty of the area, including the Lake.

In terms of enhancing the tourism experience, there are a number of initiatives underway that are aimed at enhancing tourist experience and options including the expanded and improved bike path at Waterfront Plaza and through Bluffside Farm and the Northern Star purchase by Memphremagog Community Maritime. Expanding lake access and amenities is something consistently listed by the multiple reports created to look at post-EB5 downtown revitalization as well as participants in the community visit process. It was not voted as a standalone initiative but dovetails really well into this Priority and it could be worth the group thinking about how to support and expand on these initiatives.

It may be a good starting point to pull together all reports, planning initiatives and marketing branding efforts to date (RuDAT, planning grant work products, NCRC's existing branding campaign [<http://discovernewportvt.com>], etc.) to determine what the task force recommends keeping, kicking to the curb and any new ideas.

Celebrate the outdoor rec resources! Determine how to connect all resources into accessible go-to resources for visitors - guide/map/app/kiosks for visitors - make sure all elements have the same messaging and branding.

A Newport brochure or map would be good way to highlight assets and amenities for visitors from Burlington, Hanover, Boston, and other locations.

Funds could be raised to showcase Newport's brand in social media, website, and active places in town. In the longterm, hiring a specialist to help highlight key events and enhance programs would be a boost.

It may make sense to utilize previous branding and marketing tools and initiatives that were developed through the “Genuine By Nature” campaign.

One new model of marketing – destination marketing – is taking hold and it may be worth taking a look, rather than jumping to the Chamber model. A destination development approach has the added benefit of connecting tourism work to other goals about attracting entrepreneurs.

It is important to collaborate with nearby destinations in promoting the area, particularly Jay Peak Resort. Having promotional materials such as brochures or rack cards in other nearby regions, including in St. Johnsbury, at Burke Mountain, and in lodging properties throughout the NEK will be a big help. Many people who stay at inns and bed and breakfasts are seeking things to do during their visits.

The City created two marketing plans around "Newport: Active by Nature" and "Newport: Fresh by Nature" a number of years ago - can these be revitalized, as good starting points? This article <https://www.pps.org/article/placemakers-guide-power-of-10> - provides the thesis that a great place needs to have at least 10 things to do in it or 10 reasons to be there. Can Newport market and/or create/enhance what these 10 things are?

The group could advocate for establishment of an intercity bus connection to the national intercity bus network. VTrans has successfully instituted intercity bus service along the western corridor of Vermont in recent years, connecting to Albany, NY. Though private service connecting Newport concluded many years ago, there may now be some cost-effective service design and vehicle-type appropriate to the needs of the area. Contact VTrans Public Transit Program manager, Barbara Donovan [barbara.donovan@vermont.gov](mailto:barbara.donovan@vermont.gov) to learn more about what possibilities may exist to develop a service plan and find a provider.

One comment made by folks at Jay Peak was that Newport’s downtown closed up too early to attract skiers who wanted to ski during the day and then do other activities at night. A recommendation would be to consider regularly scheduled “Newport at Night” events with downtown businesses staying open later than usual. This could include live performances, food trucks, etc.

#### **Technical Assistance/Connection Recommendations:**

To market Newport, the city can turn to the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing for support with public relations, social media promotion, and consumer marketing. The department offers assistance on several different fronts. Contact Commissioner Wendy Knight at [wendy.knight@vermont.gov](mailto:wendy.knight@vermont.gov) or 798-2191.

The Vermont Land Trust owns 129 acre Bluffside Farm in the City and has been working with the community on a plan for the property that includes expanded recreational access, including a bridge connecting to Prouty Beach and bike path extension that connects the downtown to the Beebe Spur Rail trail. VLT has also developed partnerships with North Country High School and Career Center, North Country Hospital, Memphremagog Ski Touring Foundation, Memphremagog Watershed Association and other local groups to increase access to the lake, educational events and opportunities, local food production and recreation. These activities and future planning for the farm are assets that could increase tourism and marketing opportunities. VLT is very happy to join the “Enhance and Market Newport Tourism” working group to advance ideas related to the Farm and access to the Lake and recreation in particular. Tracy Zschau of VLT can be reached at [tracy@vlt.org](mailto:tracy@vlt.org); 802-745-6301. Information about Bluffside Farm is available at [www.vlt.org/bluffside](http://www.vlt.org/bluffside).

The Task Force could connect with the NEK Regional Tourism Partnership, which is developing a regional approach to branding and marketing NEK tourism experiences and can help Newport advance many of the goals above. This group is a successor to NEKTAA (NEK Travel & Tourism Assoc.) which dissolved in mid-2016. The new Partnership has been meeting for the past 18 months and includes most of the NEK Chambers of Commerce and organizations such as NVDA, NCIC, Catamount Arts, St J Museum and other organizations

concerned with NEK Tourism. It is facilitated by the Northern Forest Center. The Newport Chamber has been on the distribution list for the work but has yet to participate in any partnership meetings or activities due to its limited (all volunteer) capacity. Newport should be represented! The task force can get in touch with Joe Short at the Northern Forest Center- [jshort@northernforest.org](mailto:jshort@northernforest.org); 603-229-0679 x104

The Northern Forest Center has experience working with small communities in Maine and New Hampshire on destination development and tourism marketing. Examples include Lancaster, NH and Greenville, Bethel, Rumford, and Paris, Maine. They would be happy to be a resource. Contact Joe Short at the Northern Forest Center- [jshort@northernforest.org](mailto:jshort@northernforest.org); 603-229-0679 x104

The Vermont Arts Council has composed blog posts that pair arts with other tourist attractions (for example, maple sugarhouses and outdoor sculpture). This marketing strategy can invite visitors to stay longer, and see other possibilities in your town beyond the one thing they came for. Here are some links to those posts:

<http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/blog/a-short-distance-to-vibrant-arts/>

<http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/blog/maple-murals-sugarhouses-and-sculptures/>

<http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/blog/mountains-of-art/>

<http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/blog/arts-and-alpine/>

Kira Bacon, head of communications at the Vermont Arts Council, has offered to be a source of advice and ideas on promotion and marketing. Contact [kbacon@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:kbacon@vermontartscouncil.org) or 802.828.5422.

Contact NVDA for planning assistance and grant writing assistance. Contact Dave Snedeker at [dsnedeker@nvda.net](mailto:dsnedeker@nvda.net) or 748-5181.

It would be helpful to reach out to other communities to learn about marketing initiatives and challenges in getting off the ground. Rutland's new campaign a great example (contact Mary Cohen at the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce at [mcohen@rutlandvermont.com](mailto:mcohen@rutlandvermont.com) or 773-2747 x202); St. Albans can tell a story about how hard it is to overcome funding challenges (Contact Liz Gamache at [egamache@vermontcf.org](mailto:egamache@vermontcf.org) or 658-6060 x7763); Barre is now collecting cell phone data to track where visitors are coming from (contact Josh Jerome at the Barre Partnership at [director@thebarrepartnership.com](mailto:director@thebarrepartnership.com) or 477-2967).

WealthWorks value chains offer a practical way to build your stocks of local capital, increase local ownership and control of that capital, and improve livelihoods and upward mobility for people, places and firms within a region. They show how a network of different types of partner investments, coordinated around a true market opportunity, can produce wealth that "sticks" to the region. They move the system of doing economic and community development toward a "new normal"—one where the realization of shared and common interests among value chain partners catalyzes opportunity and creates the will to address challenges together and better utilize all the resources flowing through the value chain to build wealth in the region.

