

Empower Pownal

Climate Economy Model Communities Program

Report and Action Plan ~ October 2017



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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I. Introduction

In the very southwestern corner of Vermont and nestled in the Hoosic River Valley, Pownal is a gateway to all of the state lying to the north and east. It is home to a beautiful river and rolling hills and the great recreational opportunities that come with a diverse and scenic rural landscape. Pownal is made up of three villages, three fire stations, a rescue squad, an American Legion Post, a library, an elementary school, and a new health center. It is rich in transportation resources including a rail line, Route 7, and Route 346. It is also rich in renewable energy resources with two large solar installations and a recently re-powered hydroelectric generating facility at the old Tannery Dam. Finally, and most importantly, it is rich in human resources. Pownal has an active and engaged citizenry who care deeply about the town and its future.

VCRD's staff and the visiting team that traveled to Pownal was impressed with the level of engagement and passion demonstrated by those who participated in the process. A fierce loyalty to their community was shown by those who live in town, whether new to the area or settled there for generations. In addition to great people, Pownal has an impressive list of natural resources including beautiful mountains and hiking trails, a gorgeous river valley, and lush agricultural lands. It also has infrastructure that is the envy of other communities including rail lines, a state highway with steady traffic, and a town sewer and water system. Pownal's potential for economic development can be seen in some of the recent developments that have taken place in the community. Entrepreneurs like Trevor Mance of TAM and Bill Scully of the Tannery Dam project both have invested significantly at locations in town and have positive things to say about what Pownal has to offer.

Pownal's location is a big part of the communities' identity and is an important asset to build upon. Right across the border in Massachusetts is Williamstown, and Hoosic Falls' and Albany aren't far away in New York State. Within an hour's driving distance there are over 250,000 people. Pownal has a storied history of attracting tourists, once being known as "Little Switzerland" and at different times in its history attracted many artists as well as visitors to the Green Mountain Race Track.

While the Climate Economy Model Communities Program and Empower Pownal were designed to help the community come together, review major issues, develop priorities, and line up for action, VCRD has a couple of other goals behind these efforts. We look to build new volunteerism and encourage more local folks to get involved in moving the community forward. We want to help build the connections of the community to human, technical, and funding resources from lead agencies and organizations in the state. And we want to help the Visiting and Resource Teams that we build learn more about local needs and the dynamics in places like Pownal.

As the first community to participate in VCRD's Climate Economy Model Communities Program, the citizens of Pownal stepped forward to serve as pioneers, helping us to design and build a program that will serve communities around the state. Challenging conversations emerged as part of Empower Pownal as people expressed concerns about the process and the initiatives that might result. It wouldn't be fair to claim that the process of coming together to select community priorities resolved all of those concerns, but over 130 Pownalites participated in the process of choosing priorities for action and nearly 50 have signed up to serve on the Task Forces that will implement community-selected projects. Local leadership is focused on those Task Forces and on continually engaging the larger community as a way to help move them towards success.

At each step during the process, local participants remarked about how the Empower Pownal gatherings provided a rare opportunity to convene with friends and neighbors. In Vermont's small towns in this

modern age, the chance to meet and engage with neighbors has value in its own right. Some participants had never been to the American Legion and many developed a greater appreciation of the potential uses of that versatile space.

At its core, the Climate Economy Model Communities Program asks participating communities to develop their own community-based vision of a new and sustainable local economy. What are the models of economic development, affordability, and prosperity that will thrive in the new climate economy? Whether or not someone accepts predictions about climate change, the national and global response already underway represent a tremendous economic opportunity for those who are able to develop new models suitable for rural communities. And, for a place like Pownal, what are the assets to build upon in defining this new future?

Pownal grappled with these questions and identified five initiatives to rally behind at the Community Meeting on July 25. It wasn't an easy choice – there are many other great action ideas included later in this report (pp 7-9). Task Forces have now come together to:

- **Develop a Network of Farm and Food Producers in Pownal to Share Resources, Market Together, and to Connect Unused Land with New or Expanding Farmers, Foresters, and Other Producers**
- **Develop More Trails and Rejuvenate the River to Provide Better Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Pownal**
- **Reduce Barriers to Starting and Growing Businesses and Agriculture in Pownal**
- **Grow Jobs in Pownal through Business Incubation and the Redevelopment of Underutilized Properties**
- **Build a Community-Wide Green Up Process in Pownal to Address Roadside Litter and Illegal Dumping**

The Task Forces are already hard at work. Reach out to the local Chairperson if you want to join their efforts. Contact information for each Task Force Chair is listed in the action plan section of this report.

There are many people to thank for making the Empower Pownal process possible.

We would like to thank the Pownal Selectboard for inviting this process in Pownal and for their leadership throughout. We would also like to thank the Steering Committee that was formed to name and launch the process and to support it along the way. Members included: Matt Barlin, Shannon Barsotti, Bill Botzow, Ruth Botzow, Nelson Brownell, Michael Carrel, Phoebe Cohen, Rebecca Dragon, Karen Gallese, Peter Hopkins, Wendy Hopkins, Donna Lauzon, Bill Lounsbury, Bruce and Caroline Martell, Priscilla Maxon, Sean O'Donovan, Michelle Pekrol, Todd Phillips, Megan Randall, Jackie and Tim Sedlock, Michael Slattery, Barbara True-Weber, and Jim Winchester. This team and a number of community leaders and organizations helped to spread the word about each event in the Empower Pownal process.

Hosting community meetings can't happen without great meeting places. The American Legion Post 90 deserves a special thank-you for hosting both the Kick-Off in June and the Community Meeting in July. In particular, Bruce and Caroline Martell were so generous with their time in helping provide a convenient and comfortable place to meet. Pownal Elementary School and staff there were also very generous in hosting the Task Force meetings at the end of August. This is especially true given that the meeting was taking place in the waning days of summer right as final preparations were being made for students to return.

The Visiting and Resource Teams that travelled to Pownal and will continue to consult by phone and in person on the Pownal priorities deserve high praise. Vermont is fortunate to have many great people serving in state government, non-profits, and in the private sector. They are hungry for opportunities to help Vermont towns achieve great things, and their partnership is critical to our community-based work.

It is important to acknowledge the organizations that provide financial support to the Climate Economy Model Communities Program. Thank you to the Vermont Low Income Trust for Electricity (VLITE), the High Meadows Fund, an anonymous foundation, and VCRD's generous supporters for making this program and our work in Pownal possible.

Local leadership is critical in moving community-identified action ideas forward. Pownal is fortunate to have the following team stepping up to get things done. Ray and Dawn Rodrigues leading the Recreation Task Force, Richard Smith and Shannon Barsotti leading the Economic Development Task Force, Dave Low and Megan Randall leading the Green-Up Task Force, Ashley Harwood and John Primmer leading the Local Food and Agriculture Task Force, and finally Deb Baker leading the Reducing Barriers Task Force.

VCRD owes a special thank you to Shannon Barsotti for leading the effort to bring this process to Pownal and for serving as the local chair of Empower Pownal. Whether fielding phone calls, posting flyers, organizing the Kick-Off lunch or attending meetings, she has put countless hours and significant energy into this effort. VCRD can't do our work without local partners, and Shannon exemplifies the best of community leadership here in Vermont. Shannon has shown tremendous grace and fortitude and, with her guidance and support, we are confident the Empower Pownal Task Forces are going to accomplish great things.

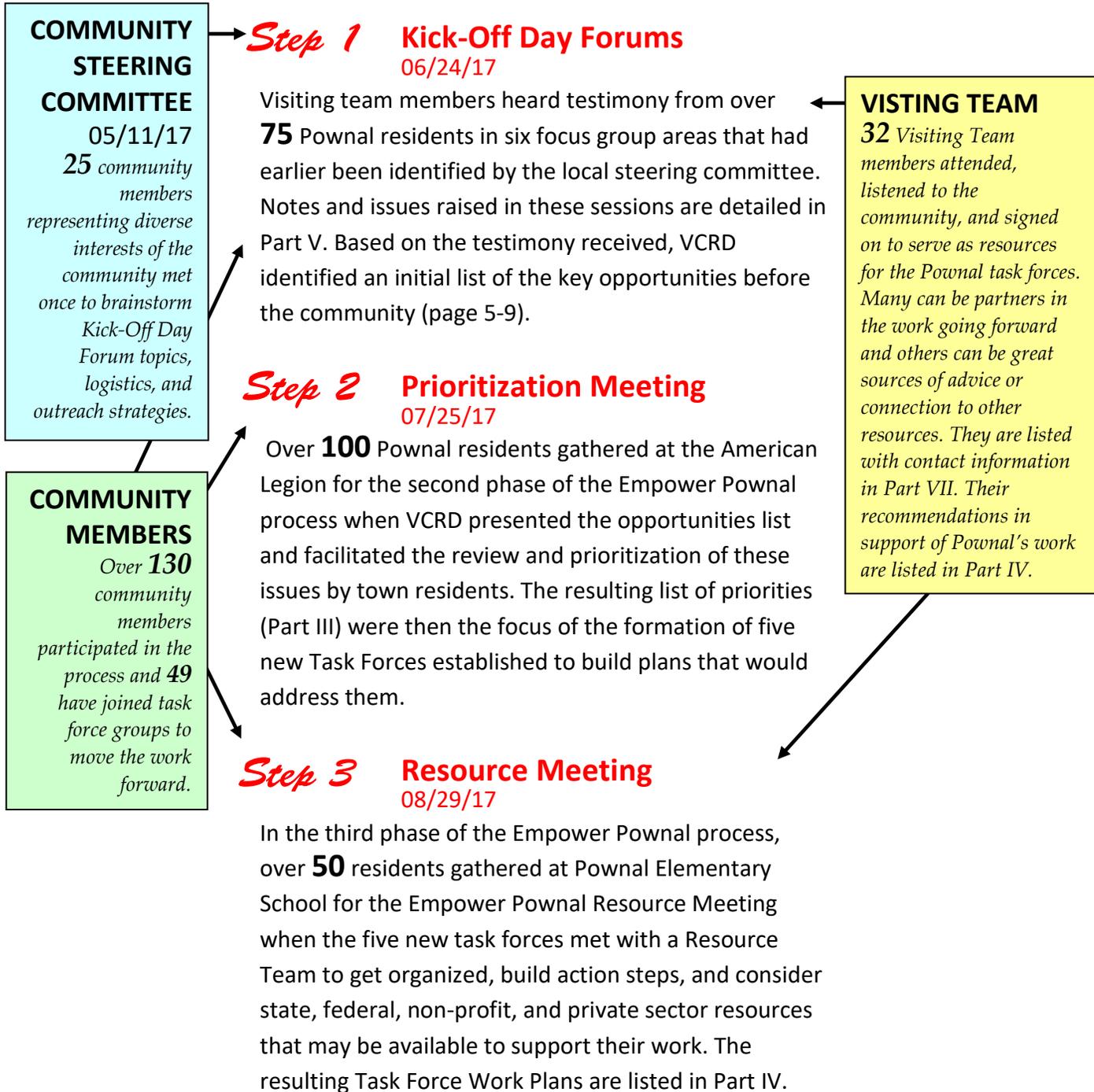
Finally, VCRD is grateful to all those citizens from Pownal who stepped forward to participate in the Empower Pownal process. We feel fortunate to work with communities as they grapple with tough questions and rally behind solutions that they believe will make life better for all in their town. The conversations aren't always easy. As long as we never forget that we share a love for our towns and our state, we can have confidence that the tough work that community members do will lead to positive results.



