



# SUMMIT ON THE FUTURE OF VERMONT

May 26 & 27  
1-5pm

VIRTUAL

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## Notes from Evening Feedback Sessions, May 26 2021

### As you consider the 9 different Propositions, what rises to the top in importance and why?

- The working landscape and agriculture, saving our farms because we need them to feed people.
- Equal tech access (broadband) throughout the state, especially in schools and improved access to education.
- Better alternative transportation infrastructure, especially because we have such focus on outdoor recreational economy. Excited about Local Motion, and the example being set by infrastructure in Quebec.
- Addressing racism to make this a more welcoming space for people of color.
- Governance – if we continue on our current path, we will see greater degrees of marginalization over time.
- Education - we need to cultivate a sense of belonging for young people to encourage them to stay in the state as adults. How do we move the needle on people changing behavior to ensure the future of the state of Vermont.
- Climate change and disaster is coming, and education cannot continue as it has, we need to shift it towards combatting climate change.
- Civic engagement (engagement is a dynamic within a relationship that holds attention, heightens interest, and motivates action...) because our citizens are experts.
- Appreciation that the proposition is focused on the long-term future of the state.
- People centered goals are most important: Equality, justice, viable environment first. I am concerned that broadband is item #1. People and place should be first, because in 2050 broadband will likely be old news.
- Build out of town center buildings, senior meals, contra dancing, and people-connecting resources. Our rural way of life requires more support than the current concerns over broadband.
- Empowering new leaders – how do we bring younger Vermonters into the conversation.
- Addressing racism.
- VT should be in the place to utilize the latest and greatest technology – beyond broadband, because that's becoming more available today.
- There used to be a state planning office designed to bring continuity to future planning. Happy to see the continued efforts around the state planning office – especially keeping this out of the political sphere where it could be easily abolished/changed.
- Polling could be done with larger groups to help identify which priorities are most urgent. Could utilize the people engaged at this event to poll the state hazard mitigation plan as an example – what's most important, most ripe for action, etc.
- Want to applaud previous work done in the arena of community trust and civic engagement.
- Having a longer-term perspective than a two-year window for improvements, though we're small as a state, we're large enough to accomplish these items – ensuring that were not falling into silos and recognize the importance of the overlap. Work with what people's excitement is around and use their strengths to look at the interdisciplinary goals.
- While all important – fundamentally #2 is the who we are as a people, being deliberate about the work that needs to be done. It should be the lens/structure for building off of as things move forward. Who we want to be as Vermonters.
- #3 (Advancing Creative Economic Solutions for Climate Change) should be either #1 or #0 because of the existential threat to human civilization. If not addressed then nothing else matters – additionally accomplishing these goals in VT it will touch on all of the other listed items – Transportation and heating -> out of old buildings and able to access resources locally. Current policy incentivizes sprawl of housing – this change would remove pressure off of land for farming and forest etc.
- Antithetical are #1 to #3 – broadband access to all dirt roads incentivizes sprawl, i.e. urban is subsidizing people to live in rural areas. Most people live there by choice not by livelihood or forced out of the "downtown" because of pricing and things are replaced by gas/transportation.
- Issues with sprawl, deforestation – for the benefits of wealth. Saw a statistic that VT has the highest percentage of people living off of their investments i.e. wealth – current land use policy is the issue at hand here.
- The main question should be: why do we need growth as the policy for looking at the future? Wealthy people come in and drive up the costs and aren't covering their true costs.
- Racism and diversity – all other things have a direct connection and measurable change. Racism and diversity are hard to measure and take longer to change – it's the core about being human.
- Local/regional resiliency thinking about the classical strength of VT but purposefully working towards utilizing and building from a local resource.

## What is missing? Are there large themes not represented?

- Support for the Arts.
- Great concern for the many downtowns of VT with empty storefronts, and nervous people. We need community centers and support for small businesses.
- If people continue their majority work-from-home pattern, how do we maintain the necessary central concentration of people that support community and business?
- Need to recognize assets that VT has that people are not aware of and amplify these resources so more communities and individuals can take advantage of this support.
- We need to change wording about Abenaki in the document. The current document insinuates that they are relics of the past and not current and future equal Vermonters. They also should be deliberately represented by invitation in the envisioning process especially among the leadership.
- Developing a sense of belonging. We need to be careful with "VT is so special," be more open, and not so parochial.
- We want young people to move here, but where will they go if we want to protect forests and land?
- Smart Growth principles exist in law but have not been supported/driven with funding and planning.
- VT has historically been 2nd in the nation for folks who make money in stocks = significant wealth alongside great poverty. How do people gain equity?
- Many of the wealthiest individuals in VT are part time residents and are less likely to invest in their local VT community. How do we make sure they feel they belong and are responsible for this home?
- We need to figure out how to welcome new residents into communities in addition to the state as a whole. There are few gathering places in towns and this makes it very difficult to connect as an outsider. Especially for those who are not involved in school programs.
- Welcome wagons need to be reinvented and brought to each community in the state.
- Sustainability and resiliency – the degrowth economy – challenging the need to grow as the "solution" and the way the economy functions.
- When the neo-liberal economy busts, that's when the sustainable resilient economy will survive and outcompete.
- Maybe a #10 or included in another section – Abenaki worked with the land and transported themselves by foot/non-impactful ways. The Green Mtn highway could've crafted a very different Vermont. Transportation is not loud enough in this draft. Trails, walkability, bike-ability & other muscle-powered transportation are important and could help re-center "fun" in all these propositions.
- Connected habitat importance, etc – smart growth approach/principles which allow for vibrant local downtown village centers that are ped/bike friendly and inviting. These also alleviate the development pressure on our wilderness/forest lands (plight of wildlife species – climate, fragmentation, diversity loss makes this all the more important to have quality landscape for wildlife and future generations) – building on the working landscapes piece but in a different lens, the ecological function lens.
- The 2050 net zero commitment and what it means for us truly. We need to simplify our lifestyles, power down: is the current infrastructure able to accommodate these changes? We need to prepare for this world.
- Not enough for the far future—this draft seems more closely focused on the near future.
- Need a 3 year and a 30-year version of this plan.
- Immediately embark on goal of 90% reduction on consumption – a lot of people think that a 1 for 1 is realistic, but this isn't so. Renewable is not renewable – rare earth elements and manufacturing especially of PV is outrageous. Have to have a lifestyle that supports human comfort on less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> than our current power consumption.
- Money as denominator of worth in our society—what would happen to our carbon footprint if we shifted this mentality? We could potentially fit this into proposition under planning (if you don't plan, then it happens to you).
- Carbon tax.
- People driving to work – not everyone is able to not drive to work, but traffic is usually busy going both ways: How to get people to not pass each other on the road?

## A key goal from this summit is to move from big visionary goals to strategic practical steps forward. Where do you see key opportunities for action?

- Welcome wagon (above).
- EX- virtual version for employees of color at VPR.
- How we spend the money for climate change.
- Education improved with civics and diversity training
- Support workforce development (inclusion and equity training for example) by supporting businesses to think long-term. Help businesses to make those long-term investments.
- Changing zoning laws, public education, and consumer decisions that can support local agriculture.
- Greater relationship with Amtrak, coordination with bike lending libraries.
- Develop/support marketing to consumers of color as a support for local business.
- Support greater density of housing.
- Gather together resources that exist across the state (nonprofits and planning groups for example) to support implementation of these goals.
- Would also combat the common insularity of VT if we provided exchange programs.
- Develop exchange with programs in other states (for example the Federation of southern coops).
- We need to take a hard look at consumption across VT and the cultural norms that come with it.
- How to move things forward under the current political climate?
- State planning work towards having this come to fruition is slowly happening.

- Act 250 bill – natural resources bill that is being worked on currently.
- Fun and its impact on community– strengthen about our collective VT identity.
- Fun as community builder - #9 civic engagement and civility should be included in this.
- Racism isn't okay anywhere – across the whole state.
- Howard Dean example about changes for civil unions and its sweeping changes – having to pick the political moment yet recognizing importance of chewing gum and walking at the same time.
- What if instead of a public works department focused on roads and a volunteer “bike committee,” we focused the PWD on the bike paths and had a “roads committee?”
- Bike-ability – getting your first bike instead of first car: Really including this in drivers ed.
- Shift basis of taxation from buildings to a Land Value model – this would bolster the downtown's and vibrancy while combatting the deforestation etc.
- Economic equality is basis of concern rather than racism – we have to stop pitting people against each other – establishing land access justice, making people pay for the land that they use and not the structure: ratio of assessed value of land is over 1450:1 in Brattleboro. Where parcel of land is located is representative of the current evaluation, downtown space vs farming space: this model would incentivize people to make the most of the land that they have – looking at the density of usage Bratt example of single-family homes near downtown [how wheelchairs and other mobility issues are addressed with higher density housing/commerce].