For more information about exploring and constructing a value chain, please contact Melissa Levy at the WealthWorks Northeast Regional Hub at [melissa@community-roots.com](mailto:melissa@community-roots.com) or 802-318-1720.

There are many sources of technical assistance to install an EV charging station. I-91 is a designated Federal Alternative Fuel Corridor. While this doesn't in and of itself bring any funding with it, the designation will steer investment by other parties. Contact Dan Dutcher [daniel.dutcher@vermont.gov](mailto:daniel.dutcher@vermont.gov) at VTTrans to learn more about how these corridors are being developed and signage is being constructed to direct motorists to EV charging stations. Drive Electric Vermont is another great resource for all things electric vehicle related.

### **Potential Funding Sources for Marketing and Tourism:**

If there is interest in an EV charging station, the City could apply for VW Settlement funding, once available, to install one. This could be a major boost to the Newport tourism experience.

Community Capital of Vermont, banks, and other lenders could potentially help fund investment in equipment and venues necessary for a vibrant tourism ecosystem. While some of these investments may only be good for increasing tourism seasonally, the costs will be far lower than the money needed for building projects, and the start-up capital required for larger business ventures such as hotels. Plus, hotels and more restaurants are more likely to follow if a region is consistently drawing people to it.

Explore grants at the Vermont Community Foundation or the NEK fund of the VCF to bring some marketing dollars and vested partners to the table. . To learn more about available grants contact Kevin Wiberg at [kwiberg@vermontcf.org](mailto:kwiberg@vermontcf.org) or 388-3355 x284.

USDA Rural Development could be a source of funding for the development of a marketing plan or other community infrastructure needs. Contact Ben Doyle at [Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov](mailto:Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov) or 828-6042.

A Planning Grant could fund the development of a marketing plan for the City. To learn more, contact [Faieth.Ingulsrud@vermont.gov](mailto:Faieth.Ingulsrud@vermont.gov) or 802-828-5229.

If improved public boat access is needed, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department has funds for improving facilities and building new facilities.

Northern Borders Regional Commission could be a grant source. The NBRC Economic and Infrastructure Development Grant Program can cover up to \$250,000 to support a variety of economic and infrastructure improvements. Contact Katie Corrigan at ACCD for more information at [Katie.corrigan@vermont.gov](mailto:Katie.corrigan@vermont.gov) or 802-272-1420.



*Resource Meeting participants.*

---

## ✓ Support and Attract Businesses and Entrepreneurs

Community Chair: **Richard Tetreault**

Facilitator: **Ben Doyle**, *Community Development Specialist*, USDA Rural Development

Resource Team Members: **Liz Gamache**, *VP of Grants and Community Investments*, VT Community Foundation  
**Joan Goldstein**, *Commissioner*, VT Department of Economic Development  
**Katherine Sims**, *Executive Director*, NEK Collaborative  
**Dave Snedeker**, *Executive Director*, NVDA

Newport has many economic assets including a scenic lakeside location, outdoor recreation opportunities, a vibrant downtown with restaurants and retail, supportive community banks and business resources, and a strong business community. A task force could form to leverage these assets and support entrepreneurs and boost economic development, attract new businesses, restaurants, and perhaps breweries. The group could look at business incentives, tax credits, and other financial tools to stimulate development and reduce barriers, and build a pitch packet to attract businesses to Newport. The group could also help to connect existing business owners and entrepreneurs with the startup and growth resources and technical assistance they need to succeed. Additionally, the group could explore the development of an incubator or makers space that would include shared resources and utilities, mutual support, cooperative marketing, shared tools and materials, and technical assistance from local and regional economic development organizations. The group could also work with the City to identify funding sources to hire an Economic Development Coordinator to provide additional leadership around events, grant writing, tourism and marketing, and economic development strategies to help the community move forward.

### Action Steps

**1. Support the hiring of an Economic Development Director.**

The taskforce should support the hiring of an economic development director. Members of the taskforce should be part of a search committee that will help develop the position description, work with the City to identify additional funding, and ensure that the person hired is successful.

**2. Conduct assessment of challenges/needs for local businesses.**

This survey should be conducted by a member of the existing business community so that it has buy-in. The information gathered can help inform future technical assistance efforts.

**3. Develop a “pitch-packet” for Newport.**

The taskforce should identify if a “pitch-packet” for Newport exists and whether it needs to be updated. If there isn’t one, it should be created with the aim of providing businesses (both existing and start-up) information about resources for businesses and why someone would want to start a business there.

**4. Work to increase knowledge about existing technical assistance/finance options for local businesses.**

This could take a variety of forms. Rather than conducting a “resource panel” alone, the committee can work to encourage service providers and financiers (SBDC, NCIC, NVDA, USDA) to be more proactive in their outreach, perhaps conducting a walking tour of the downtown to connect with local business owners. Rural Development could help convene the service providers/financiers to assist in this effort.

**5. Work with media to promote info sharing and resources.**

**6. Work to support chamber of commerce to ensure it is functioning at a high level.**

**7. Reach out to congressional delegation to improve cross-border tourism opportunities** (especially air and water).

**8. Connect with/support young professional network.**

**9. Connect educators to existing jobs so that students can see available opportunities.**

10. Support the development of a co-working/incubator space in the downtown that will help small/mobile businesses.
11. Determine the adequacy of existing broadband and take steps to address deficiencies.
12. Market and tell stories of success to build momentum.
13. Identify challenges and develop solutions for “hole” redevelopment.
14. Research what other communities have done to offer incentives to attract business in the downtown.
15. Focus economic development efforts on attracting businesses from Canada/Sherbrooke.
16. Increase access to affordable capital by working closely with local lending institutions.

## Resources

1. **Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC)**, NCIC provides financing and technical assistance for small businesses. They are also exploring the possibility of forming a development corporation that could advance downtown development. Contact: Mike Welch, Senior Project Manager, [mwelch@ncic.org](mailto:mwelch@ncic.org), 802-748-5101 ext) 2025.
2. **Northern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)**, NVDA can provide financing and technical assistance to business as well as potentially help with grant applications. Contact: David Snedeker, Executive Director, [dsnedeker@nvda.net](mailto:dsnedeker@nvda.net), 802-748-8303.
3. **Agency of Commerce (ACCD)**, ACCD can help business secure loans, provide technical assistance on downtown development, work with business to improve exports, and provide training opportunities. They have a variety of resources that can be brought to bear in support of local businesses. Contact: Ted Brady, Deputy Secretary of Commerce, [ted.brady@vermont.gov](mailto:ted.brady@vermont.gov), 802-622-4200; Joan Goldstein, Commissioner at the Department of Economic Development, [Joan.goldstein@vermont.gov](mailto:Joan.goldstein@vermont.gov), 802-272-2399.
4. **USDA Rural Development**, Rural development has grant, loan, and loan guarantee programs that can be used to support local businesses. The City or Newport Renaissance Corporation should apply for a Rural Business Development Grant to help support the creation of an Economic Development Director position.
5. **Vermont Department of Labor (DOL)**, the DOL can provide technical assistance to both businesses seeking to recruit/retain workers as well as to job seekers looking for work or to enhance their skills. Contact:

## Task Force Members

Rob	Andersen	andersenack@comcast.net	508-332-9288
Mary Alice	Brenner	rwmabrenner@pshift.com	
Jim	Campbell	jimmyc@jimcampbellrealestate.com	802-999-7781
Hannah	Cornelius	hannahcornelius@gmail.com	
Craig	Crawford	craig@jimcampbellrealestate.com	
Rick	Desrochers	desrochersrick@gmail.com	673-2435
Thomas	Evans	tsevans1958@yahoo.com	334-7910
Maire	Folan	mfolan@gmfts.org	
Wendy	Franklin	wfranklin@nchsi.org	673-0081
Daniel	Gauvin	dan@lakeviewaviation.com	673-8935
Brian	Grimm	teachdriving@yahoo.com	334-2757
Laurie	Grimm	grimmfam@myfairpoint.net	334-2757
Michael	Harvey	nightowl04200@yahoo.com	207-713-2740
Debbie	Jordan	dwin33@yahoo.com	624-3605
Patricia	Kilday	patriciakilday@hotmail.com	673-5842
Charlie	Kremer	charles.kremer@comcast.net	233-9932
Iso	Marks	isomarks@hotmail.com	673-9504
Denise	Martell	denise@alssnowmobile.com	323-3071

Patrick	Martell	patrickmartellvt@gmail.com	673-0115
Paul	Monette	paul.monette@newportvermont.org	334-1021
Vincent	Montoro	vmontoro@ucaeducation.org	
Sunny	Naughton	sunny.naughton@neklsvt.org; sunnynaughton@gmail.com	
Tina	Norton	tnorton@unionbankvt.com	
Wesley	Nutter	nutter.wesley@gmail.com	484-356-8288
Anne	Page	annedavidsonpage@gmail.com	
Woodman	Page	woodmanpage@gmail.com	
Dawn	Philip	dawnphilip14k@gmail.com	624-3435
Ryan	Pronto	ryan@jimcampbellrealestate.com	
Julie	Riffon	jriffon@nchsi.org	
Cindy	Robillard	cindy.robillard@vermont.gov	334-3960
Trish	Sears	pmsears@gmail.com	
Ellen	Stanley	estanley@passumpsicbank.com	334-8506; 535-7250
Bill	Stenger	bstenger@jaypeakresort.com	343-9208
Richard	Tetreault	richard.tetreault@wsp.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:

The group could work closely with Newport Renaissance and the new staff person to provide support and guidance to plans for economic development work in the long term.

This task force could work in collaboration with the task force focused around marketing and tourism. Marketing and branding efforts could be used as the basis for pitch packets to businesses.

This group could help to work with the City to put Newport in a better position for redevelopment of the Renaissance Block. The City could put together an attractive package which includes waived fees and additional support to draw a developer.

The group could collect and showcase testimonials from existing businesses as part of a "Newport is OPEN for business" campaign.

Drone footage could be used to develop a video showcasing Newport's downtown and business community.

The group could look into and develop a list of business resources already in existence in the community including the tax stabilization program and the potential to create a downtown TIF district (they've had a TIF district in the past that brought business to the community). NVDA and SBDC already have a presence in the City to assist businesses. NCIC is also present in economic development activities. The City and NCRC have voted to jointly fund an Economic Development position, which will be an asset to this work.

At the recent final Community Visit session, it was clear that many people were not aware of all of the technical support services and programs available to businesses in Newport (and the region). The group could create a Newport pitch packet and/or welcome packet for the City for businesses interested in Newport. Especially for Quebec businesses who are right now very interested in Newport and Vermont opportunities.

In the long-term, an Economic Development position could be incredibly valuable. The group could continue to build long-term support for a full-time Economic Development Coordinator.

In many towns, a public art project can spur community engagement and development. Identify one location in Newport (a wall, a park, a storefront) and get a group of neighbors together with a local artists to re-envision it.

The group could work with the Tourism and Marketing group to Identify gaps in the service amenities for visitors, but also for locals. For example, what is the restaurant mix in town in terms of offerings, prices, and audiences? Are there other needs that businesses could fill that are not being met?

If there was interest in a Makers Space the group could consider collaboration with the North Country Career Center in Newport. "The Foundry", a makers space in Lyndonville is co-located with the Lyndon Institute tech center. They are able to use the tech center facilities after-hours and on weekends.

Vermont Land Trust's Bluffside Farm will eventually be marketed for sale to a private buyer. Initial community input centered around attracting a land-based business that would market products and/or educational and other experiences to both locals and tourists. VLT is open to considering how the sale and use of the land could attract a business/businesses and entrepreneurs to use this unique resource in ways that benefit Newport.

As a plan is developed to build the business community, don't forget to include housing in this planning! The City could create a Housing Committee to consider not only affordable housing but also senior and market rate housing so support the changing needs of the community.

#### **Technical Assistance/Connection Recommendations:**

The Lightning Jar co-working space in Bennington is a great example of a locally driven effort to support local businesses. Contact Dimitri Garder at [dimitri@lightningjarvt.com](mailto:dimitri@lightningjarvt.com) or visit <http://www.lightningjarvt.com/>.

One of the best models for revitalizing a small downtown and attracting new businesses and creative entrepreneurs is the Bethel Revitalization Initiative. With a small corps of passionate volunteers, they created pop-up galleries and restaurants and showed the community what their downtown might look like: <http://bethelrevitalizationinitiative.org/> Rebecca Stone was the moving force behind the Bethel Revitalization Initiative. She is a wellspring of energy and ideas, and may be available as a consultant: [rebecca@communityworkshopllc.com](mailto:rebecca@communityworkshopllc.com).

There are many good success stories from across the Northern Forest region of how communities not unlike Newport are successfully attracting entrepreneurs and new residents. Littleton, NH; Burke, VT; Saranac Lake, NY; Millinocket, ME. The Northern Forest Center can help connect the Newport task force to resources in these communities. Contact Joe Short at [jshort@northernforest.org](mailto:jshort@northernforest.org) or 603-229-0679 x104.

WonderArts in Greensboro is in the early stages of a very creative community engagement process around a potential incubator space in their town. They may be willing to share ideas and experiences. Contact Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Executive Director at [ceilidh@wonderartsvt.org](mailto:ceilidh@wonderartsvt.org).

Samantha Sheehan, a leader in the Vermont Creative Network, envisioned and founded ValleyWorks, a co-working space in Waitsfield. She might be willing to share ideas and experiences. Contact Samantha at [samantha@valleyworksvt.org](mailto:samantha@valleyworksvt.org).

Michele Bailey, program director at the Vermont Arts Council is a good source of info on creative place-making (revitalizing public places through the arts). Contact Michelle at [m Bailey@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:m Bailey@vermontartscouncil.org).

NVDA and NCIC could be critical partners for this task force moving forward. The contact at NVDA is Dave Snedeker at 748-5181 x15 or [dsnedeker@nvda.net](mailto:dsnedeker@nvda.net). At NCIC contact Mike Welch at 748-5101 or [mwelch@ncic.org](mailto:mwelch@ncic.org).

Small business development organizations such as Community Capital of Vermont, NCIC, NVDA or the Vermont Small Business Development Association could be resources in thinking about strategies to cultivate and develop small businesses in Newport. They could be invited to the community to help strengthen existing businesses and possibly new start-ups. The SBA also routinely sponsors roundtables around Vermont to facilitate entrepreneurs getting connected to technical assistance and financing. A roundtable (or series of roundtables) in Newport could include representatives from SBDC, NCIC, NVDA, VCLF, Community Capital, and area commercial lenders. To start, contact Darcy Carter at the Vermont SBA district office at 828-4422 x203 or at [darcy.carter@sba.gov](mailto:darcy.carter@sba.gov).