Empower Pownal chair, Shannon Barsotti, welcomes community members to the Kick-Off Day luncheon and focus forums to follow.

II. The Empower Pownal Process

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD)'s Climate Economy Model Communities 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 Pownal consisted of three phases depicted here:**



III. Pownal Priorities

Determined by Pownal residents at the VCRD Prioritization Meeting, July 25, 2017

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Pownal community members whittled down a list of 16 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with red and blue stickers, over 100 participants chose five action ideas that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the July 25th meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Pownal residents selected five priorities for future action:

✓ Develop a Network of Farm and Food Producers in Pownal to Share Resources, Market Together, and to Connect Unused Land with New or Expanding Farmers, Foresters and Other Producers

Pownal has always been home to agricultural production and local growers and producers remain a big part of Pownal's economic activity. Pownal also has an abundance of agricultural and forest lands, much which is under-utilized. Most farming in town is at a smaller scale with many using the fruits of their labor to supplement retirement or other income. A Local Agricultural Group could develop opportunities for Pownal's various producers to collaborate on processing and packaging facilities, the sharing of goods and services, and developing consistent access to surrounding markets. The group could also facilitate the connection of existing and under-utilized sugar bushes, and forest and agricultural lands with those looking to start or grow their farm, maple sugar, or forest product activities.

✓ Develop More Trails and Rejuvenate the River to Provide Better Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Pownal

As home to the Long/Appalachian Trail, the Taconic Ridge Trail, and the Hoosic River, Pownal is already home to some great hiking and outdoor recreational opportunities. Snowmobiling, ATV's, and dirt bikes also attract many visitors and a significant local following. An Outdoor Recreation and Trails Committee could document and market existing town resources and work to develop and market new ones as a way to attract more visitors to town and to provide more great opportunities for residents. The committee could also focus on cleaning up Pownal Beach and other areas and providing better access points to the river.

✓ Reduce Barriers to Starting and Growing Businesses and Agriculture in Pownal

Some in Pownal believe that there are too many barriers to starting a business, growing a business, or growing agricultural production in town. These might include restrictive land use regulations, permitting processes and a high cost of owning property. Addressing these issues has the potential to jump-start economic development in town. A committee could form that would research the various barriers to economic development and working lands activity in Pownal and then develop and implement a plan to address those barriers.

✓ **Grow Jobs in Pownal through Business Incubation and the Redevelopment of Underutilized Properties**

As the host of a former horse and dog racing track, a wire coating facility and a tannery, Pownal was once home to many more jobs and greater economic activity. While some of the buildings remain, much of the economic activity has slipped away over time. The TAM recycling facility in Pownal provides an example of how a pre-existing structure can be re-developed in a way that utilizes existing infrastructure, creates local jobs, increases the property tax base, and provides an important regional service. An Economic Development Task Force could be convened to recruit additional economic activity to Pownal. Business incubation and the re-development of existing sites, including but not limited to the racetrack, the Mack Molding facility, and the gas station/vacation cottage property at the corner of Rte. 7 and 346 could be the focus of this group's work.

✓ **Build a community-wide green up process in Pownal to address roadside litter and illegal dumping**

Pownal has beautiful scenery that can be viewed from many of the roadways in town. Unfortunately, too many roadsides and some natural areas are marred with litter and illegal dumping. A Task Force could form to develop a community-wide green up process to pick up litter and to address illegal dumping. The Task Force could also explore having businesses or other organizations in town sponsor or "adopt" certain areas for clean-up.



Community members took part in a dot-voting exercise to choose their top priorities for action.

Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

Along with the five chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action that community members shared at the Kick-Off Forums. 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 Safety for Pedestrians and Cyclists in Pownal

Route 7 carries significant traffic travelling at a high rate of speed through Pownal. The location of the elementary school and the nature of the nearby intersection with Route 7 means that children in town are not allowed to bike or walk to school. Children also have few safe places to learn how to ride their bikes, and crossing Route 7 or travelling elsewhere in town is a challenge for those traveling on foot or by bike. Meanwhile, because of its terrain, scenery, and location, Pownal attracts many road cyclists. A Bike and Pedestrian Task Force could complete an overall assessment of safety concerns and then develop and implement plans to improve town infrastructure to provide better pedestrian and bike safety in town. The group could also explore the development of maps and other amenities to attract more cyclists to the community.

Help More People Make Energy Efficiency Upgrades to Their Homes and Businesses

Like most communities in Vermont, Pownal has an aging housing stock that requires significant financial resources to heat, cool, and provide electricity. Many residents of town also live in mobile homes that have high energy costs. While some in town have connected to incentives to improve the efficiency of their homes and businesses, there has not been a systematic effort to be sure all residents and business owners have both the awareness and access to energy efficiency programs that work for them. A Residential Energy Efficiency Task Force could help residents increase the affordability, longevity, and health of their homes and businesses through energy efficiency. Working with partners including Efficiency Vermont, Green Mountain Power, Neighborworks of Western Vermont and the BROOC Weatherization Program, outreach, incentives, and programmatic support could be targeted to those in Pownal who stand to benefit most from reducing their energy costs and increasing the health and comfort of their homes. Small measures like annual button-up efforts, volunteer outreach and community volunteer activities could also be included in the Task Force's work.

Create a Rest Area or Attraction to Lure Passersby to Stop in Pownal

Pownal is a gateway to Vermont with a long history of attracting visitors. With major population centers within a short drive and the Berkshires drawing many visitors, as the host to the major north-south thoroughfare through the area, Pownal sees significant traffic. Meanwhile, visitors to town are often going elsewhere to access dining, shopping, and other tourism-based activities. A local committee could develop and implement a plan to create a rest area or other attractions to draw visitors off of Route 7, provide basic services including electric vehicle charging, and serve as a venue to promote all the great things Pownal has to offer.

Build a Gathering Place in Town

While Pownal hosts the American Legion, a few markets, a great library and the elementary school, many residents say that there is no common place to gather in town and to attract visitors. A local task force could explore models and opportunities to develop a community cafe. Such a cafe would increase economic activity and increase the sense of community by providing a place for residents to meet and run into each other.

Develop a Park and Ride and/or a Bus Shelter and Shared Ride Opportunities

Pownal is currently served by the Green Mountain Express bus that travels regularly between Bennington and Williamstown. There is great potential for higher use of this service, and that would lead to improved service options. Many in Pownal travel out of town, north, south and west to access jobs, schools and other services. Missing is a parking facility that allows residents to catch the bus on Route 7 and better enables carpooling from town. A Committee could convene to develop and implement a plan for a park-and-ride facility and bus shelter in town. They could look into including an electric vehicle charging station, bulletin board and other amenities. The committee could also explore other shared ride facilitation such as an online ride board, jitney service, or an uber-like service.

Advance Affordable Residential Scale Solar

Many Pownal residents have benefited by installing residential solar and there are many others who are curious about the opportunity solar represents but have unanswered questions or lack the financial resources to make the investment in self-generation of electricity. Some residents also are renters or have properties that are not well-suited for solar, both which represent barriers to participating in the net-metering of renewable energy to offset one's electric bills. A Home/Business Solar Task Force could be convened to facilitate residential-scale and community-led solar development through outreach, education, and engagement with the town and partners.

Splash Pad/Rec Area

Aside from at the elementary school, there are few recreational facilities for the many children and families in Pownal. A playground and/or water park could provide a gathering point for residents, a draw to visitors, and a healthy way to play outside without having to leave town. A local group could convene to determine needs, develop plans, review sites, and ultimately develop a place for outdoor play and picnicking in town.

Municipal and School Facilities

The energy and maintenance costs of Pownal's municipal and schools facilities are shared by all property tax payers in the community. Efficiency and renewable development opportunities can help increase the comfort of these facilities, increase resilience and reduce the costs to local citizens. A Task Force that could include town and/or school officials could develop and implement plans to reduce the energy costs and generate electricity as a way to increase the affordability of maintaining these facilities. This group could also have a role in any ongoing discussions about the development of a new town office

Energy Development and Grid Resilience That Works For Pownal

Pownal hosts three large ground-mounted solar installations and many local residents are not interested in any additional large projects, particularly those located on scenic or potentially productive agricultural and forest lands. Some expressed a desire to ensure that any additional solar development happen on old landfills, brownfields, gravel pits, or rooftops that can't be used for another productive purpose. There also is the desire to ensure that the electricity and financial benefits of projects flow back to the Pownal community. A task force could form to advance solar development that fits with the character of the Pownal land and community. This group could also explore additional opportunities for micro or small hydroelectric generation in town, and residential or community-scale storage and micro-grids to increase grid resilience and reduce the disruption and cost caused by outages.

Develop Rail Service, Trolley Service, and/or a Train Station in Pownal

Pownal hosts major rail lines and once hosted a trolley that traveled from Bennington to Williamstown. The rail connection and right-of-ways represent an opportunity to provide convenient connections to major population centers in Albany, Boston, and New York. A Pownal station and rail service to these cities would bring visitors to Pownal, make it more attractive as a place to live, and increase mobility for those already living in town. A local task force could develop and implement plans to increase rail service through town and create a station to allow people to begin or end their trip in Pownal.

Make Pownal a Hub for Artists

Pownal has a long history of playing host to artists and remains a home and destination for many who are part of the creative economy. The scenic beauty of the Hoosic River Valley along with proximity to other arts communities and MASS MoCA are major assets to build upon. A committee could convene to facilitate networking among existing artists, the development of shared resources like studio space, the promotion of outdoor locations for photos and painting, and the marketing of Pownal as a great community for the arts.



Community members read the opportunities list together at the July 25th meeting, and then discussed and championed the ideas before taking part in a dot-voting exercise to choose their top priorities for action.

IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, August 29, 2017

Pownal Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. At the Resource Meeting, committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small visiting resource teams 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.