### **Who should be around the table to work on this?**

- The Abenaki people.
- Innovators in economic development.
- People of color and BIPOC consumers.
- Include AmeriCorps in the discussions annually, and regionally, as this is a group of individuals that are interacting with a lot of the state in various capacities who are in service to the community, state, and country. They are usually willing and active participants for providing feedback.
- Utilizing crowdsourcing – all across VT people will strongly identify with some of the proposition numbers – working towards the specific things with specific people's interests.
- Front Porch Forum – getting a survey out and polling people.
- High School and Middle School Students – classrooms: civic engagement.
- There are people in Windham County that commute to Chittenden and Franklin Counties, for example. High proportion of renters.

# Notes from Action Forum Breakouts, May 27 2021

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## A1 – Broadband

### What is already happening in this arena?

- Legislature passed H380 bill about extending broadband.
- Starlink presence with lots of power and speed. \$500 to install and \$100/month. Not really affordable.
- Fixed wireless, old copper to the premise, fiber to the premise, satellite technology. A lot in the mix. All is currently happening. We know some of the organizations have formed.
- Telecommunications plan has been drafted and the Public Service Board is looking for comments.
- A lot happening and there is money available right now.

### What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition? What should we be doing to expand broadband?

- The Telecommunications Act says not to regulate ISPs. One thing we can do to improve infrastructure development is to start regulating ISPs in terms of what they charge, and if we give them advantages, making sure they run to the last mile. Are they serving fewer than 10 people per mile? The law says that states can't modify that so would need to talk with Bernie or Leahy to say this needs to be changed.
- Looking at access, affordability and adoption. How do we expand the penetration and availability and also incorporate into local economy and communities?
- Often hear that broadband hurts local economies. The internet brings the whole world to people locally. We need to support people in our communities. Sometimes may not be as affordable, but if we don't they can't make it. So a mindset shift.
- The legislature got it right in deciding to build the network first and then worry about everything else. At the same time, have to always think about affordability, education and adoption. There could be an extra charge on everyone's broadband bill that helps make it more affordable for everyone (like how electric companies do with the Efficiency Vermont charges).
- At federal level, there is the lifeline program that brings \$9.25 to a broadband customer. But that's not enough to make it affordable on a \$60 or \$70 bill. ARPA giving \$50 off broadband bill is a step in the right direction but federal gov't needs to figure out how to keep that going.
- Covid forced local businesses to become more skilled with selling products online – both locally and anywhere in the world – and community groups do more communicating online with Zooms and local meetings are live-streamed and more accessible.
- Use of internet and Zoom has helped us through a difficult time. But having every legislature meeting streamed made it difficult for elected officials because you're constantly on video. Good points and bad with everything the internet has brought.
- What are specifics that lead to the benefits of better connectivity – in terms of social interaction and community – and what are some of the downsides, so we can focus on the downsides so we can figure out how to fix them and learn from things we've improved? Hear anecdotes all the time, but what do we do with that learning? Are we learning, or just wandering?
- How can the internet be used at the municipal level, in state gov't, FPF, listservs? Sometimes discussions can really go south. Need training for folks for how to use technology in a good way.

### Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?

- Finance professionals need to be involved to help structure financial packages. CUD's are going to become businesses but they are mostly volunteer driven. Not enough money available to do full connectivity and yet there is value to investors, especially local investors. ECFiber model had some of that in it – no public dollars so they developed financing mechanisms to develop the build out. CUD's need some of that. CUD's will likely merge and consolidate and they'll need help to structure financial packages and offerings.
- Can build a fiber network to the last mile, but who will maintain it? Trees fall, servers need maintaining; it requires sophisticated organization. CUD's should be driving the professionals in that – local telecoms. CUD's should be providing guidance rather than pulling cable, putting up poles, or performing maintenance.
- CUDs are set up as businesses and part of that business is maintaining that network once it's installed. They are currently more focused on getting fiber pulled, but as soon as that piece breaks, it's as bad as not having it at all.
- Some existing telecoms and utilities should be involved. Lean toward local telecoms. A couple groups only cover 5 or 6 counties and we should be helping them out because it's hard for them to communicate with the big fellows.
- Workforce development. Technical schools and trade schools should be involved and teach telecommunications – a huge resource local people could access.
- The ECFiber Valley Net model started 15 years ago and took several years to get customers. CUD's are wanting customers right away, but it takes time. CUD's need to work with an existing provider in some way and rely on skills of those that have done it. It's happening now and is the way to do it rather

than recreating a whole new entity. Those that have done it can help them know how to build, provide support and administrative services, billing services, have provided broadband out of state to big ISPs in NY and Boston. Rather than create a whole new entity from the start – no time or money to do that at this point.

- Need for a different organization to represent consumer interests?
- In a regulated environment, the regulator served as the competition and they watched prices, set rates, made sure all customers were served. But the FCC with the Telecom Act opened up a competitive market so hard to dial back to an environment where everyone is taken care of, and services go where the dollars are so that's why areas are unserved. Rural area rates aren't the same as those in an urban area. Putting funding out there to companies, that helps companies build.
- Complicated world to enter into as a consumer. They have to decide what service to install: Starlink? Higher earth satellite? Ask Consolidated to improve my DSL? What do I really need for tele-health or remote work? People don't know where to start and need help, someone to walk them through it, such as a Broadband Corps to provide direct assistance. Then they can see common themes that are coming up for lower income folks, for example. Digital divide is getting wider every day.
- Assistance needed is both technical and financial in terms of affordability. Need to get low income people on par with others so their kids can do better in schools and use the tools. How to ensure their interests are represented and who can help?
- People need help knowing what plan to choose, how to do it. How to provide assistance so people don't feel they are stigmatized for asking for help.
- Could use a sector response. For example if there is a continuity of care system in the healthcare arena where doctors, clinics, mental health providers – everyone interested in a comprehensive care system – might band together for the higher need communities to get access to tele-health and real-time information sharing to care coordination that happens when care coordinators talk to case managers, coaches, churches where peer support is going on – that becomes a movement that could act on behalf of those at risk communities that otherwise don't have the organized capacity to respond or the political muscle.
- Almost a funnel of interest coming through the sectors: health care, education, judicial, etc. An organizing strategy around what healthy communities need and telecommunications just becomes one of the ways to deliver collaborative capacity that looks out for those that are at greatest risk.

## Cell Phone Coverage

- The experience we had with Coverage Co – small 2G cells hung on poles that can provide coverage along the roads. Business model didn't work so many folks think that therefore it will never work. Had challenges in that they didn't have full subscription from Verizon and AT&T and other charges weren't designed for small cells. If we could

- What about an agency that would take this on to say these are the things we need to do to connect people to the Internet? A coordinating entity.
- Just because you have online health care doesn't mean that those lower income people will all of a sudden start to go to the doctor.
- H360 provides a state level group to distribute funds to the CUDs. One of their responsibilities could be customer advocacy. VTel was charged with consumer advocacy but there's also an intersection between PSB and DPS and subsumed by the new organization. One idea during the bill process was to revive the VTel, but there was a checkered history and the landscape has changed with all of the CUDs now so they decided to create a different entity to review applications, look at business cases, and advise those. A consumer outreach program could grow out of that.
- CUDs could provide consumer support but they don't know how. The first pass is to do a pricing system that lower income folks could afford, which may include subsidies. The charge is to provide connectivity to every address and income is a hurdle to some of those addresses.
- To make it affordable, we need a centralized program to put everyone on equal footing. And needs to be destigmatized. There's an education piece, and work on adoption.
- VT back roads are not well served in terms of speed or availability. Comcast runs a line down the main street and that's about it. ECFiber covers it and has run fiber to a lot of the homes but they can't connect them because they don't have people to do the installation. There needs to be a full plan. Growth pains of some CUDs because they have to get the fiber and people need to want it, but then managing it after that. The more they grow the more they encounter that type of thing.
- There's never been this amount of money across the country for fiber builds so there will be shortage of materials, electronics and people to run the fiber and connect. Will be hard to get done due to shortage of employees. And then once things are built, those employees will need retraining for the next types of things in the network.
- Sectors that can communicate effectively with consumers about how they can use technology in their daily lives.
- And telecom plays an important role in the organizational infrastructure around collaboration around continuity of care for healthcare, for example. COVID shined the light on deficiencies and the lack of self-management capacity of support for those people with chronic disease. Telecom plays an important role but a programmatic focus has to be built. Getting big institutions, clinics, care providers, working together with human services, affordable housing and all the other things that contribute to quality of life.

overcome some of the challenges that led to Coverage Co going under, we might consider cells on poles.