### **Potential Funding Sources for Supporting Businesses and Entrepreneurs:**

Gary Holloway could discuss the financial benefits (grants and tax credits) of the Downtown Designation program. Contact him at [gary.holloway@vermont.gov](mailto:gary.holloway@vermont.gov) or 828-3220.

Lending resources could be NVDA, Community Capital of Vermont, the VT Community Loan Fund, or Opportunities Credit Union.

Reach out to Katie Corrigan, with ACCD, to see how the Department of Economic Development could help and learn more about the Northern Borders Grant Program and how they might support business and work force development. Contact Katie at [katie.corrigan@vermont.gov](mailto:katie.corrigan@vermont.gov) or 272-1420.

Reach out to Ben Doyle with USDA RD to learn more about their Rural Economic Development Grants to support economic development efforts and planning. Contact Ben at [Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov](mailto:Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov) or at 802-828-6042.



---

## ✓ Expand Community Events and Celebrations

Community Chair: **Penny Thomas**

Facilitator: **Jon Copans**, *Climate Economy Model Communities Program Director*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Jody Fried**, *Executive Director*, Catamount Arts

**Gary Holloway**, *Downtown Program Coordinator*, Department of Housing and Community Development

**Kevin Wiberg**, Vermont Community Foundation

Community events are a way to celebrate together, showcase local talent, and build engagement in Newport. Many residents value existing community events, including Wednesdays on the Waterfront in the summer, the 4th of July celebrations, Kingdom Games, and other events that bring folks together throughout the year. Many would like to see Newport expand and coordinate events both to bring people together locally and attract visitors. An events task force could come together in support of existing events and to expand offerings to include winter activities at Gardner Park, community dinners, downtown music and arts events, bicycling and other sporting events, contests and competitions, and more. The group could explore sustainable funding sources for events including local business sponsorship and perhaps the Walmart funds, and could explore the long-term idea of hiring an events coordinator to take the lead on community events, festivals, and celebrations.

### Action Steps

1. Inventory existing local and regional events
2. Develop a shared calendar of local and regional events (Catamount Arts uses Google to facilitate a shared calendar)
3. Assess the status of existing events and provide support to those in need
4. Revitalize the Newport Recreation Committee
5. Evaluate different models to grow capacity to support events
6. Rejuvenate dormant events
7. Engage Jay Peak and others to find opportunities for collaboration and “piggy-backing”
8. Develop a marketing checklist – in coordination with the marketing task force
9. Identify and address infrastructure and venue challenges at the waterfront, with utilities downtown, and at other locations

### Other possible action items (in no particular order)

- Use town water bills as a way to promote events
- Create/utilize signage to promote events
- Use radio stations for marketing
- Support and grow Wednesdays on the Waterfront
- Figure out how to sustain events and retain leadership and volunteer capacity
- Grow capacity at the Newport Recreation Department to support events
- Address a shortage of venues for live music in town
- Develop an event or events that focus more on the water
- Attract and engage youth
- Engage volunteers – including through employers (Columbia Forest Products)

## Resources

- Gary Holloway could be an interface to Buildings and General Services related to the limitations on use of the waterfront for Wednesdays on the Waterfront. Contact Gary at [gary.holloway@vermont.gov](mailto:gary.holloway@vermont.gov) or 802-828-3220.
- Jody Fried and Catamount Arts is hoping to develop a new grant program including collaboration with up to 6 NEK communities. To learn more contact Jody at [jfried@catamountarts.org](mailto:jfried@catamountarts.org) or 802-748-2600 x105.
- Find 1 or more reps from Newport to participate in the Creative Network. This is a great networking opportunity. Check out [www.vermontcreativenetwork.org](http://www.vermontcreativenetwork.org)
- Art impact grants at the Vermont Arts Council could be a funding source. Contact Michele Bailey at [mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org) or 802-828-3294.
- Vermont Department of Tourism maintains a calendar and makes it available to communities to post - <https://www.vermontvacation.com/stay-and-play/events>
- Vermont Community Foundation discretionary grants programs could be a funding source. Contact Kevin Wiberg at 802-388-3555 ext 284 or [kwiberg@vermontcf.org](mailto:kwiberg@vermontcf.org)
- Other town organizations that host successful events. Contact VCRD for ideas and connections.
- Karen Nevin, the Director of Revitalizing Waterbury could be a good resource to share the events in the Waterbury community and how they connect to community and economic development. Contact Karen at [karen@revitalizingwaterbury.org](mailto:karen@revitalizingwaterbury.org) or 802-793-6029.

## Task Force Members

Rob	Andersen	andersenack@comcast.net	508-332-9288
Denis	Chenette	dchenette@hotmail.com	334-6001
Denise	Currier	dcurrier@nchsi.org	233-8344
Thomas	Evans	tsevans1958@yahoo.com	334-7910
Maire	Folan	mfolan@gmfts.org	
Mary Pat	Goulding	cpgoulding@gmail.com	334-2444
Michael	Harvey	nightow104200@yahoo.com	207-713-2740
Allyson	Howell	allyson.howell@neklsvt.org	673-6790
Bruce	James	brucejames.vba@gmail.com	626-3317
Patricia	Kilday	patriciakilday@hotmail.com	673-5842
Charlie	Kremer	charles.kremer@comcast.net	233-9932
Kendall	Lambert	kendall.lambert@gmail.com	
Wendy	McGillivray	mcg.wendy@gmail.com	
Colleen	Moore de Ortiz	colleen.mooredeortiz@vermont.gov	802.334.4384
Wesley	Nutter	nutter.wesley@gmail.com	484-356-8288
Danielle	Paquin	daniellepaquin.vba@gmail.com; dpaquinradio@gmail.com	624-0699
Daniel	Pellerin	daniel.pellerin@edwardjones.com	334-6261
Dawn	Philip	dawnphilip14k@gmail.com	624-3435
Dawn	Powers	dpowers@buildingbrightfutures.org	673-6478
Julie	Raboin	julie.raboin@vermont.gov	334-4391
Shane	Rogers	shane.rogers709@gmail.com	
Michelle	Rossi	michellerossi77@live.com	673-7146
Doug	Spates	dspates@memrent.com	673-7593
Michael	Stanley	stanssps@yahoo.com	323-6058
Steven	Tatum	steven.b.tatum@gmail.com	323-7530
Penny	Thomas	penny.thomas2@gmail.com	334-8388
Joe	Wevurski	jwevurski@yahoo.com	
Louise	Whipple	delabruerelouise@hotmail.com	
Ali and Phil	White	phw1948@gmail.com; AWhite@vermonthumanities.org	
Steve	Wright	swright@jaypeakresort.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:

The task force could look for regional events to connect to in order to minimize how much needs to be built from scratch. Connecting with nearby events in the NEK can help to build synergy and attract more attendees. Perhaps the group could coordinate events with other communities around the Lake such as Magog.

A great starting point could be to collect a list of upcoming events and create a community calendar and marketing plan including a list of all the publications and calendars that should be contacted with this list. The Centennial this year provides a great opportunity. It is also the 20th anniversary of the Beebe Spur Rail Trail.

Growing and sustaining community events, particularly during the warmer months, is a great way to galvanize an area. Wednesdays on the Waterfront and Kingdom Games appear to be two regularly occurring happenings with some traction. While adding more events could be beneficial, so is ensuring that these events thrive, particularly since they have already committed to multiple dates during the year.