✓ Develop a Network of Farm and Food Producers in Pownal to Share Resources, Market Together, and to Connect Unused Land with New or Expanding Farmers, Foresters and Other Producers

Community Chairs: **John Primmer and Ashley Harwood**

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

Resource Team Members: **Liz Ruffa**, Northshire Grows

Don Campbell, *Southwest Regional Director*, Vermont Land Trust

Pownal has always been home to agricultural production and local growers and producers remain a big part of Pownal's economic activity. Pownal also has an abundance of agricultural and forest lands, much which is under-utilized. Most farming in town is at a smaller scale with many using the fruits of their labor to supplement retirement or other income. A Local Agricultural Group could develop opportunities for Pownal's various producers to collaborate on processing and packaging facilities, the sharing of goods and services, and developing consistent access to surrounding markets. The group could also facilitate the connection of existing and under-utilized sugar bushes, and forest and agricultural lands with those looking to start or grow their farm, maple sugar, or forest product activities.

Priority Action Steps

1. As a first step towards creating the Pownal Agricultural Network, the Task Force will build a list of all farmers, food producers, and large land owners in town.
2. A first meeting will be planned and a strategy for inviting participants will be identified and deployed.
3. At a first meeting and on an ongoing basis the network organizers will:
 - a. Develop opportunities to regularly convene the network.
 - b. Ask everyone what their challenges are and what they need to succeed in their land-based businesses in Pownal.
 - c. Discuss the potential to develop a Pownal Pride brand and label for products produced in the community.
 - d. Explore how farmers and producers in Pownal could aggregate and market foods together with a market site or farmstand, a common market booth at farmers markets, a joint CSA, delivering together to institutional purchasers, or in other ways...choosing a good starting point and seeing what works best before expanding to other ways to collectively market products.
4. Over time, the group will also look at gaps in production that might be filled by new businesses that would allow the expansion of working lands businesses in Pownal including potential for slaughter or butchering facilities in town.

Resources

1. The group may decide that outside facilitation could help structure or manage a large meeting in Pownal to bring all farmers, food producers and farm supporters together. The Vermont Council on Rural Development could help if useful: www.vtrural.org.

2. Check out USDA Rural Development’s “Value Added Producer Grants” program that could support efforts of individual farms or producers. The goal of the program is helping producers generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase income. Contact Susan A. Poland at (802) 828-6002 and Susan.Poland@vt.usda.gov.
3. Farmers trying out new products or ways to grow them could apply for research funds from Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education (SARE): <http://www.nesare.org/State-Programs/Vermont>.
4. Vermont’s Working Lands Enterprise Fund out of the Agency of Agriculture could help individual farmers or producers, or the network itself: <http://workinglands.vermont.gov/>.
5. The Vermont Housing Conservation Board could help by funding a grant-writer to support projects of the network or its members: <http://www.vhcb.org/Farm-Forest-Viability/>.
6. Northshire Grows could provide facilitative help or grant-writing in support of the network efforts: liz@northshiregrows.org.
7. The New England Grassroots Environmental Fund could provide small seed grants to help the group get started: <https://grassrootsfund.org/>.
8. The Vermont Community Foundation could also be a great supporter of the start-up of this project.
9. The Vermont Land Trust could help with conservation support, farm transitions, and potentially help new young farmers connect to available land in Pownal: <https://www.vlt.org/>.

Task Force Signups

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Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

After the Prioritization Meeting, 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 group appears to have identified the need for communication as a key issue. The old Bennington Farm to Plate (BF2P) Council used to call it “connecting the dots.” It might prove useful to review the BF2P Action Plan from a few years ago (available through Bennington County Regional Commission) which identifies many of the key players in the regional food system. It is wise to consider Pownal as part of a somewhat broader regional food system as there are key support services and markets located in Bennington, Williamstown/North Adams, and in NY State.

Bennington Farm to Plate used to organize an annual food systems forum, generally attended by over 100 farmers and other interested parties. Those events were most recently held at the One World Conservation Center (www.oneworldconservationcenter.org), just across the Pownal border off Route 7 in Bennington. OWCC has expressed a strong interest in such topics and might prove to be a useful partner, at the very least a potential meeting place.

Jack Glade at the Tutorial Center has a lot of experience connecting producers with institutional buyers through the Youth Agriculture Project (<http://www.tutoringvermont.org/our-services/yapinfo/>). He might have some good insights and could perhaps direct some resources toward Pownal.

✓ Develop More Trails and Rejuvenate the River to Provide Better Outdoor Recreation Opportunities in Pownal

Chairperson: **Ray and Dawn Rodrigues**

Facilitator: **Ben Doyle**, *Community and Economic Development Director*, USDA Rural Development

Resource Leaders: **Tim Tierney**, *Special Projects Director*, Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Breck Knauff, *Executive Director*, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Peter Hall, *Bennington Area Trail System*, Bike Shop Owner, Pownal Resident

Sarah Gardner, *Center for Environmental Studies*, (on possible role for her class)

As home to the Long/Appalachian Trail, the Taconic Ridge Trail, and the Hoosic River, Pownal is already home to some great hiking and outdoor recreational opportunities. Snowmobiling, ATV's, and dirt bikes also attract many visitors and a significant local following. An Outdoor Recreation and Trails Committee could document and market existing town resources and work to develop and market new ones as a way to attract more visitors to town and to provide more great opportunities for residents. The committee could also focus on cleaning up Pownal Beach and other areas and providing better access points to the river.

Priority Action Steps

1. Identify various user groups both formal and informal (hikers, ATVers, bikers, cyclists, etc.)
2. Conduct asset inventory of recreational opportunities with input from user groups (beach, trails, access points). Focus on identifying “legal” or legitimate trails.
3. Create a map that displays various identified assets and that can be shared with the community.
4. Identify an initial list of “opportunities” that could increase access for recreational uses. This could include repurposing of public land, working with private land owners to expand access to existing trails, or the purchase of land for recreational development. Categorize opportunities as short, medium, or long-term and try to sketch out cost projections (if any) as well as potential funding sources if needed.
5. Through a well-developed communication plan, share the group's findings (assets, map, opportunities) with the community and solicit community member’s ideas—through surveys—on what priorities the group should focus on. Be sure to offer “other” categories for unsurfaced opportunities.
6. Develop website/brochures that provide information about recreational opportunities.
7. Increase signage for recreational opportunities and safety in particular. Fishing and swimming access should be well marked.
8. Offer bike and water safety classes for young students.
9. Develop a management plan for the town forest that increases opportunities for recreational usage.

Resources

1. Jessica Savage, Recreation Program Manager, Forest Parks and Rec, 802-249-1230, jessica.savage@vermont.gov. Jessica manages a number of recreational grant programs through the state including rec. grants for trail development and mapping and community forest planning grants.
2. Richard Amore, Planning and Project Manager, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, 802-828-5229. Richard manages a number of planning grant programs including the Better Connections program which could help the community work with Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTRANS) to implement street improvements that are more conducive to pedestrian traffic.
3. VTRANS Bike and Ped grant program: <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped>

4. Buildings and General Services Recreation Grant Program: <http://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>.
5. Sarah Gardner at Center for Environmental Studies (her students can support this effort).
6. Breck Knauff, Youth Conservation Corps (corps members could potentially work on trail projects): breck.knauff@vycc.org.
7. USDA Rural Business Development Grant (funds equipment/activities that ultimately support small and emerging businesses): <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants/vt>
8. Vermont Community Foundation: <http://www.vermontcf.org/NonprofitsGrants/AvailableGrants.aspx>
9. Local Motion – for Kids Bike Safety and other on-road bike safety strategies: http://www.localmotion.org/bike_smart.
10. Community resource people, such as Wendy Hopkins at Hoosic River Watershed Association (HOORWA) and others to be identified: <http://hoorwa.org/>.

Task Force Sign-Ups

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Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

After the Prioritization Meeting, 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.

Definitely get in touch with the Bennington Area Trail System (BATS) as they have done a lot of trail work and are great at organizing. BATS focuses on trails for mountain biking and trail running, but their approach is generally applicable. www.batsvt.org. Brad DeBoer from BATS attended the first public meeting and is a good contact.

The Bennington Area Chamber of Commerce is working to incorporate outdoor recreation and trails in its mission and work program. Jonah Spivak, the current president, has been leading the charge. Contact Matt Harrington (executive director) to talk about how Pownal might participate more actively in their efforts.

Tim Scoggins is a select board member in Shaftsbury who also is passionate about trails and hiking. He has worked with Jessica Savage on some online trail mapping for trails in the region. Tim is a great guy and I am sure he could provide some insights.

The Town of Bennington received a municipal planning grant for a trail study and map. Mark Anders at the Bennington County Regional Commission worked on the map (<https://www.bennington.com/recreationintheshires/>). Something similar could be done for Pownal.

Donald Campbell at the Vermont Land Trust helps manage farm and forest conservation, access to farmland and outdoor recreation project development: donald@vlt.org.

Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development's outdoor recreation leader is Tim Tierney, tim.tierney@vermont.gov.

Vermont Mountain Bike Association is a statewide advocate, collaborator, and network builder for outdoor recreation and the economy. Contact Tom Stuessy, tom@vmba.org.



Ray Rodrigues, Chair of the "Develop Trails and Rejuvenate the River... Task Force" presented their work plan to the full group on Resource Day, with Ben Doyle of USDA Rural Development looking on.

✓ Reduce Barriers to Starting and Growing Businesses and Agriculture in Pownal

Community Chair: **Deb Baker**

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

Resource Team Members: **Matthew Harrington**, Executive Director, Bennington Chamber

Some in Pownal believe that there are too many barriers to starting a business, growing a business, or growing agricultural production in town. These might include restrictive land use regulations, permitting processes and a high cost of owning property. Addressing these issues has the potential to jump-start economic development in town. A committee could form that would research the various barriers to economic development and working lands activity in Pownal and then develop and implement a plan to address those barriers.

Priority Action Steps

1. Recruit New Task Force Members:
 - a. Post a description of the Task Force and an invitation to join to Front Porch Forum.
 - b. Work with the Bennington Chamber to send an invitation to their membership located in Pownal.
2. Identify and engage newer businesses and agricultural producers in Pownal in order to:
 - a. Recruit them to join the Task Force
 - b. Survey them to better understand the obstacles they have had to overcome as they got started, and the obstacles they might face as they consider expansion.
3. Engage the Task Forces on a Farm and Food Producers Network and Redevelopment of Under-Utilized Properties to coordinate efforts regarding the identification of businesses and Farm/Food Producers in town.
4. Through a survey of businesses/farmers, catalog the infrastructure limitations or challenges including but not limited to: water, septic, parking, broadband and cell connectivity.
5. Perform a sector-specific analysis to produce a checklist of steps for those wanting to start a business. Sectors might include retail, manufacturing, service, hospitality, and food.
6. Perform a Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats analysis to identify areas of opportunity for entrepreneurs and farmers in Pownal. This should include an evaluation of the influence of neighboring states and communities and a review of potential clusters to focus activity.
7. Develop a webpage and/or other tools to help potential businesses and farmers understand the opportunities in Pownal and identify and connect with some of the resources they will need to get started.