- The large carriers don't care. They cover 99% of the population, but rural valleys will never be covered by cell technology. So if 5G goes into rural areas then it has to work on small cells, not intended on large cells. Can we do

better exploration. When we have fiber buildout, can we determine what characteristics are needed for the small cells to provide the service? This feeds into a public safety piece, though that is supposed to migrate to digital technologies but not even close. Is this buildout an opportunity to explore migrating that cellular technology and try some of that out?

- Fiber is being expanded so lends itself to that. FirstNet isn't the answer. The reliance on hilltop cell towers won't work. We can't build enough of them. And in rural areas there's no access to power, etc.
- Should lump this together with broadband discussion. Some people rely on wi-fi for their laptop and that's it. More and more people are accessing the internet through cellular technology. Spotty coverage in VT and we may suffer and it will separate us further.
- Wireless is difficult. Large carriers don't see profit in rural areas, so how does a small carrier get started and provide service at reasonable rates? Large carriers never have to prove they are performing. Need to tie it to when they are building. In VT with trees and hills there will always be locations without service because of the tough topography of the state.
- Because of that, does Starlink satellite technology offer some solution?
- Maybe, but we don't know if it will continue to provide the speeds once it becomes saturated. Starlink is still in beta. How long will they continue to subsidize the installation? There are questions about long term viability. If they don't deliver the speeds, that is why we come back to fiber networks to the home.
- We know a lot about what can happen though fiber. But we don't know the up and down capacity a satellite system

can handle as the number of customers increases and maybe saturate the system. We don't have the answers yet.

- Coverage Co had some poles in Woodstock but didn't get much traction or use. Verizon was part of it, but not AT&T. Was important in some communities where there was no way to get cell coverage.
- Not profitable for single carriers to provide full coverage in rural areas, but Verizon, AT&T and Sprint have independent systems. Need to get agreements with all 3 of them. In the end, Coverage Co was able to get agreements with Verizon and AT&T, but not Sprint, and to be successful you have to have agreements with all 3 of them.
- We should take critical transportation corridors, invest the money, develop relationships with the 3 carriers, test it out. A gap filler beyond what the big companies would want to do. We know where those dead zones are from all of the driving around and mapping that has happened.
- If an entity can get the 3 carriers to use their network in these areas, and build one network and get paid adequately it could work. The company would never sell directly to the end-user. Just making sure gaps are filled where their cell towers don't reach.
- Hard part is getting the 3 carriers together to agree, and to want to.
- Start with areas no one covers, and there are plenty of those. The big carriers know their customers are not happy because their coverage isn't very good. A way to make the customers happen. Will require subsidies to get started. Let's try it.
- Pull together the 3 large cell carriers, VTel, and the legislature if we're talking about a subsidy.

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## A2 – Opposing Racism & Creating Safe & Welcoming Communities

### What is already happening in this arena?

- Conversations about police & community - citizens activated.
- Disabilities being addressed - Bennington Police Department citizen committee.
- Burlington High School work.
- Central VT (Randolph) racial justice work in the community with conversations at the high school.
- Law enforcement conversations in Central VT.
- Racial justice work in churches.
- Orange Co Restorative Justice Center has done circles with volunteers to address bias.
- Waterbury local anti-racism groups; ie: school name being changed from slave owner.
- Disability groups - Rutland - Raider mascot being taken down.
- Champlain workshops on white privilege.
- Hartford committee on racial equity and inclusion; plans in school and community.
- Human rights commission gathering data.
- Peace and Justice Center is a resource.
- Randolph HS - Elijah Hawkes - work with American University to address extremists

<https://www.american.edu/centers/university-excellence/peril.cfm>.

- Farm to plate and Working Lands initiative - bringing resources to VT.
- Brattleboro - active marketing campaign to attract black and brown consumers; needs financing, but needed for businesses to grow (previously worked with LGBTQIA+).
- Cornwall - police governance project; look at history - jim crow laws and white privilege and reviewing local police policies.
- School circle conversations.
- New law in state to address exclusionary discipline in schools.
- Bennington - social justice reading group.
- Burlington - reading to end racism; volunteers read to students in the classroom (PD, ministers, etc).
- Citizen activism. Local action starting in Bennington.
- Replace welcoming with inclusion--more active. Be open to whoever and whatever that person chooses.
- Fighting racism in Vermont for thirty years as an advocate. Not a new issue.



- Not a lot in Central VT. But some in high schools. Conversations began with some very negative reactions from adults.
- Some churches doing racial justice work--conversations to teach white Vermonters about their racism.
- Schools are moving the deck chairs on the Titanic. Racism is jeopardizing Vt's future economy.
- Fear. Discomfort and defensiveness among whites. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f0f7aefddd8c901ed42de59/t/5f5e698af54b1d69283367f3/1600022930018/csti-understanding-somatic-abolitionism-09112020.pdf>.
- 99% of whites involved love "trauma tourism" Becomes paternalistic "How can I help you?" Don't have multi-racial groups.
- VT is virtually unknown to BIPOC communities now. Current marketing geared towards a shrinking population of white people. Equation for disaster.
- The Police Governance Project. Cornwall. <https://aboutrightandwrong.org/the-conversation-about-policing-in-america/>.
- Circle process happening some places.

### **What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition?**

- Use "inclusion" rather than the word "welcome" - addressing safety for all Vermonters.
- Each person defining their place.
- Address bias in criminal justice system.
- Education is so key - businesses, essential workers, etc.
- Momentum and dedication to the work.
- Empathy and understanding of issues.
- Changing belief systems - not changing minds.
- Policy work still needs to be done.
- Need courageous leadership - addressing fear, rights and issues.
- Economic considerations with changing demographics - how are communities promoting inclusivity?
- More work in schools to get deeper into issues for the future of VT economy.
- Noticing racism and fear from a retail perspective; how do we attract people to visit and stay in Vermont?
- Fear drives decisions.
- Self-learning - what it is like to be white.
- Background checks deny access to housing.
- Review appraisal and zoning with view toward inclusivity.
- When something doesn't feel right - say something/disrupt what is wrong; don't wait for a black or brown person to speak up first.
- School boards need to step up and do things differently - think of the future and consider the future workforce.
- Ask local police departments about laws and policies.
- Get stories out to every media outlet.
- Encourage literature on the topic in schools and community.
- Personal obligation to be informed – read.
- Start with earlier education - being aware of "othering."
- Change systemic racism. Review rules regarding loans and real estate. Especially so background checks don't become barriers to access for people of color. Review appraisal values. Check that zoning does not separate rich and poor neighborhoods. <https://www.getahome.org/racial-justice-and-equity/>.
- Check fair housing/discrimination laws which currently discriminate and are biased.
- Address "wrongs" as they occur. Be willing to speak up and disrupt. Don't wait for others to complain. <https://www.darden.virginia.edu/ibis/initiatives/gov>.
- Vote out local school boards. More and more of our school age kids are BIPOC. What happens there now is our future.
- Get in touch with local police and find out what they are doing to address the legacy of Jim Crow.
- Talk to local realtors about people being excluded for ethnic or racial background.
- Media has begun to get positive stories out, but needs to go a lot further.
- Develop curricula for the schools and broader community institutions.
- Share language to frame this issue.
- White folks need to keep pushing through. Identify uncomfortableness. Trainings, readings.
- Be willing to make real change in what gets funded. Not just tinker about how much programs keep getting. Driven by goals, not track record. What if return on social equity was the indicator? Bankers might be trained to point such people to nonprofit models. This could be part of our overall startup ecosystem.
- Reading to end racism program in Burlington.

### **Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?**

- DEI workshop with diverse participants; avoid trauma tourism, though.
- Chambers of Commerce.
- Business roundtable.
- Businesses for Social responsibility.
- Librarians.
- Law enforcement.
- Community Justice Centers.
- School Boards.
- Expand our understanding of this universe.
- Partnering with librarians is also a great idea! School librarians, public librarians, and academic librarians!
- Police, and school board reps.