Asking multiple interested stakeholders to participate and enhance the diversity of an event is essential if people are being invited to attend from many miles away. Whether visitors are coming to Newport to attend a sporting event, concert, or some other festival, having food trucks or carts, art vendors, and activities for kids are other ways to help ensure a robust turnout. Identifying other key dates on the calendar that tend to excite people, such as 4th of July or St. Patrick's Day, could provide other opportunities to drum up momentum and create other events to draw people to the region.

In Newport, it seemed that many residents feel their resources are stretched thin. If that's the case, it may be best to focus on a small number of high-visibility, high-impact signature events rather than a larger number of events throughout the year that might be harder to sustain. Wednesdays on the Waterfront sounded like it had some momentum and community energy behind it. Is it possible to revive the jazz festival that was so popular?

The group could explore outdoor recreation and wellness events (or a Wellness Week) in collaboration with Jay Peak and/or VAST.

The task force could build a collaboration with Vermont College of Fine Arts in Montpelier or another nearby campus to bring some of their artists/writers in residence to Newport for performances, musical events, exhibitions or readings.

It can be a great boost to local events to get local Main Street merchants involved. The group could work with businesses on flexible hours during events and on offering promotions and activities – or event sponsoring events. The Island Pond Chamber has made good progress on connecting local businesses to community events. Contact Mike Strait at (802) 723-0470 or [mike@hearthandhomecountry.com](mailto:mike@hearthandhomecountry.com).

It would likely be beneficial to connect with larger local partners to coordinate events such as the hospital, banks, Vermont Land Trust, and others.

It seems that Wednesdays on the Waterfront is truly an anchor community event. This group could help to build, support, and promote that event through community leadership, promotional materials, and sharing the story of the event.

The group could continue to support and work with the Recreation Department which seems to have real energy and potential for more.

In the long-term, perhaps an Events Coordinator could help to boost events and increase sustainability.

Work with the State of VT to gain more permanent and long-term access to the state-owned waterfront property for community events. Gary Holloway has agreed to be a point person for the state to help foster that connection. He can be reached at [gary.holloway@vermont.gov](mailto:gary.holloway@vermont.gov) or 828-3220.

One area to pursue for event promotion is partnerships with radio stations. Radio stations can be powerful allies in promoting festivals, particularly if they have a presence at them, such as a table or allowing one of their personalities be an MC.

### **Recommendations for Technical Assistance Connections and Models to Learn From:**

It may be helpful to connect with Chambers in the NEK who have had success in planning and implementing events to learn from them and what has been successful. Two that would be great to connect to are the Island Pond Chamber, who organize Friday Night Live and other events (Mike Strait (802) 723-0470 [mike@hearthandhomecountry.com](mailto:mike@hearthandhomecountry.com)) and the St Johnsbury Chamber (Tara Holt Tara Holt [director@discoverstjohnsbury.com](mailto:director@discoverstjohnsbury.com)).

The new Brighton Recreation Program has been very successful at building (and funding) new local events that have been well attended over the past year. To learn more about their work visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/IslandPondAGreatPlaceToLiveAndPlay/> and contact Doug Niles, Recreation Director, at [douglas.niles@yahoo.com](mailto:douglas.niles@yahoo.com).

The Bethel Revitalization Project is a great model of low-cost, high-impact downtown development. They created Vermont's first free community-based pop-up university, now in its 5th year: <http://bethelrevitalizationinitiative.org/>. To learn more about the project in Bethel you can contact Rebecca Stone. Rebecca would be a terrific resource when it comes to mobilizing business owners and volunteers in support of downtown events. She can be reached at [rebecca@communityworkshopllc.com](mailto:rebecca@communityworkshopllc.com).

Consider ways to cross-promote events on statewide or regional sites and calendars. Kira Bacon, head of communications at the Vermont Arts Council may be able to post Newport events on the statewide Arts Calendar. Contact [kbacon@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:kbacon@vermontartscouncil.org) or 802.828.5422. The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing events calendar would be another good place to post. Visit <https://www.vermontvacation.com/plan-your-visit/events>.

St. Albans has developed an "Around Town" online events calendar which will potentially be shared with other Franklin County Towns. Perhaps Newport would be interested in checking that calendar out and learning how it was developed. Contact City Manager Dom Cloud at [d.cloud@stalbanstvt.com](mailto:d.cloud@stalbanstvt.com).

VLT's Bluffside Farm could be a potential location for some events - VLT is very open to being involved in thinking about that. Contact Tracy Zschau at 745-6301 or [tracy@vlt.org](mailto:tracy@vlt.org).

Jody Fried at Catamount Arts is a great resource and may be interested in working with the City on the idea of bringing their stage to Newport. Contact Jody at [jfried@catamountarts.org](mailto:jfried@catamountarts.org) or 748-2600 x105.

### **Potential Funding Sources for Events and Celebrations:**

Buildings Ground and Services (BGS) could potentially help fund needed improvements at the state property, and then seek a long-term lease that would allow the city to have year-round events (with vendors).

Sponsorships from businesses or even corporate sponsors (sports drinks, energy bars, beer, equipment/apparel manufacturers) could be a boost to local events.

Consider the WalMart money as a potential for seed funding to get events started. As this funding is not long-term, sponsorship would be needed in subsequent year.

The Vermont Community Foundation may have grants available for community projects of events. The Northeast Kingdom Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation could be a regional source for grants for specific programs or projects. To learn more about available grants contact Kevin Wiberg at [kwiberg@vermontcf.org](mailto:kwiberg@vermontcf.org) or 388-3355 x284.

---

## ✓ Improve and Coordinate Health and Wellness Services & Early Child Care and Education

Community Chair: **Melissa Tarryk**

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

Resource Team Members: **Patrick Flood**, Formerly Northern Counties Health Care and VT Dept of Mental Health

**Didi Harris**, *Strategic Initiatives Manager, Vermont Birth to Five*

**John Sayles**, *CEO, Vermont Foodbank*

Newport schools, the hospital, the wellness center, non-profits, and other service providers offer a wide range of resources to support health and wellness for people of all ages and backgrounds. However, some residents have concerns about access, coordination, and communication of these key resources. A task force could form to unite providers, community members, and key leadership to coordinate services and optimize the health, safety, and well-being of Newport residents of all ages. The group could build an inventory and coordinate resources and programs and effectively share information with individuals and families through family and community programming, education, and events such as an annual Wellness Week. The group could also work to boost community volunteerism in health and wellness services and seek funding and creative models to increase capacity and staffing to manage critical health issues such as mental health, nutrition, substance abuse prevention, and primary care. The group could also explore opportunities to improve access to early childhood care and education.

### Priority Action Steps

1. Come together in regular meetings; share problems and successes; break into working groups to address specific needs and issues.
2. Develop a common resource directory. Work with partners like Sunny Naughton's substance abuse prevention group, Vermont 211 and others to collect resources and identify ways to disseminate resources to the community. Some strategies may include sharing on the Newport website, tabling at key events, sharing materials at the senior center, library, meal sites and other locations.
3. Utilize key health indices and reports (such as the County health statistics) to identify key problem areas or gaps that need to be addressed and develop programs/strategies to address those issues. Some potential focus areas may include:
  - a. Teen Pregnancy
  - b. Nutrition
  - c. Substance Abuse
4. Once key focus areas are identified, build specific actionable projects to improve in those focus areas. Projects may include:
  - a. Creating or building on an existing health and wellness fair
  - b. Developing a mentorship program
  - c. Food and nutrition education
  - d. Exploring health and wellness incentives
  - e. Recruiting and engaging community volunteers
5. Expand engagement in the group to other health and wellness sectors/arenas and other Newport health, wellness, and early childhood groups and initiatives. Reach out to invite the hospital, supervisory union, NEK Council on Aging and other key partners to add leadership representation.
6. Investigate the opportunity to develop a community center, a central place for service location and coordination that also provides opportunities and services for youth and families.