Resources

1. Matthew Harrington, Bennington Chamber of Commerce for help with outreach to Pownal members, and assistance in connecting with other resources: matt@bennington.com and (802) 447-3311.
2. Bill Colvin and Jonathan Cooper, Bennington Regional Planning Commission and Bennington Community Investment Corp. for help with market/cluster analysis and identification of other possible business resources: bcolvin@bcrvt.org or jcooper@bcrvt.org or (802) 442-0713.
3. VT Secretary of State Business Start-Up Guide: <https://www.sec.state.vt.us/corporationsbusiness-services/resources/business-start-up-guide.aspx>.
4. Annette K. Hoyle, Business Counselor at the Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council at 802.665.1744 or ahoyle@broc.org.
5. Dimitri Gardner, The Lightning Jar for assistance in thinking about neighboring communities/states and what clusters/niches might represent strong opportunities for Pownal: dimitri@lightningjarvt.com.

Task Force Contacts

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Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

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Bill and Jonathan at Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) are good contacts. A website is a great communication tool; BCRC has long dreamed of creating something where farmers and other food system participants could see what others are doing, share ideas, and perhaps initiate joint ventures. Many small business share the same need and working together can do what cannot be done alone. Contact Jonathan at the BCRC/Bennington Community Industrial Corp at 802-442-0713 ext 312 to explore if and how they might be able to help.

Take advantage of opportunities presented by the need for home weatherization and installation of alternative heating systems. Like many communities in our region, Pownal has a lot of older homes, most of which would benefit from such work – and immediately begin returning \$ to the owners. Win for the business, win for the homeowner investors. Efficiency Vermont has tried to spur some interest in the region, but not much has happened. Maybe someone locally could connect with Efficiency VT, or talk with NeighborWorks of Western Vermont, which now has an office in Bennington, 802-440-5210, about opportunities to engage as an energy auditor and/or building contractor through their Heat Squad program.



Photo by CARL VILLANOVA

✓ Grow Jobs in Pownal through Business Incubation and the Redevelopment of Underutilized Properties

Community Chairs: **Shannon Barsotti and Richard Smith**

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

Resource Team Members: **Dimitri Gardner**, Lightning Jar and Global Z

Adam Grinold, *Executive Director*, Brattleboro Development Credit Corp.

Elisabeth Marx, *Senior Philanthropic Advisor*, Vermont Community Foundation

As the host of a former horse and dog racing track, a wire coating facility and a tannery, Pownal was once home to many more jobs and greater economic activity. While some of the buildings remain, much of the economic activity has slipped away over time. The TAM recycling facility in Pownal provides an example of how a pre-existing structure can be re-developed in a way that utilizes existing infrastructure, creates local jobs, increases the property tax base, and provides an important regional service. An Economic Development Task Force could be convened to recruit additional economic activity to Pownal. Business incubation and the re-development of existing sites, including but not limited to the racetrack, the Mack Molding facility, and the gas station/vacation cottage property at the corner of Rte. 7 and 346 could be the focus of this group's work.

Action Steps:

1. Inventory under-utilized properties and identify possible uses (including buildings and land).
2. Create Teams to speak with owners of under-utilized properties in town.
3. Create a "Pownal Small Business Network" to enable networking for entrepreneurs.
4. Create a comprehensive Pownal business listing – expand this from the "bulletin board."
5. Conduct a feasibility study to identify possible uses/re-uses of properties and then prioritize based on Task Force priorities.
6. Dedicate a team of people to support redevelopment of "the Fork" property and to support entrepreneurs.
7. Support Village Center Designation to support entrepreneurs and "the fork" property.

Resources:

1. Bennington County Regional Planning Commission. Bill Colvin, bcolvin@bcrcvt.org or (802) 442-0713.
2. USDA Rural Development: Rural Business Development Grant Program and Community Facilities Program. Contact Ben Doyle, Benjamin.Doyle@vt.usda.gov or (802) 828-6080.
3. VT Agency of Commerce: Village Center Program and Community Development Program. Richard Amore, richard.amore@vermont.gov or (802) 828-5229.
4. Bennington County Chamber of Commerce. Matthew Harrington, matt@bennington.com or 802-447-3311.
5. Southern Vermont Economy Project. Sarah Lang, slang@brattleborodevelopment.com or (802) 257-7731 Ext. 222.
6. VT Community Foundation. Elisabeth Marx, emarx@vermontcf.org or (802) 388-3355 ext 241.
7. Bennington College. Susan Scorbotti, sgorbati@bennington.edu or 802 447-4267.
8. Vermont Small Business Development Center. Steve Paddock, spaddock@vtsbdc.org or (802) 989-9605.
9. Lightning Jar. Dimitri Garder, dimitri@globalz.com or (802) 445.1011 x205.

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Participate in meetings of the Bennington County Regional Commission's Brownfields committee. Pownal has been represented on the committee by Walt Klinger and with a new assessment grant beginning October 1 of this year, there may be opportunities to help plan for redevelopment.

Remain engaged in the Regional Economic Development Groups and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process (<http://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/major-initiatives/ceds>) as it could lead to US Economic Development Authority (EDA) funded economic development projects down the line.



The task force met on Resource Day to begin building their work plan.

✓ Build a community-wide green up process in Pownal to address roadside litter and illegal dumping

Community Co-Chairs: **Megan Randall and Dave Low**
Facilitator: **Jenna Koloski**

Pownal has beautiful scenery that can be viewed from many of the roadways in town. Unfortunately, too many roadsides and some natural areas are marred with litter and illegal dumping. A Task Force could form to develop a community-wide green up process to pick up litter and to address illegal dumping. The Task Force could also explore having businesses or other organizations in town sponsor or “adopt” certain areas for clean-up.

Priority Action Steps:

1. Reenergize and extend Green Up Day. Make Green Up Day a more organized/structured event that includes community volunteers, school and youth groups, and a community meal and celebration. Additionally, host 3 or 4 Green Up Day events throughout the year to keep the clean up going year-round.
2. Develop a public relations campaign that would include signage, press releases and letters to the editor, social media and/or the town website, before and after photos, a display at town meeting, and awareness building at other events and venues to build a “clean and green” culture.
3. Engage community volunteers of all ages by building a list of on-call volunteers for community clean-up efforts, building sign-up sheets to display at community events and town meeting, and other strategies to engage youth, adults, and other school and community members and leaders in clean-up efforts.
4. Join and host community green-up events such as the Hoosic River Watershed Association (HooRWA) clean up day in November and a Pownal Beach Clean Up Day. Then, share the story of clean up efforts to highlight volunteer and community work to green up the community.
5. Connect to and develop relationships with local authorities on the goals and work of the task force including the local sheriff’s office, the Planning Commission, the Selectboard, the Transfer Station, and other key partners and authorities working on green up and illegal dumping in and around the community.

Other Potential Action Steps:

- Work with leaders and students in the education community to develop youth-led clean-up and green-up efforts in a safe setting. Learn from other schools in the state how they have held successful and safe green up efforts with youth.
- Identify a name for the new Task Force that is exciting and engaging and builds a sense of ownership and pride such as “Pownal Proud” or “Pownal Pride – Green and Clean.” The task force could build a campaign or competition to enlist local youth to choose a name for the group.
- Develop a local adopt-a-road program where residents or groups can adopt a section of road in town and commit to picking up litter and “greening-up” regularly.

Resources

1. Joel Howard from the Sheriff’s Office.
2. Green Up Day Website: www.greenupvermont.org.
3. Crystal Gardner about clean-up efforts in collaboration with the school.
4. Barry Domina, Compliance Coordinator, Northwest Vermont Solid Waste District, 802-524-5986, Bdomina@nswd.org.

V. The Town Kick-Off Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 75 Pownal residents and the Visiting Team on June 24 2017

Although the prioritization work of the 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.

Home Efficiency Opportunities

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Li Ling Young (Scribe), Hyle Bates, Jon Copans, Liam Fagan, David Howe, Elaine Haytko, Stephanie Lane, Paul Markowitz, Bhima Nitta, Dotty Schnure, Gus Seelig

What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- In Pownal we can heat with wood. Growing and owning our own heat. There is concern about the environmental impact, but it works well and is less expensive.
- Solar arrays are enough to provide head and take care of all electric needs. It is possible to be energy neutral through geothermal/air source heat pumps, and electric cars. Those with solar can have their cars powered by the sun, at least when travelling locally.
- In our family we heat with a wood stove, propane, and oil as a back-up. Many combine multiple energy sources for heating their homes.
- Efficiency Vermont program is great. I received multiple rebates, especially on LED's and heat pump hot water heaters as well as a heat pump clothes dryer.
- The federal tax rebate helped with solar, and Efficiency Vermont's incentives help also. Access to financial assistance makes solar more accessible.
- Heat with a wood boiler – using cord wood. Log and chop the trees – total cost is about \$650 annually for heat. Use oil in the summer, and the circulation pump for the boiler increases the electric bill by half.
- Connecting with the various providers, Efficiency Vermont, Neighborworks, BROCC, is overwhelming. People don't know where to start.
- Others don't find the process overwhelming, but want it to be cost effective. Things like insulation are very cost effective. Geothermal and Tesla batteries are not as cost effective. Many people don't have the money to make investments in efficiency and other energy projects.
- Some complained about getting too many unsolicited calls from solar companies.
- Everyone's situation is unique. It is difficult to plan for a multi-year payback when I'm not sure how long I will be in my home.
- Some feel overwhelmed about the process of going solar. There is a lack of knowledge about transitioning to new energy sources.

What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?

- There should be better incentives for door and window replacements. That is a gap in the rebates.
- Outreach could be much better to promote efficiency programs, especially connecting with the elderly and folks who don't use the internet.
- Something like the winter blitz that Bennington and Williams College do – with students going door-to-door to help neighbors button up, could be great.
- The housing stock in Pownal is really old. Many heat with wood.
- Wood smoke increases pollution during the winter. We should increase the efficiency of both the house and the woodstoves.
- One citizen built their house in 2009 and had to pay \$20k to connect to the grid. They currently don't have a heating systems, planning for wood/oil, but now air source heat pumps have become way more cost effective, so the path forward isn't clear.

What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?

- There are relatively cheap actions people can take. Installing LED's, doing air sealing. Neighbors can help neighbors with these activities.
- Maybe we could have a community sewing event to make heat trapping curtains and door "snakes" for people.
- The mobile home parks are tough to reach out to. It would be great to create opportunities in the parks that would benefit residents, like community solar.
- Energy audits are very helpful – blower door tests and infrared cameras, to figure out what you need done in your home and to show where to insulate and seal.