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## A3 – Advancing Creative Economic Solutions to Climate Change

### What is already happening in this arena?

- Sustainable Woodstock: Holding town to goals, connecting people in the Upper Valley and resources.
- Climate Catalyst Project - community hubs to localize services - reduce car use.
- Climate Council.
- Legislative appropriations to address climate change.
- EAN Report.
- Local investments and relocating.
- Buses, trains, land use.
- Trains - Community rail - in need of political buy-in.
- Need new ways of thinking.
- Working with schools to involve young people.
- E-bike events and loans.
- Incremental changes we can make right now as well as longer term changes. Need to support each other across different scales of actions.
- Energy committees funding an intermunicipal regional energy coordinator.
- Regional planning commissions are taking an integrated look at housing and services.
- Energy Action Network Action teams on Weatherization at Scale, Clean Heat Standard, Combined transit, and Replace your Ride - with a big focus on equity and not leaving anyone behind.
- Being willing to take risks on things that might fail / take risks in order to try big new things - including risking funds.
- Carbon footprint of tourism and of shopping/items that aren't available locally or made locally.
- We are doing a lot, but not enough. EAN report shows we need to go faster.

### What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition?

- What are the levers for action? Regulatory, Incentives, Culture shift - frame of mind, local action.
- Establishment of a state hazard mitigation plan. Audit of all state grant programs to make sure they are pulling in the same direction in terms of climate - co-benefits. Where we put jobs (in relation to transportation), revamping central facilities - flood proofing, leverage grant programs against each other. Need a state planning office.
- Maximize Federal dollars that are coming into the state. \$250 million over the next 3 years of ARPA funds.
- Need to get off of fossil fuels - PUC needs to get redone so that solar and wind are more viable. (Wind decibel limit is much lower than the military aircraft in the Burling area).
- Ban connections on Natural Gas. Ban fossil fuel heating systems.
- Look at what we tax and what we don't tax.
- Communicating the urgency of the climate crisis to get change made.
- Concentrate on the point of sale for new heating, transportation etc, to make sure people make good long term decisions for their wallets and the environment. This needs information and incentives. And make sure there is consistency in incentives to avoid boom and bust.
- Need ambitious leadership from all-of-government working with all-of-industry.
- Need to increase demand - critical mass of people behind the changes that are needed - demand for improved products that are needed to hit our goals.
- Education is really needed. Initiative and campaigns. Educational campaign as part of proposition.
- Connecting with energy committees and volunteers who are very involved to move this forward in communities.
- Quality of life issues for lower income households. Partnering together to make the ability to switch equipment more affordable.
- Many of the Vermont citizens who care about energy efficiency and climate change can't afford to put in heat pumps or solar panels. This population is larger than perhaps you imagine.
- Utilize municipal funds coming to the state to further climate goals. Immediate need for this summer.
- Worry about the push for broadband - the internet is using more and more energy. Finding a way to minimize the environmental impact of broadband. Though this can also reduce the need to drive. (Starlink as another option for high speed internet).
- E-bikes may replace walking more than driving so should maybe be limited. (Disagreement on this -- e-bikes for older folks and to allow people to go further on a bike and can be very efficient).
- Transportation solutions for people who don't own cars (or don't want to own cars). Shared electric vehicles for the trips we do need to take.
- Microtransit options.
- Technology won't rescue us from the technologies we already mismanage. We use a lot of energy because we are rural, old, and cold as a state. Can we stop being such a rural state? We need public investment in town and city centers.
- Vermont Proposition - needs more emphasis on trails, walkable, muscle-powered, public transportation, and not car-centric.
- Need more housing units - currently most houses only have 1 or 2 people. Sub-divide big houses into multiple units.
- Payment for ecosystem services to manage soil and forestry in better ways. Agriculture needs to be included in the climate conversation.
- Transportation isn't called out in the Proposition very explicitly. Could use to be elevated.
- Need to make sure the message to the public is about preparedness, public safety net, opportunity, not disruption.
- Pushing back against neoliberalism, monetizing everything, and adding a safety net.
- Carbon capacity in soil.



## Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?

- Focus on young people - empowerment - technical know-how. In and outside of schools.
- Government, non-profit, business.
- How do we engage the general public?
- Urbanists. Can subsidize cheap rent with cheap gas (can afford more house outside of town centers as long as gas is cheap)
- People with disabilities need to be in conversation.
- Tapping into younger citizens and people moving to the state.
- Need for innovative leadership moving forward instead of moving back.
- EAN speaker series - power of regulation.
- Need for a broad demographic: we need people of all income levels in the conversation, BIPOC people, people of all ages, and we need to make the conversation available to them.

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## A4 – Reducing Economic Disparity & Advancing Opportunity

### What is already happening in this arena?

- Collaborations like THRIVE, Continuum of Care groups, Cap Agencies together, etc. and AHS to address or implement supports at community level.
- Economic Caucus at the State House is creating their own equity lens to inform policy and fellow lawmakers.
- Awareness of the inequalities within groups who are in poverty, ex. VCIL addressing needs of those living with disabilities and how those people are more likely to live in poverty, even if they are working, and Black people with disabilities are even more likely to live in poverty.
- Thinking in new ways to drastically shift the systems that those who are “disproportionately impacted” to thinking about how we can shift the systems created to keep folks in the giver or taker box.
- The pandemic has made it clear (to many that have not seen it before) that many more Vermonters are closer to falling out of a place of success or safety than many had realized, this lens is really important to bring forward with us as we move into the recovery phase.
- We are really good in emergencies - but if we want to move ahead of the crises we will have to be more creative, make services easier to access, create opportunities that move people ahead on the social economic ladder of empowerment.
- Infrastructure is different than 6 months ago, we need to start with what is under the ground like water and wastewater and replace aging infrastructure; focus on downtown to keep infrastructure on our downtowns and not outside.
- Relying a lot on volunteers to join committees to pull communities up by bootstraps, lots of inequities because lots of communities don't have people with time to galvanize the work of committees.
- I am seeing people identifying what they are good at and deciding to focus on that in their communities. It is important that the state and local capital support and amplify the work of community members and volunteers who are engaged.
- We need to break down the silos, especially among agencies. Worries me that we are going back to normal, and we can't go back to normal.
- We need to include the private sector. I left the session yesterday because no one from the private sector was involved, the private sector needs to be involved in our solutions. I am often the only person from the private sector.
- See the recent legislature bills around early care in Vermont. This was greatly facilitated by the private sector; a group of CEOs worked along with Let's Grow Kids – the private sector gave the effort credibility.
- Now the private sector is realizing that wealth and income inequality is an issue of substance and a scourge in our country and state. Could take it up just like early care. This is an opportunity.
- Libraries play a critical role with broadband, other local services like copying, and they're an important part of the social and physical infrastructure of a community.
- It is nice to tell families that there are opportunities available through the libraries to connect to their communities, especially with formerly incarcerated people.
- I am working with formerly incarcerated people. Good to see lots of jobs and people working. Employers are extremely helpful - people have been able to go out and find jobs.
- I see silos breaking down so we can put people into jobs, especially jobs that may not have been available prior to COVID. Now employers are more willing to hire.
- Vermont has the highest employee-owned companies per capita. There are over 50 of these companies in Vermont. This is a way to reduce income inequality (e.g. these companies have much more wage equality). Employee-owned companies builds equity and wealth.
- Addison county workforce alliance, focused on making sure employees are ready for work, important conversation happening how to help employees in Addison.
- ARPA infusion is establishing the funds necessary to improve child care resources and education opportunities.
- We have identified education is essential to combating and eradicating poverty. We have identified long-standing gaps in access to education.
- Rhino Foods Income Advance Program offers low interest loans against future paychecks, no questions asked.
- Limited equity housing trust models are happening and reducing disparity in access to homeownership.
- Broad use of credit unions in Vermont is structurally supportive of promoting more equity.