## Other Potential Action Steps

- In the long-term, explore funding sources for a paid coordinator position to lead health and wellness efforts in the City.
- Identify human needs in the community that are unmet on the continuum from pre-birth on. Work towards strategies to fill those gaps.
- Investigate the opportunity to build a community center.

## Resources

- The Vermont Community Foundation – Contact Kevin Wiberg at [kwiberg@vermontcf.org](mailto:kwiberg@vermontcf.org) or 802-388-3355 ext. 284
- Local community philanthropists (The Vermont Community Foundation may be able to help identify)
- The Northeast Kingdom Fund – see contact information for Kevin Wiberg above
- Potentially, an allocation from municipalities
- Bank partners, especially the generous regional community banks
- USDA Rural Development – Contact Ben Doyle at [benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov](mailto:benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov) or 802-828-6042
- VT Birth to Five has grants for childcare program start ups and expansion. Contact Didi Harris at [didi@vermontbirthtofive.org](mailto:didi@vermontbirthtofive.org) or 802-343-7450
- The Vermont Community Loan Fund can also be a partner in childcare development – contact Will Belongia at [will@vclf.org](mailto:will@vclf.org) or 802-223-4428
- The Northern Borders Commission could be a grant source – contact Katie Corrigan at [Katie.corrigan@vermont.gov](mailto:Katie.corrigan@vermont.gov) or 802-272-1420
- Jay Peak – contact Steve Wright at [swright@jaypeakresort.com](mailto:swright@jaypeakresort.com)
- NEK Learning Services might be able to act as a fiscal agent or facilitative partner – Contact Michelle Tarryk at [michelle.tarryk@neklsvt.org](mailto:michelle.tarryk@neklsvt.org)
- The NEK Collaborative – contact Katherine Sims at [katherine@nekcollaborative.org](mailto:katherine@nekcollaborative.org)
- Community members could be recruited as volunteers to help with grant writing and other efforts

## Task Force Members

Kevin	Charboneau	kcharbon306@comcast.net	
Lisa	Daigle-Farney	lisa.farney@neklsvt.org	
Eileen	Drew	emdrew@comcast.net	598-5672
Ruth	Duckless	neknative@live.com	880-9006
Laurie	Durivage	lauriedurivage@gmail.com	766-5516
Jane	Edwards	buildahealthyplate@gmail.com	355-9707
Kathy	Griffin	kmetras@nekcavt.org	
John	Harlamert	nptfire6@yahoo.com	
Jennifer	Harlow	jennifer.harlow@newportpd.org	673-3913
Didi	Harris	didi@vermontbirthtofive.org	343-7450
Allyson	Howell	allyson.howell@neklsvt.org	673-6790
Connie	Lamont	clamont@nekcavt.org	324-3306
Suzanne	Legare Belcher	suzanne.legarebelcher@vermont.gov; lebrookvt@aol.com	585-5488
Ruth	Marquette	rmarquette@nkhs.net; raamarq@hotmail.com	
Colleen	Moore de Ortiz	colleen.mooredeortiz@vermont.gov	802.334.4384
Sunny	Naughton	sunny.naughton@neklsvt.org; sunnynaughton@gmail.com	
Christina	Nelson	chris@vermontbirthtofive.org; mvdckids@gmail.com	238-3962
Wesley	Nutter	nutter.wesley@gmail.com	484-356-8288

Dawn	Powers	<a href="mailto:dpowers@buildingbrightfutures.org">dpowers@buildingbrightfutures.org</a>	673-6478
Julie	Raboin	<a href="mailto:julie.raboin@vermont.gov">julie.raboin@vermont.gov</a>	334-4391
Michelle	Rossi	<a href="mailto:michellerossi77@live.com">michellerossi77@live.com</a>	673-7146
Melissa	Tarryk	<a href="mailto:mmtarryk@gmail.com">mmtarryk@gmail.com</a>	624-1163
Steven	Tatum	<a href="mailto:steven.b.tatum@gmail.com">steven.b.tatum@gmail.com</a>	323-7530
Annette	Vallieres	<a href="mailto:timesavervt@gmail.com">timesavervt@gmail.com</a>	

## 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:

The group could look at ways to expand the reach of the group to include other sectors of the community such as teachers and administrators from the SU. It may also be a great addition to include teens in the discussion.

It would be great to build a comprehensive list of community groups and state and federal partners in this area.

This initiative could be an opportunity to make an effort to engage all Newport residents in events that promote health activities and lifestyles.

Newport has a long list of outdoor recreation assets. The group could help to make the link between wellness and outdoor activities.

Newport has existing trails, the lake, sidewalks, parks, and recreation facilities at the high school that could be utilized more. Getting residents of all ages to be active and outdoors could improve community wellness.

The group could conduct a survey of working families in Newport (perhaps through schools, employers, other public outreach) to better understand their child care needs and preferences. Compare this to the supply of child care in Newport (CDD can provide data on that) to create a measurable plan to address real child care needs in Newport.

### Technical Assistance/Connection Recommendations:

There was a recent group formed around some of these issues facilitated by Melissa Levy of Community Roots. The group could speak with her and understand what work was done and how it connects. Contact [melissa@community-roots.com](mailto:melissa@community-roots.com) or 802-318-1720.

The Regional Building Bright Futures (BBF) Council could help to convene a local work group to build on the childcare capacity building coalition that is kicking off statewide this month. The BBF coordinator for the region is Dawn Powers. She can be contacted at [dpowers@buildingbrightfutures.org](mailto:dpowers@buildingbrightfutures.org).

VLT's Bluffside Farm is hosting a community health-care share garden with VYCC and North Country Hospital and will host numerous trails that will expand recreational opportunities in the community. VLT is very open to discussing other ways the Farm might advance goals as this committee moves forward. VLT would be very interested in participating in a Wellness Week. Contact is Tracy Zschau - 745-6301; [tracy@vlt.org](mailto:tracy@vlt.org)

Work with local child care providers to launch and expand their businesses and to increase care quality according the Vermont STARS standards.

The team at the Department of Children and Families may be helpful in thinking about strategies to improve and expand childcare. Contact Reeva Murphy at [reeva.murphy@vermont.gov](mailto:reeva.murphy@vermont.gov) or 760-0792.

The group could invite representatives from the Permanent Fund to visit and brainstorm. Contact Aly Richards at 448-0441.

**Potential Funding Sources for Health, Wellness, and Early Childcare and Education:**

Vermont Birth to Five's Make Way for Kids program has a goal of to creating 500 high-quality child care spaces in Vermont annually. This could be a source for technical assistance and grants. Contact Lorraine Vernet, Regional Manager for the Newport, Barre and St. Johnsbury Regions at 760-8878.

This aligns well with Vermont Community Foundation focus areas around reducing the opportunity gap. Contact Liz Gamache to discuss ways that Vermont Community Foundation may be able to partner with the group and support this work. Contact [egamache@vermontcf.org](mailto:egamache@vermontcf.org) or 658-6060 x7763.

Vermont Community Loan Fund can be a great resource to help structure and perhaps finance childcare development. Contact Will Belongia at 223-1448 or [will@vclf.org](mailto:will@vclf.org).