- This is the first I have heard of Efficiency Vermont. There needs to be better outreach to make people aware of services.
- It would be great to do some projects rooted in the schools – service learning projects so students get involved in the community.
- Maybe we can combine forces with the Promise Community Grant. They are considering a laundromat – maybe we could make it highly efficient.
- We should do some community events. An energy fair where information is available so we can understand better what resources are available.
- Maybe we could train community members so that they can do outreach on their own.
- How about a training for landlords. They are the first line for renters. Renters are concerned about efficiency but don't own the home, so they don't have a reason to invest, or aren't able to.
- We need better understanding of what a heat pump is and how it works.
- It is unclear what the goal of this effort is. We should establish a goal for this initiative – helping those who haven't made efficiency improvements to do so. How do we approach them to be effective?
- People are wary of outsiders, so we need to be respectful and find common ground to speak on, don't prescribe interests and solutions to people.
- Could this be a program where we go door-to-door?
- If there are not enough certified energy efficiency contractors in the area, this could be a workforce development opportunity (and challenge.) Home efficiency improvements could be a job opportunity.
- There needs to be better education about financing opportunities. There are low-interest loans for those who want to invest in renewables, but many people don't know how to access them.
- Many in Pownal are short on capital or are carrying significant debt. We need to be sure we have opportunities for everyone.
- Financing could happen through our utility, Green Mountain Power.
- Financing could also happen through the town. It could be integrated into your town bill – is there creative financing in relation to the town?
- Pownal could move their town infrastructure towards carbon neutrality.
- Many are not aware of existing programs. There is also a challenge of helping people understand how the savings achieved over time fit into their budget. Rebates from Efficiency Vermont also help bring down the price.
- Thermal curtains are a very local and affordable idea. Having a town sewing day to make door snakes and thermal curtains would be a good idea to bring everyone together to save money.
- Another simple step is to turn off the lights.
- Acting together our individual projects are a way to help the whole town.
- Projects like solar can spread quickly. When you see your neighbor do it, it can spread. The Town could have good examples to build trust with local homeowners and to increase understanding.
- We talk about the mobile homes, but we also need to remember the other older homes in Pownal that also need efficiency improvements.

Reflections of the Visiting Team

- There are a lot of great ideas and seeds of ideas - what different efficiency ideas might be, how do you learn about them. A fair to learn about these are easy.
- Other ideas like net metered solar mobile home park programs would be great.
- There was the idea of doing a special project with the school.
- Also the idea of a special project with the town offices.
- We can each do something with our homes, but we can also do a bigger project together, then toot our own horns and celebrate our success.
- Acting together to provide door-to-door services and outreach.
- There were a few outreach themes identified - how to reach folks who are not as comfortable with the technology, understanding where to start and how to do it, and what grants and financing are available.
- There was a desire to focus on the “low-hanging fruit.” Start with the easy stuff.
- There was a desire to learn more about the programs and resources Efficiency Vermont brings to the table.
- Some common themes identified include - Pownal residents want what is already available in the state; there is a want for knowledge, both about what are my resources and how do I connect to them, as well as where is the best place to start; energy efficiency/climate work as a way of building a sense of community.

Local Grid Resilience and Residential Renewable Energy Development

Visiting Team: Paul Costello (facilitator), Li Ling Young (Scribe), Hyle Bates, Jon Copans, Liam Fagan, David Howe, Elaine Haytko, Stephanie Lane, Paul Markowitz, Bhima Nitta, Dotty Schnure, Gus Seelig

What are the Current Conditions and Challenges in this Area?

- PV on MF
 - Competition between insulation and PV.
 - What is future of incentives?

- Pownal experiences frequent power outages, often from downed tree limbs.
- The changes in net metering law makes it hard to develop on non-preferred sites.
- Poor solar installations have given the industry a black eye.
- There is the potential for rooftop solar installations to interfere with firefighting.
- Many are interested in going solar, and many already have in Pownal.
- GMPS's Tesla Powerwall offering integrates well with residential solar.
- Contractors provide the legwork on incentives and tax credits.
- A resident who owns a parcel at a key intersection in Pownal would like to redevelop it to be zero energy and mixed use. The owner already owns another solar project offsite.
- There are concerns with the amount of larger scale solar that has been developed in Pownal.
- Concern about the impact on Vermont's landscape if renewable energy goals are met.
- Not enough of the benefits from these larger solar projects flow back to the community.
- Does Pownal want to be a generator supplying energy to the grid?
- Not all solar projects are equal – there is a difference between personal, roof mounted solar and industrial scale solar.
- The application of CCHP and solar is not well understood.
- There is little local knowledge about the local hydro project at the Tannery Dam.
- Concern about the susceptibility of the grid to disruptions. There is a need for back-up plans, and fossil fuels may have a role in providing resilience.
- Artificially changing the cost of energy may be unproductive, and state initiatives are impositions.
- Solar fields are disgustingly ugly.
- There are questions about what happens to the “solar” or renewable energy credits.
- It is possible to live entirely off the grid, but it is not easy.
- There was local resistance to the development of a biomass electric generation and pellet manufacturing facility.

Ideas: What Should Be Done?

- Solar on our school rooftop to save taxpayer money and, when paired with storage, this would power an emergency shelter.
- We should develop non-grid connected solar to increase our independence.
- Solar should be developed on brownfields, landfills and gravel pits in Pownal, not on forest and ag. lands.
- We should use large solar arrays and the town income generated to help pay for individual, roof-mounted solar. Leverage “bad” installs for “good” installs.
- The benefits of local solar projects should flow back to the citizens of the community.
- What about wind energy?
- There is confusion about the hydro facility in Pownal – and a need for greater education.
- Pownal should explore the possibility of micro-hydro. Anyone with flowing water could generate electricity. There is new technology that allows for hydro-generation without the construction of a dam.
- We should superinsulate the town hall and include solar as part of the project.
- There needs to be an effort to educate the people of Pownal on their options. Going solar is difficult to understand. There is a lot of confusion.
- Renovations provide an opportunity to educate about solar. At the point of permitting the renovation.
- Could Pownal be its own island or micro-grid?
- Is there an opportunity for more hydro in Pownal?
- Why is there no talk of wind? There are manufacturers of very small, very quiet residential scale wind generators – we should explore this.
- We need to respect community property rights, property values, and taxes.
- The technology is constantly changing. How do we know if we install solar or some other technology that it won't be obsolete in a few years?
- Are there medical impacts of solar?
- Do solar panels make toxic waste?

Getting Around Pownal and Connecting to Other Communities

Visiting Team: Jon Copans (facilitator), Li Ling Young (Scribe), Hyle Bates, Paul Costello, Liam Fagan, David Howe, Elaine Haytko, Stephanie Lane, Paul Markowitz, Bhima Nitta, Dotty Schnure, Gus Seelig

Current Conditions and Barriers

- The roads in Pownal get plowed.
- Driving is the only way to get around Pownal.
- We have school buses that serve our elementary school and the middle/high school in Bennington.
- I travel to Albany and Dartmouth to see medical care.
- There is a bus that serves both Williamstown and Bennington that comes through Pownal and stops there. There is no weekend service. The bus is equipped with a bike rack.
- There are on-demand transportation services for the elderly and those on Medicaid.
- For those picking up the bus on Rte. 7, it is best to call the bus service or simply to wave the bus down. There is no parking lot for those driving to Route 7 to take the bus.
- Some hitchhike and there is a willingness to pick-up locals.
- The hour to hour time bank is used to connect volunteer drivers with those needing a ride.

- There are many walkers on Rte. 7 and crossing Rte. 7 and it is very unsafe.
- There is no park-and-ride in Pownal.
- Taxi ride to Williamstown costs \$50 and to Albany costs \$100.
- There is no Uber service in Pownal or Bennington.
- There are zip cars in the area.
- There are concerns about cyclists travelling through the community. There is economic opportunity, but also bike/car conflicts. Williams students ride side-by-side.
- There are also car/ATV conflicts.
- Zimride is a resource for those looking to carpool who plan ahead.
- Rutland train service skips this part of the state.
- Route 7 and the intersection near the school is a major barrier to a walkable town. Kids are not allowed to walk or bike to the elementary school because the intersection is unsafe.
- The school zone is not a low speed area.
- The churches and the Legion Hall are gathering places. The school doesn't really serve as a community center, other than to watch school performances.

Ideas: What Should Be Done?

- Utilize the old rail line/trolley track for a bike path.
- Develop train service to Albany and Boston using existing rail lines.
- Use town land for a train station.
- Train line would provide transportation to commuters, access to medical services in Boston, and would make Pownal a magnet for surrounding towns.
- We should develop ridesharing – we could use the town website or another website to facilitate this.
- Development of a local jitney service could be possible. A van that runs around and picks people up.
- We should restore the trolley service between Williamstown and Bennington.
- We should develop a park-and-ride with a bus shelter. We could partner with the career development center on the bus shelter.
- We should develop some sort of rural shared Uber system, though there are questions about whether the population would be big enough.
- We should complete a car ownership and transportation needs survey.
- We need to be a community that has alternatives available for the elderly and non-drivers.
- Mobility solutions tend to be income based.
- We should recruit an Amazon distribution center to Pownal.
- We should develop an electric vehicle charging station somewhere in town.
- We need to make infrastructure improvements to make the town more bikeable and walkable.
- We should develop a pedestrian bridge over Route 7.
- We should support the work of the selectboard that is trying to develop a hiking trail that will connect to the Taconic Ridge Trail.
- We should develop a tourist attraction at the tri-state marker (in the woods).
- We need a traffic light at the school intersection.
- We need a tunnel at the school intersection.
- We need a town center to spur economic development which would lead to better walkability.
- Some in town would simply settle for a good coffee shop.
- The racetrack is in a floodplain.

Small Business Development

Visiting Team: Ted Brady (facilitator), Dane Whitman (scribe), Tom Berry, Chris Callahan, Jonathan Cooper, Ben Doyle, Annette Hoyle, Elisabeth Marx, Haley Pero, Jim Sullivan, Abby White

What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- TAM Recycling - TAM takes construction debris, food waste, recycling. 8,000 tons of recycling this year. Employs 11 people, all of whom live in Pownal. Looking forward to two more full time positions. Looking at trash and waste as opportunities.
- 180,000 people in the region, how do we bring those funds up into this area?
- Pownal is a beautiful town with great recreation areas.
- Williams College is a resource: alumni and graduation weekends, bring people up to Pownal. Overnight stays perhaps?
- Pownal has the race track. Can we start conversations about revitalizing the race track? Since we are the first thing people see as they travel from the South, what we do represents not just Pownal but state of Vermont.
- Would love to see more Rail use. Can we use it as a hub? Can we use it to send our business' products out by rail?
- People want to come to Pownal, and want to come to Vermont.
- Business owners currently have to send guests to Bennington or North Adams to go grocery shopping.
- There is the co-op or artworks building that could be used as a marketplace.
- Could have stalls that farmers rent out.
- Could be organic or just locally grown.
- We have a liquor store.
- Guests who come don't want to leave Pownal, they would rather stay.
- All of the greenery is one of the reasons people come stay in Pownal. Vermont is something that she can sell. Natural beauty is biggest asset.
- In 1936 this was known as the largest art community in Vermont. People arrived by train and trolley.