## What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition?

- Bring our experiences from the pandemic forward (housing all of the Vermonters experiencing homelessness, etc.).
- The legislature found that they have the power to increase the access to their process, which brings more voices to the table, and we need to include those voices going forward and include this improved access to the State House.
- We should challenge the process of the legislative process that uses time to limit the access of voices - find ways to be more creative and bring in those who have lived experiences to inform laws and policies.
- Broadening the voices of lived experience being at the table
- Using more relationship building and human-centered or person-centered approaches.
- Decide we MUST care for our neighbors who need support, shift from the “we should if we can...”
- Work of collaborative action networks during the pandemic made many of the good solutions that were used possible, we need to ID how those can be sustained in order to address the many facets of the reality of disparities Vermonters are facing.
- Improving access to education in the trades and harnessing existing companies needs to link people with opportunities and the supports they need to sustain that work (housing, transportation, mentorship, soft skills, etc.).
- Put the pieces together in a holistic way that helps people build confidence and prove that it is worth it to people to put in the hard work to move forward (education, job training, etc.).
- Value certain jobs more than we do right now - ex. Personal care attendants as a workforce needs better pay and better benefits and we need to value those people in our society.
- Address the benefit cliff impact on people who are struggling, address this gap to expand opportunities.
- Be more creative to make home ownership available to more people - not just house people, but help them generate wealth through homeownership.
- Considering transportation solutions that are more like what is available in urban areas where folks don't need to own or rent a vehicle (like Lyft or Uber), that are accessible to anyone who needs that ride, ex. electric vehicle fleet that can be used as rentals or shared fleet, on call as needed.
- Traveling therapy vehicle where Medicaid covers the therapy or peer support session while en route to the grocery store and the ride.
- We should advance quality affordable housing – “housing is where jobs go to sleep at night.”
- As someone who recently moved here from Portland Oregon, I was shocked to find that there is nothing to find here compared to Oregon. As a new resident I recognized that this must be a big challenge.
- When looking at housing, people become deflated because they realize the work that they love is hard to continue because wages are so low and they can't afford housing. Solutions revolve around financial literacy to build own assets and developing partnerships with social service provides to identify housing right off as an issue to focus on and break the silos among service providers.
- Benefits cliff solutions are needed.
- Federal state money available – good news, places like Rural Edge have been able to be proactive to make housing more affordable but at the same time coming up against speculators (people from out of state coming in).
- Sense of belonging in Vermont – need to work more intentionally to make sure our neighbors feel connected so they will reinvest.
- There has been an amazing partnership growing among housing, transportation and schools to offer food to residents
- Affordable homes for a new family starting out is not going to be livable.
- Housing is not a question of not enough, it is not having the right type of housing to meet demand. We need to identify the type of housing stock we want. Right now we are asking people to own homes that are part of an antique housing stock/not up to par and cost a lot to keep up.
- There will need to be variety of solutions based on each region like adaptive reuse, infill development, home shares.
- How can we pair people who need some help with someone who can answer their needs?
- We need to recognize ways to connect our more rural, remote communities – those that are “exceptionally isolated.” How do we realize our connectedness with NH? Issues like broadband and school districts don't conform to usual lines.
- We need more creative thinking - nourish people with ideas and see how things can emerge organically based on unique assets. That means solutions will need to be regional - and we need to grow flexibility to get things done by region.
- Jobs need transportation, health care and education solutions.
- Financial literacy in HS is important – how to teach the next generation about 401k, health insurance, how to save and invest, and what is debt.
- Transportation – we need to somehow make it easier to get people to places where jobs want to be or make places that are interesting where people want to be; we need a lot of creative thinking.
- Universal pre-K has to be available in all areas of state.
- Poorly Understood - book about poverty defining it and busting myths about poverty. We need to recognize that none of us are immune to poverty, and over the course of a lifetime a larger percentage of us than assumed will experience poverty. We should apply this lens to look at the actual statistical likelihood of poverty using data.
- Reducing disparity in the economy requires providing opportunities for people to not only work but earn a livable wage. Adequate childcare and education are both required for this to work.
- We need to define economic disparity better, and which pieces we need to be focused on. Poverty is one element. Wealth inequality and access to wealth is also an economic disparity.
- Poverty regularly starts with one major event, such as a healthcare event. We need to look at how we overcome that. Lack of access to healthcare creates economic disparities.
- Providing a strong secure safety net for the community is essential to help combat climate change.

- Money isn't the only safety net required. A socio-cultural safety net plays a role. Institutions of community are essential.
- We should strive to drive all people toward the middle class. The goal should be a more egalitarian society.
- Pressure on home prices from people moving to Vermont must be addressed.
- Scarcity in housing is manufactured. Homeowner property values increase the more scarce housing is. It is actually in the financial interest of many people to preclude alternative zoning (tiny homes, detached cottages, accessory dwelling units, multi-unit housing).
- Employment and benefits are tied, and need to be decoupled. Benefits are a human right.
- Right to sick time and paid family leave is essential.
- The economic dynamic playing out globally and nationally is in part defining what is available locally here in Vermont. We can foster healthier local economies collaboratively by engaging the full community locally in a democratic way.
- Income versus capital inequality are two different issues. Capital inequality is far greater than income disparity.
- Building the opportunity for employees to gain equity in the company for which they work.
- Building models for neighbors to invest in their own communities promotes people engaging in egalitarian ways. Community investment funds are a potential example.
- Minimum wage jobs don't allow leisure time to participate in culture and the arts.
- Building affordable housing is the biggest challenge that we have right now. Can we integrate tiny houses into our landscape?
- The ways that we treat tipped workers does not guarantee that they receive tips. We have to re-evaluate this approach.
- We are talking about programs and community interventions, but we need a shared understanding of economic inequity and disparity.
- We can take a proactive prevention approach to poverty and economic disparity. We can start with young children, rather than focusing on adults and a reactive response to extant disparity.
- The approach to poverty prevention must be cross-disciplinary.
- Strategies to allow people to build assets will require initial capital. (pump priming with funding).
- The Alaska Permanent Fund is a potential model Vermont should look at for climate change issues.
- Intergenerational wealth is a huge issue contributing to expanding economic disparity. How do we make those opportunities available to those who don't come from wealth? Baby bonds? Intergenerational wealth opens doors for education and homeownership.
- Globalized economy and pursuit of wealth are at the root of climate change. We must culturally shift the pursuit of individual wealth to a collective collaborative pursuit of a secure safety net for all.
- Policy to reduce income diversity would make society stronger. Reduction in the magnitude of disparity is essential to alleviating the increasing cultural and social divisions in our society.
- The war on poverty is one end of the spectrum. There is also a war on wealth to be had. Wealth is not healthy, necessary or useful.
- The war on poverty isn't working. The systems reinforce poverty and do not provide a ladder out. They are largely designed to protect the accumulation of wealth. They are bandages to maintain the status quo. Wars don't create things, they destroy things. We need to create something. We are building the middle class.
- Advancing shared prosperity is our goal.
- We need to right-size wealth and income and cost of living in Vermont. We need to set a goal and a timeframe to reach a reasonable level.
- Engage the business community and build their interests as it relates to reducing inequality.
- Build wealth (not just programs) through financial literacy homeownership employee ownership, entrepreneurship
- Think creatively around regional isolation – build new partnerships based on common interests that are boundary crossing.

### **Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?**

- Bringing together the private sector employers and the public sector (schools, government, etc.) for example, the Winooski School District did a community engagement process that highlighted the soft skills needed to prepare young people for tomorrow.
- Public funds need to be used to build forward programs that are beneficial to the future of individuals and families (ex. Building the child tax credits into the future while training individuals in financial literacy skills so they can make educated decisions for themselves).
- Capstone is connecting with employers and the Working Communities Challenge, United Way, and community partners together to bring employees the skills they need to stay employed and employers who need employees what they need to understand about the workforce (similar to the Working Bridges program). Other regions have the opportunity to do this, too.
- Homeowners encouraged to use the rental rehab program to share their homes and bring new rental units online, and increase the options of models considered (single occupancy, micro apartments, and hyper affordable units, or roommate situations like home sharing).
- Expand the conversation about scarcity to include accessibility (physical accessibility) where housing is built as accessible from the beginning and normalize the fact that accessibility is part of everyday life (like multi-unit housing that is accessible and has mixed use) using orgs like VHFA, housing developers, VCIL's knowledge of accessibility, etc.
- Businesses felt like they were missing too many question askers - the panel may have benefitted from a business or employer voice and employers and business must be at the table for any change to be made and sustained.
- Citizens need to be involved; as citizens how do we do a better job in partnership with each other; how does VLCT work with

citizens to direct new stimulus funding? We need to boost citizens as leaders to drive solutions.

- Private sector effort – Vermont Business Roundtable and VBSR – has stepped up and wants to participate on wealth inequality; however other business orgs are not so interested in having this discuss and they need to have it; a case can be made that it is in the interest of business why wealth needs to be shared; I urge the people who organized this conference that they didn't spend enough time to get private sector folks to the table.
- Higher education needs to be part of this work. They need to see their role in society is to build upward mobility. Community colleges already know this but the UVM system should too.
- How do we enhance the sense of belonging among businesses? How can we be better partners and communicators with others who are not at the table? We have done a terrible job of engaging businesses.
- School boards need to be part of conversation; they are the change makers.

- Business owners need to be engaged. A spectrum of business sizes and stages of development from startup to mature businesses should be engaged.
- People who are cost-burdened for housing.
- Champlain Housing Trust.
- VHFA.
- Vermont Housing Conservation Board.
- Homeless population.
- UVM Office on Engagement could help with research and further discussion.
- A sociologist could help to frame how people work.
- Finance organizations - VT Community Loan Fund, VSECU, venture capitalists, financial advisors.
- People in intentional communities/co-housing communities.
- Diversity of participants.
- Organized labor movement.
- USCRI - refugee resettlement.
- Interpreters and translators.
- Young working people.
- Remote workers.
- People with lived experience of poverty.