*Each task force reported its draft action plan to participants at the Resource Meeting.*

# VI. ReNewport Town Forum Notes

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

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

---

## Public Transportation

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

---

### What are the Assets in this Area?

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

---

### What are the Challenges?

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

---

### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

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

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

---

## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

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

---

## Downtown

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

---

## What are the Assets in this Area?

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

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

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

---

### What are the Challenges?

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

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

---

### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

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

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

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

---

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

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

---

## Economic Development

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

---

### What are the Assets in this Area?

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

---

### What are the Challenges?

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

---

## Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

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

---

## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

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

---

## Health & Wellness

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

---

### What are the Assets in this Area?

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

---

### What are the Challenges?

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

---

### Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

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

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

---

## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

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

---

## Arts, Entertainment & the Outdoors

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

---

### What are the Assets in this Area?

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

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

### **What are the Challenges?**

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

### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done?**

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

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

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

---

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

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

---

### Tourism & Marketing

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

---

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

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

---

## What are the Challenges?

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

---

## Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

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

---

## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

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

---

## Housing

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

---

### What are the Assets in this Area?

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

---

### What are the Challenges?

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

---

## Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

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

---

## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

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

---

## Caring for Our Children

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

---

### What are the Assets in this Area?

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

---

### What are the Challenges?

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

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

### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done?**

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

### **Reflections of the Community Visit Team**

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

---

## Connecting Our Community

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

---

### What are the Assets in this Area?

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

---

### What are the Challenges?

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

---

## Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

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

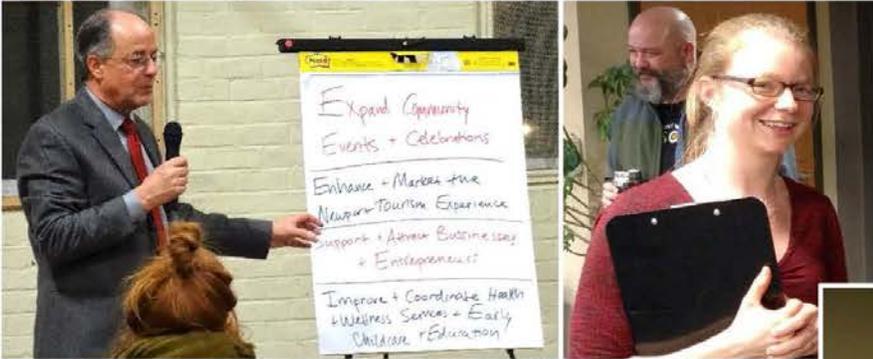
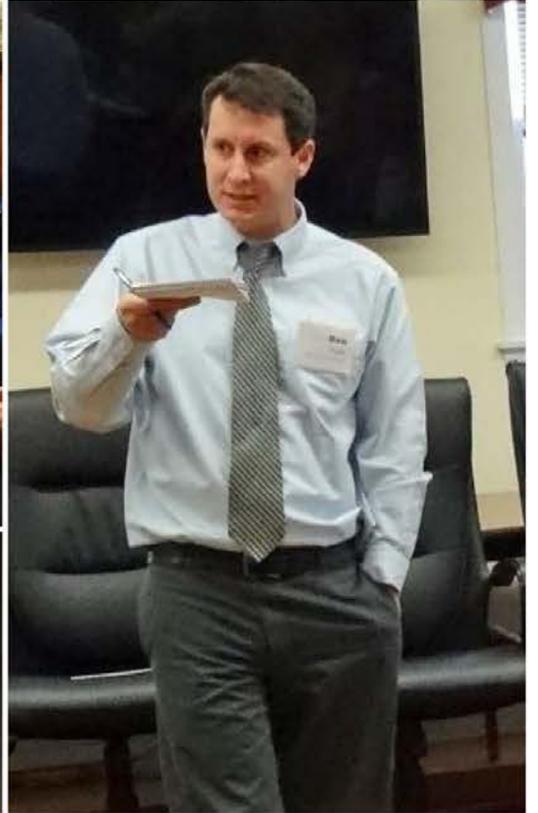
---

## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

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

## VII. Newport Community Visit Participants

Kathy Aiken	Bob Currier	Debbie Harlamert	Jim McKimm	Cynthia Santoli
Peter Alexander	Denise Currier	John Harlamert	Geny Menard	Jeremiah Schuyler
Jay Ancel	Lisa Daigle-Farney	Jennifer Harlow	James Merriam	Rebecca Schuyler
Rob Andersen	Tim Daley	Didi Harris	Chris Miller	Trish Sears
Sybille Andersen	Tonya Davis	Michael Harvey	Susan Miltner	Katherine Sims
Michelina Auger	Alain De La Bruere	Don Hendrich	Dawn Mitchell	Kathie Sims
Casey Baraw	Irene Delabruere	Dan Higgins	Paul Monette	Jennie Sloan
Ed Barber	Jonathan	Mary Hoadley	Vincent Montoro	Pam Smith
Beth Barnes	DeLaBruere	Bill and Jan Hogan	Colleen Moore de	Robin Smith
Debra Beaupre	Rick Desrochers	Jennifer Hopkins	Ortiz	Doug Spates
Patty Beckwith	Richard Deuso	Ronald Horton	Sunny Naughton	Ruth Sproull
Conrad Bellavance	Laura Dolgin	Allyson Howell	Christina Nelson	Ellen Stanley
Ronald Benson	Paul Dreher	Thomas Howell	Judy Nommik	Michael Stanley
Mary Bishop	Eileen Drew	Eileen Illuzzi	Tina Norton	Bill Stenger
Chelsea Boisvert	Ruth Duckless	Bruce James	Wesley Nutter	Mark Stewart
Louise Bonvechio	Laurie Durivage	Lynn Jenness	Cerardo A. Ortiz	Sharon Stewart
Mary Alice Brenner	Sue Dwelle	Bev Johnson	Micaela Ortiz	Judy Szych
Carole Briere	Jane Edwards	James Johnson	Anne Page	Lynn Tanguay
Katelynn Briere	Linda Essaff	Nicole Johnson	Woodman Page	Melissa Tarryk
Scott Briere	Paul Essaff	Debbie Jordan	Danielle Paquin	Michelle Tarryk
Barbara Buchanan	Thomas Evans	Mark Kelley	Marian Peduzzi	Steven Tatum
Mary Butler	Jon Floyd	Patricia Kilday	Diane Peel	Richard Tetreault
Jim Campbell	Maire Folan	Charlie Kremer	Daniel Pellerin	Penny Thomas
Andy Capello	Claudio Fort	Pam Ladds	Alden Pellett	Sandy Thorp
Andrea Carbine	Wendy Franklin	George Lague	Jean Perry	Tyler Tinker
Aaron Carr	Charlie Gallant	Shirley Lague	Daron Philip	Debra Towle
Rory Carr	Erin Gallant	Kendall Lambert	Dawn Philip	Annette Vallieres
Beth Chambers	Daniel Gauvin	Connie Lamont	Dawn Powers	Markus Vogt
Kevin Charboneau	Bob George	Bob Lareau	Bob Primeau	Jay Walsh
Presleigh Chase-	Marie George	Suzanne Legare	Ryan Pronto	Naomie Walsh
Benway	Teresa Gerade	Belcher	Julie Raboin	Diane Ward
Denis Chenette	Karen Geraghty	Gail Lynch	Julie Riffon	John Ward, Jr.
Anne Chiarello	Michael Ghosa	Michelle Maitri-	Cindy Robillard	Joe Wevurski
Stan Chop	Mary Pat Goulding	Mudita	Shane Rogers	Louise Whipple
Annie Christoni	Mary Grant	Michael Marcotte	Michelle Rossi	Ali and Phil White
Elaine Collins	Katelyn Gratton	Iso Marks	Casey Rowell	John & Janis Wilson
Hannah Cornelius	Nicole Gratton	Ruth Marquette	Judy Roy	Frances Woodward
Christina Cotnoir	Kathy Griffin	Elia Marquis	John Royen	Rick Woodward
Rene Cotnoir	Brian Grimm	Denise Martell	Chris Royer	Steve Wright
Jacques Couture	Laurie Grimm	Patrick Martell	Glenn Saaman	Tracy Zschau
Craig Crawford	James Hafferman	Wendy McGillivray	Tira Santaw	