- Everybody was around here painting, now people should be here taking photographs.
- If people could come along the main roads and stop, that would be a great thing to cooperate with.
- What we need is 5 Great restaurants.
- Pownal was known as the Little Switzerland of Vermont. We can start coining that once again?
- There is an active arts community in Pownal.
- The track could be a farmer's market, as well as restaurants, and space for artists.
- Since we have so many people doing really interesting things all around Pownal, it would be great to create a map of attractions.
- 150 years ago farm would send down a wagon to pick up people from the train, and bring people up to paint and draw in the farmhouse.
- Now there are classes and workshops. Allowing people with a short amount of time to have that experience once again. People have said that it is too far up in the hills to visit, but there is a long list of people wanting to visit.
- It won't be one or two big ideas, but rather many more small efforts that creates the difference we want.
- Small efforts building up are a great asset.
- A great asset is the river. It used to be considered "dirty and scary."
- The Hoosick River Watershed trip is a different way to see the river.
- The mountain is an asset, we take it for granted. The view is beautiful.
- If we can start some businesses, Air B&B's, then the restaurants will follow.
- Air B&B's are easy for us to do.
- The history that is here is underrated. It is a means of drawing people in.
- We have created history related programs with Shaftsbury to bring people in.
- An opportunity in 2020 is that it will be the 300th anniversary of when Dutch and others came to Pownal. We want to make it into a large event.
- Regarding the racetrack, beware that the Boston PanAm railroad is currently there, so there is no access. PanAm says that whoever owns the property owes PanAm money. Anyone who wants to use the area we will need to deal with this issue.
- Lots of in home-businesses and agriculture-businesses in town.
- At the farmers market in Bennington, many of the people vendors there live in Pownal.
- Find a way to capitalize that in a concentrated area or create a map.
- One of the assets is the elementary school.
- We have a lot of large buildings on the highway that are currently vacant. Could become incubators. Furniture store for example.
- Two of her three children have left because there is no employment. They also work remotely.
- Somewhere to work remotely would be great.
- Bicycles, Pownal is pedal town.
- Bike riders coming from Williamstown up to Route 7.
- 1,000's of people coming through Pownal during bike season.
- Proximity. We are southernmost tip of Vermont so easier to reach from New York and Massachusetts.
- Route 7 is now a special corridor because of a consortium of museums: Mass Moca, Clark, Theater, and Bennington Museum (and one other). New York Times advertises them, so there should be a lot of traffic as a result. There is a museum pass that gets you to three of these museums.
- One challenge is that the beauty that you see is not visible coming up route 7. The trees have grown so much that you can't see the beauty anymore.
- Reframing some of these things around the Climate Economy. Local Agriculture. Local food movement is something where we have a lot of activity.
- Underutilized asset are the mountains. Alternative transportation. Outdoor recreation.
- Nobody mentioned that we brought the clinic closer to home. That is helping the climate.
- We need groceries and a dentist closer to us.
- Speaking about the solar array. Somebody was upset that there were no jobs associated with that project that weren't associated with that project. It would be great if there was a jobs posting board in town where businesses could post opportunities for people.
- Jackie: Children are an asset. Her son went to Pownal elementary school where she volunteered in nature program called "four winds nature program." Children here love learning, are curious and love living here. If we can enrich their lives they will stay here and grow this town.
- We have a lot of plumbers, farmers, electricians, truckers and excavators and they are good people to call. You can get to know the workers.
- There are a lot of talented people in Pownal. Lots of entrepreneurial spirit.
- Lots of forest resources in Pownal.
- We have the wastewater infrastructure in Pownal. Sewer system serves three village centers.
- A second to the contractors who work in this town. And people that can get to know you.
- Our fire department is incredible. Knows you by name. Responsiveness and professionalism is incredible.
- Front Porch Forum is a great asset. A way to learn people's names.

What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?

- We don't own the track.
- With these "underutilized" properties, it would be good to either own them or not own them.
- Some of the good properties are currently in the floodzone, including the track.

- We're always fighting just to keep this valley the way that it is. We need to see this as not a big energy producer.
- There are high taxes. Terrible for business.
- There is financial inequality here.
- Some people dump illegally along river and in the back roads. Makes things pretty "piggy."
- Main Street does not look good. Route 7 could be improved 100%.
- There is no housing. No low-income housing. Young people can't move into town easily.
- We need to let business in.
- Because of our terrain, there is a lot of work that needs to get done to improve the telecommunications.
- High speed internet and cell service can present a challenge.
- Internet. You need to pay a fortune at certain places to get good internet because there is no DSL.
- We need to improve the mobile home parks.
- We need to have affordable homes and then that would take care of itself.
- We should create new homes rather than point at some housing that we do not like.
- Senior housing needs to improve.
- The town no longer has any economic development representatives, so no longer any local resources. We need somebody to oversee some of these issues. People have to go to Bennington or somewhere else to get these resources.
- There are not enough jobs.
- There is no manufacturing.
- Other towns are able to offer new businesses tax breaks and other things. Since Pownal was unable to offer a deal to new business we are now missing those places.
- We have never developed future-looking jobs. We need to realize that manufacturing is not coming back. In some places nearby there are solar things and semiconductors that pay living wages, but we can't get these things. We don't have the energy infrastructure. Pool of talent or transportation.
- We are between Williamstown, North Adams, and Bennington.
- They are stuck in between a lot of other development, so they aren't too far away from anything.
- There is a lack of public transportation. A high level of poverty leads to less car ownership.
- People can't get to jobs, or can't get to training.
- Basic needs like a laundromat are missing in Pownal.
- I don't think we can decide what the new business is going to be. We need to invite new people to enter the town. Maybe we need to look at regulation and taxes as a means of bringing businesses into the area.
- We need to be careful about oversimplifying unemployment. We need to recognize that sometimes people don't just need more opportunities.

What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?

Doug Kuzmicki started the session by telling his story and asking the group some questions.

- A property owner in town is considering how to re-purpose the small cabins and store-front on the property. Interested in hearing from the community about what they might envision. The cabins could be micro-houses or for tourists. The owner would like to do something good with the property that contributes to the community.
- Millennials and generation Z tend to not be people who want big houses and lots of stuff. Some places have embraced this by creating areas where people can put their tiny houses. Tiny houses are brought into the woods, like an Air B&B where you get a tiny house for the weekend.
- Agrotourism, and avid fans of geocaching. Both could draw people in.
- Is there any way to get the track to the point where we can meet with the current owner, the town of Pownal, and the railroad? If there are \$100,000 owed, should we just settle with it being there?
- The building currently at the track may be becoming a safety issue.
- Can we make our own access to the track through the backside and eliminate the Pan Am issue.
- Town road crosses because of the cemetery, so that crossing will stay.
- We need to create a new access point so that many people can meet at the track again.
- If it takes the Town to bring in a new roadway, that could be a great opportunity.
- Backyard sugaring: Property owners have approached him to ask if people would be willing to tap their trees. Would be great to have a land bank, to bring in producers such as sugaring and beekeepers. During the time that they are tapping, creates a lot of jobs, albeit temporary. Brings money into Vermont.
- Put together a piece about taking the town property from down at the tannery and putting in a passenger rail station to New York City through Schenectady and through Boston.
- If we could once again make this into the gateway to Vermont, would be great.
- Speaking as someone whose family has struggled with unemployment and financial struggles. Food security would be a great thing to address. We need affordable food. When we are struggling we are not buying food at the farmers market. Combining new entrepreneurship with more affordable food. Bartering with friends all of the time. Trading meat for vegetables. Setting up a bartering collaborative. Could bring the community together.
- Straighten out all of the railroad crossing. Taking a comprehensive look. Make the crossings productive for the people who want to do things in the state.
- Have a community garden, that you could be a part of it, and is also a co-op. Town could provide the seeds. Wouldn't have to pay to be a part of the co-op garden. In North Adams they

- have gardens outside of Mass Moca that are community gardens.
- TAM could recycle anything else to make a business out of it. Old windshields, in Oregon they are fabricating beautiful shower doors and other things out of these items. How much would it cost to create a business, targeting recycling to generate business ideas?
- TAM currently takes all of the waste that they have and can turn it into something new, but it can be very costly to add business component to waste management and recycling.
- As economy moves more towards distributed generation. We will need maintenance for decades to come. Could there be a school or training here in Pownal to show people how to maintain energy infrastructure?
- For a lot of people this is just a throughway from Williamstown to Bennington. If we had a place to stop, an attraction to just stop. Create a place to stop along the road.
- Camelot village in Bennington, we could have something like that. Something like the Applebarn, where buses can stop.

- Pownal could be an arts community fascinates. An arts co-op could be great. Shared spaces.
- Lots of people have goods and services to share. A comprehensive, up-to-date way to exchange the information about what goods and services we have and are offering. Land, service, and goods.
- Following up on the arts. Like kodak spots. Create a map of plenaire areas, so that artists could find the places they want to go.
- Fueling for electric vehicles in town. Could put something down by the solar plant.
- They need to create somewhere for the kids to go. They don't have anywhere to get off the street. Splash park or rec center. Ages in between high school and younger.
- We could have a rest stop, which would be used as a place for electric cars to charge. We could have a great bulletin board right there.

Reflection of the Community Visit Team

- Number of people who are here and spoke up, people are indeed moving here.
- Recycling business, mobile home park, housing stock, there is now a sewer system. Thinking about energy development there is lots of renewable development.
- Super energy efficient units that you can put on a mobile home pad, what you save in energy pays for the mobile home. Can we upgrade the housing on the mobile homes?
- So much creativity in this room. People are industrious. Thinking about a homeschool collaborative. Such an asset that people all have a lot of creative ideas. Could weave all of these ideas. Find the moments where ideas feel the best and go with them.
- Biggest asset is the people. Natural beauty is a great asset. 170,000 people live so closely to this area. Ben heard a lot about the arts. Bringing people to the table for a step forward.
- Felt the passion that everybody in the area has towards the community. Pownal's location is both a tremendous asset and a real challenge. Some things are already in neighboring cities, so how can we bring it to Pownal? Looking at challenges as opportunities.
- Skill trades people are here. Combining that with Housing. Little spots for cycling activity.
- The people there today represent their community really well. From really small ideas to looking outside the box, it is a tribute to their great entrepreneurial spirit. Lots of referral that is going on within the new community.
- Chain of events, Sense of Place, Looking at future and looking at the past.
- Lots of tremendous pride in the community. Very inherent resilience in this community. He saw thoughts of being an ambassador community for Vermont. Concept of the local food system in terms of high end options and others.
- Saw participants as entrepreneurs, 50 people to show up on Saturday in June to talk about economic development.