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## A5 – Child Care

### What is already happening in this arena?

- Some people and entities are working on the expansion of child care.
- There is difficulty attracting and retaining qualified staff.
- Hospitals in the area can pay significantly more, so related service providers are going there to work instead of to the school systems. Retaining staff depends on having a child care system to support the teachers and school staff.
- There is difficulty finding licensed Pre-K teachers (or any qualified teachers).
- Care providers need child care as well and may not make enough wages to support child care (vs. higher paying doctor jobs).
- Some child care providers are paid wages that put them in a gap zone for services; if they continue working, they aren't getting the same community services that other folks who aren't working or are employed otherwise receive. Some can't accept raises because they will no longer qualify for support or they live in that gap between making the amount to get support and making too much to get the support.
- People are exiting or not entering the workforce because they don't have child care.
- Attracting and retaining support staff in schools, especially with large populations of IEP students, can be difficult. One school system set the goal of a \$15 entry wage (high school diploma, zero years of higher education), which was a 7% increase for some, by 2023.
- A lot of support staff are working to access health care, and some of them don't have enough to live on after health care expenses. Minimum wage does not provide a living wage.
- The market is driven by what parents can afford, and then when subsidy systems come in, it makes it seem like you can

afford more until you actually see what your subsidy is. Parents seem to have to make up the difference no matter what.

- Health insurance is one of the biggest expenses for employees *and* businesses. Once we solve health insurance issues, it gives us more leverage to solve other issues —like early childhood education challenges. From a social determinants of health standpoint, you're also solving the health insurance problem down the line. Where is the will and the way and the money to start that feedback loop? Is it the healthcare chicken or the early childhood education/child care egg?
- In the fourth piece of the VT Proposition, with benefits issues, everyone from child care staff and middle income people can struggle with a benefits cliff. When the legislature was talking about \$15 minimum wage a couple years back, they tripped over child care because they realized if someone was making \$10/hr and getting a child care benefit and you raise them to \$15/hr, they would lose their benefit and be in a worse position than when they started. What about everyone that was already making \$15/hr and couldn't afford child care?
- On the other hand, some small child care entities cannot afford to offer higher wages.
- 80% of a child care budget goes to staffing. This is why staffing/pay often gets cut first because that is the bulk of the budget.
- In terms of positive things happening, the advances made in the American Rescue Plan Act around Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are very targeted and an incredible tool for combating poverty of parents and the expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Credit, with limit of \$18,000/child, is a great opportunity as well.

- Lake Champlain Chamber is working with partners and trying to better understand the trade-off and optimization between the Child and Dependent Care Credit and the Child Care Financial Assistance Program —where can they put each at so people get the maximum benefit from each.
- Child Tax Credit, looking back 50 yrs from now, will be a huge anti-poverty measure.
- When you compile all these benefits, that's a lot of relief for parents. The thought in Washington is that these things are possibly here to stay.
- Lake Champlain Chamber lobbied to have the Vermont tax code link up with the Child and Dependent Care Credit and to VITC at a cost of about \$7 million to the state in revenue expenditure —which represents good opportunities moving forward.
- There are some changes the legislature put in place under S88 that will help the market for health insurance which could provide a great path forward for child care centers.
- It will be great to see what comes out of the studies in H171 this session.
- One of the big shifts that's happening is that we're actually valuing family. If we hold that families with children can afford to live in our state, that can guide so many changes. We have to think about the impact to children and families in our tax codes, our changes, etc. Let's Grow Kids has been a great champion.
- H171 has passed the House and Senate and is waiting on the Governor's desk for signature. That will put more money in family pockets for child care, increase the rates of reimbursements to providers —it's a really good down payment on a 3-year plan where families don't pay more than 10% of their income on child care and for shifting the system and increasing the revenues for the field. The studies that are part of that to get the policies and infrastructure right are very important. It will be interesting to see how the Child Tax Credit interacts with child care revenue models.
- Vermont did a great job, thanks to Let's Grow Kids and other early childhood advocates, of retaining more of our child care during the pandemic than many other states.
- Programs seem to simply not be able to find staff.
- Although we've lost a number of child care providers over the years, we've retained high-quality programs. We've got good overall child care, but not enough of it.
- An important part of the wage discussion: Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children is working on an initiative called Advancing the Profession which is a body of work within the field to define roles and talk about fair wages, etc.
- One participant is working in 6 different Vermont communities that are considering starting their own child care centers to address the need. Parents may receive money to get child care, but there might not be enough of it to find.
- Lots of people think the child care industry is broken, but they know how to do child care — there's not enough money to sustain it. In this conversation, we have to figure out how much it really costs to do it best with the right amount of staff, hours, etc.
- We have to remodel revenues to understand and implement. What can you get from CCFAP, UPK? How much support can we give parents now, and how much more are they going to need if we're not going to ask them to pay more than 10% of their income?
- Maybe we should be looking at what the European countries are doing with universal child care. It might be nice not to reinvent the wheel.
- As a state we need to be a leader for change, but we also need the federal government to support what we want to do.
- People in Canada have a year of maternity leave mandated and paid by their employers, and they don't need child care for a year. As a country, we don't foster the importance of early child development. The developmental period between ages 0 - 4 are critical.
- When paid family medical leave was discussed in the legislature, the constructive criticism of that effort was that it was created at the national level too quickly and dropped to the states, making it difficult to take into account other priorities/happenings in each state. Making child care accessible would cost approx. \$150 - 300 million to reach the 10% income goal while also spending \$150 million on 12 weeks of parental leave. Why isn't the child care provider for the first twelve weeks or longer the parent(s)? Why is the child care subsidy not just applied to the parent from the moment the child is born?
- Our parents' payments currently account for 1/4 of what it costs to educate their children; we're trying really hard to keep expenses down, but obviously we need to raise wages.
- Then there's the intertwining issues of if you pay higher wages, or increase minimum wage: 1) the taxes have to be raised to pay those and 2) how do you attract small businesses who may not be able to start out paying \$15/hr?

### **What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition?**

- Make sure staff are fairly compensated.
- Accountability for outcomes.
- We also need to consider that not all of our employers live in Vermont creating complications about what benefits people can get. We could look into pooling costs for parental leave between VT and NH.
- There are 100 counties in the country larger than VT, and there's a lot we can do at a regional level. More collaboration around New England could work to scale plans, pool costs, etc.
- There is a lot of turn-over within the child care industry as well. There needs to be a roadmap for looking at the incentives for child care providers to stay in the industry whether that's loan cancellations, retention benefits, etc.
- The EITC is a great way to see if giving families more money can make a difference. Potentially expanding the EITC could make a difference.
- With the large, well-funded initiatives, people want the final version —let's create the end program now. But what about the interim steps? Those interim steps could be created through tax incentives.

- There are federal tax credits for businesses that support child care, so what about some state credits? Some have said that employers have not participated, but now the employers might understand the importance of child care because of the pandemic.
- There needs to be a framework included in child care mandates for child care providers to follow that still provide flexibility for communities to adjust as needed.
- In past paid family medical leave discussions, it's been about either an unfunded mandate or a tax on employers to create an insurance program. Why not incentivize with tax credits things you want employers to do —even on a trial basis? After the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) has run its course, we can replicate it at a small, voluntary level and put state tax credit dollars behind it and see what uptick is.

### **Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?**

- Employers - what is their role in child care for their employees? Some have tried to create a child care center, but couldn't make it happen. Others don't see it as their place to provide child care, and everywhere in between.
- There is often talk at the state level about supporting employers in Vermont and helping them retain employees. Child care will help employers retain employees.
- There needs to be a combination of family-friendly supports and policies (paid parental leave, universal pre-k, etc.) to make sure families have choices and each choice is something good for their kids.
- Child care is a complex business with very tight margins, but an employer doesn't have to run a child care to contribute to child care. Employers can provide support with stipends or scholarships.
- Parents with second and third shifts struggle with child care. Why not offer families first shift first? With a lot of parents, one takes a first shift and the other takes a second/third shift in order to coordinate child care, and that is rough on families because of the lack of family time.
- Other jobs with inconsistent schedules, like in law enforcement, create child care barriers as well.
- How do you make steps toward a universal system like those in Europe? Universal pre-k was a huge step forward. However, it's an unfunded mandate with not enough guidance for schools for effective implementation.
- How do we entice our young people to step up and become leaders when we are making them choose between being a leader or starting a family? What are parents, what are young people giving up when we as a culture put those constraints on them and how does that impact our collective future?
- In the legislature, universal pre-k and child care sit side by side, but they have not really been communicating/working together. In the systems conversation happening in H171, these two areas need to talk to each other and the intersection of UPK and child care. We need a state-wide system that makes sense, but it needs to be flexible for each individual community —similar to what we do with schools.