*Members of the Visiting Resource Team enjoyed their time in Newport!*

## VIII. Visiting Resource Team Members

**Tom Berry**, *Field Representative*,  
US Senator Leahy's Office, 802-  
229-0569,

[Tom\\_Berry@leahy.senate.gov](mailto:Tom_Berry@leahy.senate.gov)

**Ted Brady**, *Deputy Secretary*, VT  
Agy of Commerce & Community  
Devel, 802-828-5204,

[ted.brady@vermont.gov](mailto:ted.brady@vermont.gov)

**Katie Buckley**, *Commissioner*,  
Dept. of Housing & Community  
Devel, 802-828-3080,

[katie.buckley@vermont.gov](mailto:katie.buckley@vermont.gov)

**Jon Copans**, *Model Communities  
Program Director*, VT Council on  
Rural Development, 802-225-6393,

[jon@vtrural.org](mailto:jon@vtrural.org)

**Paul Costello**, *Executive Director*,  
VT Council on Rural Development,  
802-223-5763,

[pcostello@vtrural.org](mailto:pcostello@vtrural.org)

**Ben Doyle**, *Community  
Development Specialist*, USDA  
Rural Development, 802-828-6042,

[benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov](mailto:benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov)

**Patrick Flood**, 802-748-9405  
x1519, [pflood001@aol.com](mailto:pflood001@aol.com)

**Jody Fried**, *Executive Director*,  
Catamount Arts, 802-748-2600  
x105, [jfried@catamountarts.org](mailto:jfried@catamountarts.org)

**Elizabeth Gamache**, *Vice  
President of Grants & Community  
Investments*, Vermont Community  
Foundation, 802-658-6060 x7763,  
[egamache@vermontcf.org](mailto:egamache@vermontcf.org)

**Joan Goldstein**, *Commissioner*, VT  
Department of Economic  
Development, 802-272-2399  
[joan.goldstein@vermont.gov](mailto:joan.goldstein@vermont.gov)

**Martin Hahn**, *Housing Director*,  
Vermont Housing and  
Conservation Board, 802-828-  
3259, [mhahn@vhcb.org](mailto:mhahn@vhcb.org)

**Didi Harris**, *Strategic Initiatives  
Manager*, Vermont Birth to Five,  
802-343-7450,  
[didi@vermontbirthtofive.org](mailto:didi@vermontbirthtofive.org)

**Gary Holloway**, *Downtown  
Program Coordinator*, VT Dept of  
Housing and Community Devel,  
802-828-3220,  
[gary.holloway@vermont.gov](mailto:gary.holloway@vermont.gov)

**Wendy Knight**, *Commissioner*,  
Department of Tourism and  
Marketing, 802-798-2191,  
[wendy.knight@vermont.gov](mailto:wendy.knight@vermont.gov)

**Jenna Koloski**, *Community and  
Policy Manager*, VT Council on  
Rural Development, 802-225-6091,  
[jenna@vtrural.org](mailto:jenna@vtrural.org)

**Suzanne Legare Belcher**, *Field  
Service Representative*, VT Agency  
of Human Services, 802-751-0168,  
[suzanne.legarebelcher@vermont.gov](mailto:suzanne.legarebelcher@vermont.gov)

**Seth Leonard**, *Housing Programs  
Director*, USDA Rural Development,  
802-828-6013,  
[seth.leonard@vt.usda.gov](mailto:seth.leonard@vt.usda.gov)

**Pollaidh Major**, *Public Affairs  
Specialist and Administrative  
Assistant*, USDA Rural  
Development, 802-828-6080,  
[Pollaidh.Major@vt.usda.gov](mailto:Pollaidh.Major@vt.usda.gov)

**Becky Masure**, Rural Edge, 802-  
535-8154, [beckym@ruraledge.org](mailto:beckym@ruraledge.org)

**Karen Mittelman**, *Executive  
Director*, Vermont Arts Council,  
802-828-5420,  
[kmittelman@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:kmittelman@vermontartscouncil.org)

**Reeva Murphy**, *Deputy  
Commissioner*, VT Department of  
Children and Families, 802-760-  
0792, [reeva.murphy@vermont.gov](mailto:reeva.murphy@vermont.gov)

**Dave Pelletier**, *Planning  
Coordinator*, VT Agency of  
Transportation, 802-595-9675,  
[Dave.Pelletier@vermont.gov](mailto:Dave.Pelletier@vermont.gov)

**Nick Richardson**, *President*,  
Vermont Land Trust, 802-262-  
1210, [nick@vlt.org](mailto:nick@vlt.org)

**John Sayles**, *CEO*, VT Foodbank,  
802-477-4101,  
[jsayles@vtfoodbank.org](mailto:jsayles@vtfoodbank.org)

**Gus Seelig**, *Executive Director*, VT  
Housing & Conservation Board,  
802-828-3251, [gus@vhcb.org](mailto:gus@vhcb.org)

**Joe Short**, *Vice President*, The  
Northern Forest Ctr., 603-229-  
0679, [jshort@northernforest.org](mailto:jshort@northernforest.org)

**Katherine Sims**, *Director*, NEK  
Collaborative, 802-673-7376,  
[katherine@nekcollaborative.org](mailto:katherine@nekcollaborative.org)

**Misty Sinsigalli**, *Community  
Programs Specialist*, USDA Rural  
Development, 802-748-8746 x122,  
[misty.sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov](mailto:misty.sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov)

**David Snedeker**, *Executive  
Director*, Northeastern VT  
Development Assn., 802-748-8303  
x303 [dsnedeker@nvda.net](mailto:dsnedeker@nvda.net)

**Tim Tierney**, *Special Project Director*, VT Agency of Commerce and Community Devel, 802-505-5496, [tim.tierney@vermont.gov](mailto:tim.tierney@vermont.gov)

**Philip Tortora**, *Communications Director*, VT Dept. of Tourism & Marketing, 802-522-7323, [philip.tortora@vermont.gov](mailto:philip.tortora@vermont.gov)

**George Twigg**, *State Director*, Office of Congressman Peter Welch, 802-652-2450, [george.twigg@mail.house.gov](mailto:george.twigg@mail.house.gov)

**Kevin Wiberg**, *Philanthropic Advisor for Community Engagement*, Vermont Community Foundation, 802-388-3355 ext. 284, [kwiberg@vermontcf.org](mailto:kwiberg@vermontcf.org)

**Tracy Zschau**, *Conservation Director*, Vermont Land Trust, 802-745-6301, [tracy@vlt.org](mailto:tracy@vlt.org)





PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384  
802-223-6091 | [info@vtrural.org](mailto:info@vtrural.org)

<http://vtrural.org>



3 Court St., Middlebury, VT 05753  
802-388-3355 | [info@vermontcf.org](mailto:info@vermontcf.org)

<http://vermontcf.org>