Recreation, Trails, Health, and Wellness

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle (facilitator), Dane Whitman (scribe), Tom Berry, Ted Brady, Chris Callahan, Jonathan Cooper, Brad DeBoer, Annette Hoyle, Elisabeth Marx, Haley Pero, Jim Sullivan, Abby White

What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- Southern Vermont Medical Center - Satellite Campus. Closer than traveling to the hospital. Pownal-centric Health Center is great.
- Hoosick River. People go down to the river. Fish. Canoe. Kayak. Beautiful River.
- Other bodies of water in Pownal. Recreation oriented. Barbers Pond and fishing access after South St. Road.
- Fishing is awesome.
- Nature Conservancy property over by Quarry is beautiful.
- There are trails and access to the quarry. Very interesting wildflowers since it is all lime at the Quarry.
- The Nature conservancy land is not very well advertised.
- Also the tubs. Wonderfully cold water and stone circles. Teenager hangout.
- Amazing and rare wildflowers.
- Pownal Bog. Has very rare and unusual plant life. Town owned, or privately owned? Where is it?
- The Appalachian trail runs through Pownal, but you can't get to it.
- Access to the Taconic trail.
- Wildlife management area off of Barber's Pond Rd.
- Caves and a good climbing wall somewhere.

- Town forest is close to 800 acres. In the process of going through a legal right of way status.
- Beautiful drives for leaf people, and cyclists.
- Burrington road is a wonderful walking road with a great view.
- Hoosick River Watershed Association...HOORA. Regional Organization. They are interested in Pownal. Interest is very much in recreation and trail building. Could be interested with working with people in this town.
- As far as we know there is no trail committee.
- Bennington Area Trail Systems (BATS). Brad DeBoer is president.
- There is a recreation committee that does a month long program in July at the school. Focused on using the school facility.
- Pownal Little League. Most beautiful Little League field
- Horses are a big part of Pownal.
- The Rescue Squad. Last week went to a free CPR training.
- Pownal has quite a few Wellness Practitioners, Massage Therapists.
- Group called Circle of Life, midwifery.
- Visiting nurses and children's integrated home. Do lots of home visiting with pregnant women.
- Meals on Wheels serves Pownal.
- Hospice is located in Bennington, but takes care of us in Pownal.
- There are also assets in Bennington that Pownal can take advantage of.

What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?

- One challenge is the amount of private land. Trails cut across private land. Some of the places mentioned cross through private land.
- From the point of view of the owner, people are concerned about the liability of people occupying space.
- No official Green Mountain National Trail through Pownal. Also not to the Taconic trail. We have to move through private land to reach these unofficial areas.
- Better signage would be helpful.
- We don't have big playgrounds.
- Would be wonderful to have trails instead of a playground. But why not both?
- One of the enjoyment issues is that people are burning trash, and that sometimes you can smell that along the trail. Illegal disposal.
- There are very few pedestrian roads in Pownal, difficult for foot traffic because there are no sidewalks.
- Bicycling there is an issue. It can be difficult to find a spot for biking. Need to be brave to go into town.
- We have pulled together a group of people to clean up sites so maybe they could address trash burning on trails.
- There is no way to cross Route 7, especially dangerous while cycling. Kids are not allowed to ride bikes to school because of Route 7.
- Traffic is preventing kids from riding their bikes.
- A road or two on the mountain that ATV's are allowed to ride on, but access to them is difficult. Can make it there with a trailer but could be easier to access.
- There are no mountain bike trails, but there is always interest.
- The state department is closing down the four wheeler trails. There used to be nice trails, and now a lot of people can't go anywhere anymore without hauling the vehicle somewhere else.
- We have tried in the past to locate money to put in improvements for bike paths, etc. We don't have a lot of experience seeking grants. Often find out about grant money late.
- Even though we have a health center in Pownal, it is still difficult to access the health center due to public transportation.
- Access to dental is limited. Need to go to Bennington to get dental.
- Access to healthy food is limited. Need to go to Bennington to get affordable healthy food.
- One asset, there are a lot of farms, but there isn't a lot of coordination so access is limited to get to that food.
- Pownal little league. Only organized sports league in Pownal, so there is a lack of organized activities in Pownal. Lack of things for youth to do in the summer. Month of July program is only in elementary schools.
- No formal swimming in Pownal. Now there is no public swimming. Nowhere for children to learn how to swim.
- There is a sign on the road that says that there are children playing on the road. No place for the children to play.
- Kaitlin Hunt is a 5th grade teacher. Children had an idea to give the Race Track sidewalks, bike paths, playground, etc.

What should be done? What action can be taken by the community in this area?

Ben opened with the recognition that previously mentioned assets are a part of climate economy.

- Businesses, we need a map so that people know where to go to find things that they want to do. Include Pownal's assets on the map.
- It would be great if property owners agreed to create postings saying that people are welcome to use their property. Personally, I've thought about it. People actively sharing their assets.
- The model of a trail system including private land exists in Kingdom trails up in the northeast kingdom. 53 Private landowners have signed on to make it possible. It is a result of the generosity of the landowners. Also, the trail riders and users respect the private property.
- There is a concern of the legal ramifications of such a system. Vermont has a very strong land-owner protection written into statute. If you are not benefitting from people using your lands, people would have to prove that there was malicious intent to be illegal. Need to read the legal statutes. We could educate people about their liability and exposure regarding recreational opportunities.

- Pownal could create ad hoc town committee to look at trail access, and coordinate with landowners.
- The trails need to be repaired and maintained. Bennington Area Trail Service (BATS) as an example.
- BATS would love to reach out into areas outside Bennington. Trails brings a lot into the local economies. And our population market is greater than northeast kingdom.
- The northeast kingdom has done it. We should access their plans so that we don't have to reinvent the wheel.
- Create bike lane system connecting Berkshire to Bennington through Pownal. Could go along the old rail tracks.
- Create a splashpad play area for kids. Place for picnic and barbecue, could be a space for entrepreneurship.
- Does the state still have money to have funds available to buy unused trailways?
- Jim Sullivan: There are a couple of grant programs, but the amount of money available doesn't get a lot of distance. Purchasing right of way is often the most expensive. Part of the rail track has developed into Bennington. We have given a lot of thought to that. If you don't need to buy right of way you are way ahead of the game.
- We should continue to beautify the Route 7 corridor. Take back on the roadsides one of the greatest views in Vermont.
- We could create a bridge across Route 7. We should also take a look at pedestrian foot traffic.
- Bike rentals or Kayak rentals. We could have a drop off and pick up on Hoosick. Can we reach out to an existing recreation business and bring them into the community?
- Have a business training, so that industrious kids could start their own businesses. Kids could rent their time at the lemonade stand, basically an environmental hub.
- Motorcycle Rally and Motorcycle Runs. If we have an ATV club, then we could have trail trims, and a form of stewardship. Would all be donated time. Motorcycle and ATV folks can bring in that kind of money. Right now, people need to put motorcycles on trailers, even though they live in the woods. As far as we know, there is no active ATV club in town.
- VAST would be a great model for that.
- Having geocaching throughout Pownal would be recreation as well as health and wellness. Only about four in Pownal currently. It's a treasure hunt.
- If there could be a fundraiser, where people raise money towards a bike trail. Could be an event that is a ride. Similar to the AIDS rides.
- There are different models for cycling fundraisers. Would need volunteers and organization to pull it off but could work great.
- The "Red Dragons" used to come through. The "Hoosick River Ride" comes through part of Pownal.
- Could the hospital be a partner in cataloguing the overall dollar value on public health if people are using these trails?
- Using the school campus. Could have a community recreational paths that are on the school's campus.
- Ten years ago they started a community garden. It lasted for about four or five years and then things faded away. We need to remember that you want to be involved, follow through, and stay with it.
- Part of creating an initiative is creating a project sustainably. It can be difficult when there are only community champions.
- Contribute to your own food security by pulling weeds.
- We need to make sure that whatever we create is affordable and accessible.
- Notion of a coop with people contributing time, to sustain a space and selling the food affordably.
- Creating a farmer's stand run. Organize a painted van that has different pickup points from different farm stands. Could carry people from farm to farm, and have farmers go from place to place.
- We could look at how much food needs to be produced to provide for the people in this area. Think about what will grow or not grow as things change over the next twenty years.
- There is a group in Bennington County looking at the gap of affordable lunch being provided during a particular time over the summer. If we could distribute all the different farmer's food in August, this could aid efforts like that.
- We have beautiful farmland but an aging farming population.
- We were able to buy land partly because it was in the Vermont land trust. There is a farm land access program that is trying to work on this. We bartered with farmers: farmers used the pasture and we got some free produce. Pownal is much more affordable than other areas of Vermont, but still tough from a farmer's salary.
- A lot of folks in Pownal don't know how to cook, shop, or meal plan. If we could partner with SVMC to have nutritionists teach in Pownal. Nobody is teaching this in Pownal.
- There could be a community store/community shed. A place for food, clothes, dishes, books. An area where otherwise wasted things could be exchanged. Instead of creating a new program, interdependence in the community. Community Kiosk at the splash pad.
- Along with health and wellness we could teach people personal responsibility. There are lots of opportunities.
- Teaching people how to cook is also a solution.
- Started an hour for hour, time bank. 246 people, was just reorganized so that is owner run and is now the same. Could perhaps transfer over to the same system.
- A discrepancy between a place and a system, an online system vs. a physical space.
- Back to barter space idea, we have a little swap shed at the transfer station. It is not walkable from town, but maybe could be expanded.
- In the country of Belize you pay a dollar to go the zoo if you are Belisian. Can we have a discount for Pownal residents?
- Developing local currencies. Buying token for so many dollars and that becomes credible for local businesses.
- Creating a different class of property in Vermont for homesteaders. Discrepancy from agriculture, and housing. Have a different sort of zoning for something in between. Support and tax structure for homesteaders. We could talk about the tax base with state legislators and work with Farm bureau.
- Urging us to think about linkages with the elementary schools.
- Have something at the school, to create a swap shed using that as a local exchange area.
- Copenhagen took parts of the local roads and set aside one lane for bicycles only. Went to a population that is much more car-less. Can we have a lane designated for bicycles.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Maps of trails are key. Recreation groups she has been part of have never met in Pownal. Signage could encourage us to think about this as an artistic community. Getting kids involved in social enterprise. You have great assets. I think there is a place about how to get to these places. Stewardship, if people are trashing areas people will not want to lend out land.
- Mapping to do in Pownal. Taking surplus and turning it into opportunities.
- It is about access. Bikes, food, ATV's. BATS is an example. Bring townspeople as well as tourists to Pownal.
- Organization. A lot of these things between assets and further assets are right on the edge of happening, just need a catalyst. Some things in the state. Some things volunteering. Some things are other entities. ATV's. Trails to Appalachian.
- Bennington Area Trail System (BATS). Swap Shed. Pownal government. People in the local community.
- Lack of information. Resources that are there that need to be pulled together into a single place. Getting engaged regionally could benefit Pownal. Could become a lynchpin between North Adams to Bennington. Tying yourself into existing networks.
- Bennington section of the Green Mountain Club is quite active. In terms of family nutrition there is a program that needs a reminder that Pownal is here.
- The breadth of the seasonality. There is a lot of things that stretch over the year.
- When we (BATS) need access, we do a great job of pulling together volunteers.