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## **A6 – Supporting Business Creation, Workforce & Innovation**

### **What is already happening in this arena?**

- LaunchVT helps businesses start and grow successfully.
- SBDC, VMEC, RDCs.
- Healthy Roots assists farm and food businesses, also acknowledges Farm Viability program, Intervale, IDA program within community action.
- Mad River Food Hub - space and mentorship.
- VT SCORE helps entrepreneurs.
- Helm Solutions helping contractor business development.
- Efficiency VT trains distributors and contractors.
- Vital Communities - local economic development including local investment in its region including housing development which is tied to workforce and business development.
- SBA Emerging Leaders program for scale up of existing businesses -helps creates jobs as well.
- WSBP from Mercy Connections helping very small new business owners.
- Northern Forest Center - wood products, USDA Rural Development programs.
- Preservation Trust of VT can help bring historic buildings back online for businesses.
- NW Regional planning - municipalities have economic development officials.
- Schools are working to connect students with work opportunities.
- VT Land Trust - help small farms get started.
- Colleges and Universities - VTC setting up an advanced manufacturing facility to educate businesses and train the new employees.
- SWIFFY - technical skills training.
- Maker spaces - Brattleboro, Rutland (Mint), Generator in BTV, Foundry, Lyndonville has one at the school.
- Springfield - Black River Innovation Campus, Center on Rural Innovation has VT towns in cohorts. Launch and scale of tech-based businesses, upscaling skills of college graduates and helping with ideation to create new tech businesses. Example a mechanic who developed a software program to improve processes. Business support services and networking opportunities.
- Training of municipal and other planners to better assist businesses.
- VEDA lends to small and medium businesses as well as farms, adds credit enhancement.
- Internship programs with college students - Union Mutual has a strong paid internship program with great results in developing skills.



- Businesses are training employees because of the small labor force.
- Brattleboro - One-to-One training program that uses “old school” way to include businesses in assistance as well as virtual methods - emphasizes benefits of new ways to reach community businesses.
- In the Bennington area, there are limited carpenters. Forest Byrd is creating a cooperative of trustworthy carpenters and hopes to attract young prospects with a learning environment. Another goal of the cooperative is to increase innovative environmental building techniques. They hope to be employee-owned and do not know how to access collaborative input and financial support.
- VT Employee Ownership Program has funding available for entrepreneurial projects. There are baby boomers who are looking to exit their businesses and opportunities to purchase an existing VT business.
- NewImpact.care is a tri-sector model that leverages private, social, and public resources to create change. It is a collaboration of the business, government, and non-profit communities.
- Community Capital of VT has financial and networking resources that are not tapped because people are unaware of their availability. As a result, people are leaving the state and small businesses are frustrated.
- AdvanceVT provides a resource that aggregates resources for VT’s most promising careers and the necessary educational resources: [www.myfuturevt.org](http://www.myfuturevt.org).
- Entry-level positions do not have upward availability so younger people are leaving the state.
- Business advice is available at local economic development centers. The advantage of VT is that it is small and there are people with many connections and willing to provide introductions and advice.
- Makers Spaces provide networking opportunities and are resources for entrepreneurs and the Burlington space provides networking for high school students and college for education and career prospects.
- It is difficult to find workforce housing.
- There is a need for sustainable engineering education and other professions. Incentives need to be created along with educational and financial supports to fill the gaps.

### What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition?

- Connecting young people who want to stay in VT to get the skills needed by local businesses. VT Talent Pipeline, Burlington Code Academy, ApprenticeScope to help coordinate apprenticeships.
- More opportunities for capital, small grants in particular are pivotal to help startups.
- Middlebury College has scholarships that pay a student to work for a business.
- Internship programs in HS need to be more incentivized with longer internships and ensuring competencies.
- Continuous learning is not negotiable. Ex. is building industry. Support of ongoing training at the jobsite - problem solving, keeping up with the changes is an investment in the organization and helps retain employees.
- Address leadership styles of business owners to better foster employee development.
- There are good models - Red River in Claremont, Hypertherm, DH Medical Center for employee pipeline development. Corporate Council convened by Vital Communities - business leaders look at prevailing issues. How to replicate these models in other companies with interaction with students or career changers or new to VT (GMEDC suggestion).
- COVID federal funds - ReVTA Revitalizing VT Technical Assistance - matching and paying for professional services to local businesses. Several attendees considered this an effective program, as it helped VT businesses help other VT businesses. RDCs made sure business was getting the help needed. Not picked up for expansion. BDCC developed the platform used. Relevant and could be continued. There was a report on this program. Had to be a business registered to work in VT.
- Climate change aspect - training in solar design and installation and weatherization. This is a growing industry. Building Performance Institute, Solar Energy International are examples.
- Vermont has a large population of older Vermonters who want to lend their skills or funds, but there is no clearinghouse for this.
- LaunchVT has a network of over 300 professionals that help the emerging businesses.
- SCORE counselors in VT are available to provide business assistance at no cost. [www.score.org](http://www.score.org).
- Focus on bringing people (employees) into the state and help them find places to live.
- Encourage local investors to improve properties and find businesses to use them.
- Landlords as supportive partners with Main street business tenants. Including incentives to attract tenants.
- Vermont Community Loan Fund has been creative in providing capital to businesses during the pandemic.
- More investment in tourism marketing to attract customers to Vermont. Help VT businesses to sell outside of VT.
- Making sure there is thoughtful, available technical services for small businesses that are operating on thin margins. Assistance with financials and other aspects so the smallest businesses can better access resources. Help overcome broadband or language barriers.
- Create intersectional approaches to create local resiliency within business communities.
- Keeping business ownership local will help keep employees in VT.
- Ensure that programs are beneficial and effective for microbusinesses (5 or fewer employees). More can be done to make sure these businesses are aware of the resources available. Many do not have time to apply for time consuming or complicated programs.

- Social safety nets of child care, paid family and medical leave can be effective in growing the smaller businesses and attract businesses to locate here.
- Additional housing investment and the supporting infrastructure (waste water, electricity, plumbing, internet access).
- Bring in more economic activity to the state.
- Create a “matchmaker portal” to connect jobs to applicants.
- Students are left behind and need to have access to career information, about Certificate of Values at CCV and VTC, the most promising and needed careers in VT. Their education needs to be affordable and accessible (internet accessibility).
- The state needs a comprehensive cohesive strategy for the workforce shortage and post-secondary workforce goals of attaining credentials of value. There is good work around identifying good careers but the state needs a strategy so it can appropriate the necessary funding.
- Credentials of Value should be provided to high school students.
- Eliminate the competition for educational funding between career tech centers and the high schools.
- Affordable high-quality childcare to attract young families and support the current workforce.
- Affordable senior housing so older people can sell their homes to younger families and then find/afford a smaller house.
- VT League of Cities and Towns should coordinate and educate about available resources.
- Prioritizing and sequencing are essential in the planning
- Think across sectors so that we are not recreating the wheel but instead leveraging existing resources to maximize opportunities within schools/childcares/technical centers.
- It’s challenging to find welcoming communities. The BIPOC community does not feel safe in certain communities.
- BIPOC Business Survey: <https://vermontpartnership.org/2020/12/20/bipoc-business-survey-preliminary-results-released/>
- BIPOC- Owned Businesses: <https://loveburlington.org>
- Provide access to funding for small businesses besides ethnic restaurants.
- Supporting existing BIPOC businesses.
- Encourage more start-ups in Vermont.
- To attract and retain new Vermonters, including those of the BIPOC community, it is important to be upfront and proactive in creating benefits that make sense and create a sense of community that is inclusive.
- Identify banks where diversity is represented, and people might feel seen and represented.

### Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?

- Start-Ups need to have access to and information about micro-loans, especially in rural communities.
- The state needs a strategic plan, coordination, and to provide clarification. How and where are the incoming federal funds being spent?
- How does one get into “the room” to find the available funding and resources?