Local Agriculture and Forestry

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle (facilitator), Dane Whitman (scribe), Tom Berry, Ted Brady, Chris Callahan, Jonathan Cooper, Annette Hoyle, Elisabeth Marx, Haley Pero, Jim Sullivan, Abby White

What are the community Assets in this area? What's working now, what's going well?

- We have farmers, whereas many communities do not.
- Our farms range from small farming to commodity milk.
- We have good land.
- The size of farms is decreasing, a number of people are making a few dollars off of agriculture.
- Some people retired, and then became farmers through retirement to support themselves.
- A small creamery is starting up. But there are huge pressures on the older traditional farms. It will not work if we do not keep a diversified portfolio.
- With the lower cost of ownership of property for agricultural land, some property owners can allow farmers to use that land.
- There is access to farmland, but this if property taxes are raised then people will not be able to live on this land.
- There is lots of forest in Pownal.
- Some people make money from leasing out their trees to non-local forestry.
- It is a good climate for farming. The northeast is blessed with moisture, while other parts of the country are starving for water.
- Very good maple sugarers, who are very good at what they do. Mid-sized but not industrial. Not doing vacuum pumping.
- Can't say whether or not it is a growing economy. About three people in Pownal are going for market.
- Pownal has biodiversity in wildlife.
- There used to be people processing the lumber.
- There used to be a sawmill but now is a recycling center.
- Closest mill is a relatively small one in Petersville.
- Dairy makes a value added project.
- There is a fellow who has created a portable saw mill, but is small scale. You can purchase timbers from him.
- A lot of the people at the Bennington Farmers market are Pownal farmers with small value added products.
- There was interest in a pellet manufacturing location at one point.
- There are small fields in Pownal. Could more easily support niche products like value added. Mustard and Kimchi relish are all made in your hops.
- Access to markets are definitely a plus.
- One Pownal resident runs a hop farm three miles up the road. ¾ of an acre. About twenty people growing hops in Vermont. Bright Ideas Brewing in North Adams will be buying hops from his the next six years.
- Commercial Kitchen at the American Legion could be a great asset.

What are the Challenges in this area? What are the issues or problems to be addressed?

- Closure of the sawmill.
- There is no Hemlock on this side of the mountain.
- There is a culture of farming here, but a lot of farmers who are getting up in their years.
- Value added products are the way for people to enter farming. Need to produce things in a licensed facility. There is a lack of licensed facilities in the area.
- Waitsfield, Hardwick, Greenfield MASS, are the closest licensed facilities.
- Currently the right arrangements are not being made for the American Legion kitchen to be used as a food hub.
- Berries. What can we do about lowering the license requirements for people to grow harvest and sell? Cost of land is a challenge. State or town needs to lower taxes.

- PFOA contamination in water supply. Could there be money available for a private company to look at water or bottling facility.
- Price of milk and raw logs are down. The markets are down.
- Not enough local brewers to lead the hop production. (*joke*)
- Low availability of labor for local agriculture. There is no state program in Vermont. Farmer has to pay 12% workers comp of payroll. Employees are coming from local area. But there is a challenge of finding people willing to work year-round.
- Somebody has a seventeen year old looking for work.
- People who would like to utilize land for agriculture, but don't know what would be the best thing to grow economically in those niche industries. Lack of technical assistance.
- If we could establish a niche that this valley is known for growing, and get enough people growing it that the industry support us.
- We can't buy hemp seeds.
- Everybody is working in their own kitchen. The transportation cost of following through with agriculture. The distribution system isn't working.
- There is the demand for lamb. But limited access to slaughterhouses due to time constraints.
- Individual efforts aren't feasible. There needs to be some way to get people together to pool these resources.

What should be done?

- Programs available to train young people. If someone needs a butcher, how do we train a butcher? Basic job training.
- Career development center at local high school has a forestry program but does it have an agriculture program?
- We would need a facility license for a slaughterhouse.
- We could use a mobile processing unit to for the area.
- Why can't we look at the demand? If there were less regulation maybe we could address this.
- Is there enough demand? Not enough demand for a slaughtering facility.
- Coordination of existing resources regarding processing facilities and packing centers.
- We need scale. Very small farms might not be able to make a big difference. With small parcel sizes it is difficult to have a sizeable business. Many of these parcels are more along the line of supplemental income.
- There is a lot of part-time niche farming and that's perfectly fine.
- There is no place for dairy around here. Biggest farmer in Pownal had 450 head.
- To what extent is there a social network of farmers? Sharing equipment, communicating, collaborating.
- People don't think there is any existing social network within Pownal.
- A social network would be helpful. If there was a mechanism so that we could get together and create a network. Could be online, or a list, or a meetup.
- Bennington Farm to Plate council used to organize an annual local food symposium. Things like this can be a place to link supply and demand. Bringing together people with needs and people with services.
- Cross marketing, so that we can link people across places.
- Would be great to have somebody who is technologically competent to set up a Pownal farmer Facebook group.
- If there was more help from the UVM extension agency, but UVM pulled out at one point.
- Now UVM is back to set up their Bennington office once again. Re-engage with UVM extension agency.
- You are close enough to New York that their extension agency will come over. The extension program is a national program, it can be good to pull from different states.
- We don't know who we are and we don't know what we do. There is no central place to talk or gab or have a coffee. It is really important to convene.
- One person wants to start a bar.
- Marketing. Opportunities and lessons around marketing. What can the community do to pursue that? Pownal brand. There are resources to support that.
- While there is diversity in what people are growing, we need to meld our resources together into a market. And also need to find a way to get to that market. Market development and distribution. Everybody agree about getting their goods out and making an income.
- Recommendation of the Rural Development Grant program. We can get a town or non-profit organization to say they want to develop a marketing plan. Flexible grant programs. Less-so about dropping off a list of resources, more-so about developing plans with others.
- There is a distance, real and otherwise, between this corner of the state and the areas where these resources exist.
- We learn about grants too late. We lack the experience to put in grants. We need to build capacity about people's ability to access these resources.
- We are not removed from the market, but rather from the capacity to access those markets.
- Farmland access program of the Vermont Land Trust. It is a private program whether you have access to it or not depends on the board of trustees. But actually there is a public element to it. While access is limited, it is not only about a private program.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Farm and Forest Viability Program. One on one business planning with any farmer who enrolls in the program. Purchase of development rights. Farmland Access program will purchase development rights to make a farmland purchase affordable. Funding system to help communities to write grants to pull in this funding.

- None of the farmers in Cabot today ship to Cabot. They have created their own network. The success in Hardwick is because farmers have gotten together. They then demanded that the universal packing center moves into their area. The next action step. Whether full time or part time, how can you leverage each other, support each other, and do things that will be of mutual benefit. Will take a mosaic approach.
- Whatever Bill tells Montpelier to do, they do. Why do we leave where we live? Because half way between where I work and where they work. Agricultural assets help people want to live in Pownal. Vermont's agricultural economy defines Pownal.
- Already seeing impacts of coming together.
- Lots of existing resources that are not making their way down here. The need for scale to be competitive. Opportunities for scale through aggregation.
- Addison and Franklin garden, people getting together seems to be a big impact. It can even be defensive, to mitigate impacts. There is a bit of neglect down here. This location creates an opportunity, since it is tucked between existing areas.
- Local food and agriculture was a consistent theme in all three sessions today. Far less forestry things are touched upon. Forestry could provide a lot of opportunities.
- If there are things that can be discovered in Pownal between residents of Pownal, imagine everything that the peripheral population can discover.
- Sense of community and place. People identified challenges, and opportunities. The idea of little Switzerland was interesting, arts community, and rural community.



One of six focus forums on Kick-Off Day.

VI. Empower Pownal Participants

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Dave Low
Gerald Lubeck

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Bruce Martell
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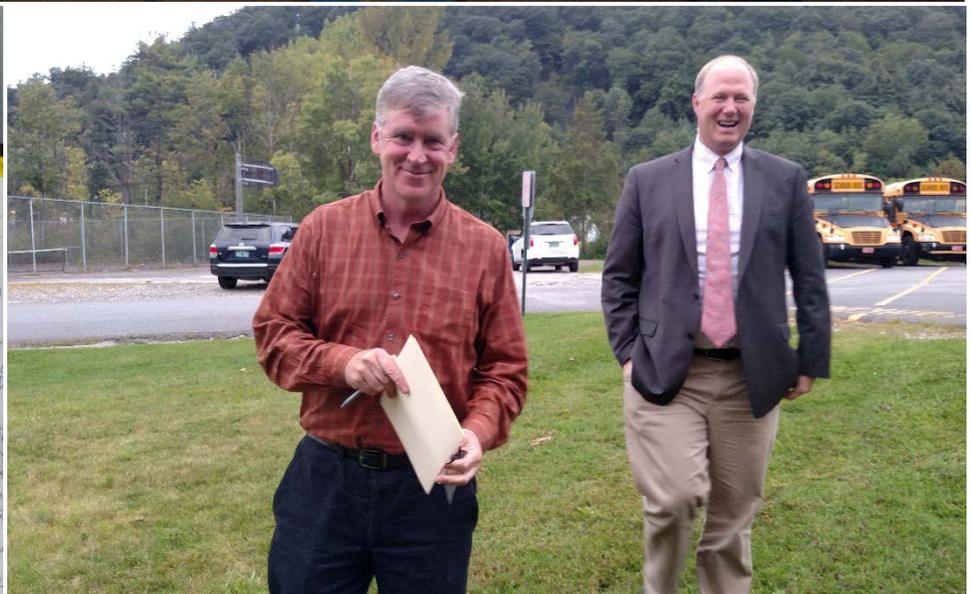
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A few Visiting Team members who took part in meetings in Pownal. The Visiting Team can be called upon as resources to task force groups as they carry out the work. Give them a call!



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Empower Pownal is part of the Vermont Council on Rural Development's (VCRD) Climate Economy Model Communities Program – a community-driven process with local leaders, VCRD, Green Mountain Power, and Efficiency Vermont to cultivate economic development, innovation and affordability in the face of climate change.