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## A7 – Streamlining Regional Governance & State Planning

### What is already happening in this arena?

- Brattleboro library has a steering committee to be a resource for community engagement.
- At Woodstock town level there is a need to overcome an ever-rotating group of people who lack expertise. Wanting to write a Capital Plan. Need expertise; borrow that person who could provide templates. E.G. Woodstock wanted to hire an energy coordinator. Could not afford it by themselves. Grouped with 7 other towns. Consultant works for the RPC on only energy.
- Agreement with the Woodstock comment, from a former worker in state planning. The RPC used to have a boring video they would loan out to towns.
- VT Planners Association often feel they are the only ones advocating for a state planning office. It is needed.
- Bill in legislature. Climate Caucus of Legislature has looked to VCRD’s report 15 yrs ago. There is a need for planning in terms of the state budget to make it more politically viable.
- Enosburg created a volunteer group, Enosburg Initiative. Agree – there is a local support need. Need capacity at local level. NWRC is a great help writing proposals. Most issues arise with elected local officials who think in terms of maintaining conditions, not planning for the future. How many town officials’ job descriptions include planning?
- From E Montpelier: Piloting with state an Emerald Ash Borer effort with regards to town roads. Animal Control Officer values the informal network: Relationships with police, other towns. Public safety: Barre/Mont working with other towns. Hit many roadblocks. E Montp shares a FD (& ambulance) with Calais, who is in a separate relationship with Woodbury. Because it is hard to get local volunteers, Depts. parasitize each other. Need regional ambulance service. Should the Legislature help?
- Windham County RPC has been level funded for the last 8 yrs. Must meet certain requirements; have to seek grants to do more. Need more state funding, or towns need more funding to contract with RPCs. Towns are stuck with little experience/know-how.
- United Way of Northwestern VT: The network of statewide United Ways merged with the statewide network of non-profits when Marlboro College closed. Can maintain “guardrails” like trustees in nonprofit orgs. State does it backwards.
- UVM Community Development/Applied Economics is relatively new. Reaching out to Economic Development & Workforce Development, and seeing a big need for increased capacity.

Opportunities to collaborate - UVM/RPCs & RDCs. Networks already in place. State-centric approach or a network of networks with a backbone of support. Fit in the towns. We have no counties. Lack of uniformity in capacity in RPCs and RDCs. The rich tend to get richer, at regional & community level. Equity/fairness issue. Top down or bottom up – either way could work.

- Revolving door in state government with elections every 2 years creates a fragility and a lack of stability in planning. We

need to create a term of office for the leader that's not tied to politics (eg FBI director – 10 yr term).

- NEK Collaborative is a private regional organization that supplements our RPC/RDC. It is especially strong in outreach and professional networking. Was able to pivot quickly in COVID to share developing ideas on community support networks from town to town.

### What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition?

- We will get all this federal stimulus funding, but there are no plans. Local Select Boards, even in relatively wealthy towns, are not doing this needed planning.
- Volunteer Enosburg Initiative--not the local gov't--is working with Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation to buy an empty Enosburg building.
- Too many people think they are all set for the future. Need to move beyond that mindset.
- Top down vs bottom up: What will happen if the Legislature forces towns to plan? (even with funding)? Most people hate being told what to do. But no teeth unless required. Give us the \$\$ to be able to do it from the bottom up, especially smaller towns. Interconnectedness: Sewer & other local infrastructure needs impact housing and other big statewide issues.
- The state already requires municipal plans. Add incentives - Can't get state \$ w/o such and such. Currently not as detailed as it might be.
- There are capacity questions regarding local Planning Commissions. Need innovative thinking re regional governance. Why does every town need to replicate its infrastructure? Local planning commissions' job would be to provide local input. There is no way for us now to think about growth because it is a regional issue. COVID & Climate change. How can we grow our infrastructure in a coordinated way?
- Do not mandate towns to do more. Consider ways to take stuff off their plate – provide grant writing & grant administration.
- Local groups are important as opportunities for much needed emerging new leadership.
- Issues regarding Act 200 could cause backlash. Language is important. House the planning entity in the state budget office, not the Gov's office.
- Libraries are a great place to advance outreach and education, and can serve as an activity center.
- VT is quite divided. Caution re statewide or regional mandate. Has potential to override progress. Need grass roots efforts.
- State planning office does not have to be top-down. It's an asset. Especially for DATA. Census is coming up. So much federal money. What are the statewide priorities; does the state level have a good handle on local needs? Many changes from COVID – work from home changes all priorities.
- Trade-offs in siting a planning office. When agencies quibble over money, the Governor can quash infighting to keep things going forward.
- With regards to Part 9 of the Proposition, consolidations can reduce opportunities for people to step forward & learn to be local leaders. Need to think of leadership development along with program efficiency.
- Many small towns lack access to professional planners. Equity issue. They need to be served.
- The UVM Office of Engagement is working to develop data partnerships across the state to address economic and workforce development. Working with all 12 regional development corporations and are happy to speak with anyone who is interested in using data to address community needs in VT.
- Need data to understand what our actual issues are.
- Non-profit & elected leaders need to step aside or step behind so new leaders can emerge.
- Work with groups like Gun Sense & Braver Angels to cross cultural gaps and reduce polarization.
- Make sure we know whether/if things are/are not working in some communities.
- We need to build capacity and skills at local levels (small municipalities). We need accessible local training. People don't have broadband and are unskilled in using it. Can't access GIS. Don't understand the hydrologically connected roads and the funding rules.

### Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?

- VLCT's role is beyond providing insurance and legal advice. They are a widely used resource by many municipalities.
- Pathways locally and more broadly need to be explored.
- Hope. A goal/plan. And agency. Need futurists & younger people to envision 25 years out.
- A plan is a valuable endeavor as a tactic for 3-5 years.
- Civic engagement, youth. We rely on volunteers.
- GIS was put at local level, purposefully, to beef up local RPCs. We could do that again and put a new resource there.
- There is long term thinking happening. Examples are VHCB, conserving land and creating affordable housing – in perpetuity. VT has committed to Designated Downtowns & Village Centers.
- VNRC will be releasing a Smart Growth Report Card soon regarding infrastructure.
- Don't use the phrase "Planning Office" for the state level. Planning needs to be in every town. Suggest "Planning Facilitation Office."
- What does "development" mean? Economic & educational, cultural? Bigger is not always better.
- Facilitation idea is good. The backbone mentioned above: Experts to facilitate. It has worked in the opiate epidemic, and in homelessness for the United Way.

- VHCB is a model; also VT financial planning is too. Joint fiscal office in legislature, and in the Governor's office. Call the planning office something else. Site it close to the Gov, but not in administration office, to make it last through political ups and downs.
- VT Planners are with the idea of going forward.
- Healthy discussion between local/state control. Can also be useful for planning state gov't action. Reference Bill Schubart's recent article. Interconnectedness of sectors.
- The legislative bill "on the wall" is a first response only. Do not be worried about this draft; plenty of opportunities to make it better.
- When RPCs were first set up, it was envisioned they would provide the training & assistance people now say they need and don't have. If CH 117 and Act 200 are not working, we need to revisit. RPCs don't have the resources/staff to do what is needed, although they have the will.
- How much disconnect is there between what's called "planning" among professionals, vs. what's going on the ground? Use the libraries, and bring community members in!
- Nomenclature gets in the way. "Training" is different from "Capacity Development." Need to strengthen informal networks & relationships – like going for a beer. What we need is more than just a day of training.

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## A8 – Protecting VT's Land, Water & Working Landscape

### What is already happening in this arena?

- Land frames the identity of most Vermonters.
- Abenaki continue to be at one with the land.
- Increasing parcelization of the landscape.
- Quantifying parcelization is a big challenge- incremental fragmentation.
- How do we grow and do it in a smart pattern that maintains the integrity of the landscape?
- What is happening with land development - all the landscape is really the working landscape.
- Water is an issue - Look at the recent Florida initiative given water bodies rights - need to be inclusive of all resources.
- Loan to the Farm at Brattleboro Retreat.
- Wildlife is also part of the working landscape and fragmenting affects wildlife health.
- Issues with regard to people not following "rules" in the landscape.
- We have not established what resilience and sustainability really means in VT - forest in private lands, biofuels use increasing, how many people can we support -without oil and transportation and food from California?
- VT is a bit beyond sustainability according to studies.
- There are limits to growth so sustainability is a real issue.
- Getting into agriculture is still a matter of privilege and capital in terms of land access, farmer's age increasing - not sufficient support for getting into farming for young people is still a problem.
- Loss of forest blocks and connected habitats, loss of farms, loss of biodiversity with indicator species.
- Not enough public awareness - how to raise it - how to work together to have a working landscape and also viable habitat and recreation space?
- We focus on the tax base at the expense of other economies.
- Need for a collaborative spirit.
- Yes- fragmentation but our tools may not be effective - in our town we recognized forest blocks but not sure what we can do about it.
- Cited current use program = but uses a 25 (or 27) acre threshold - and this may be in fact contributing to the problem.
- Smart Growth VT grappled with the balance or marriage of VT's beauty and environment - wildlife and vistas - and being able to work in VT.
- What are the future jobs - how can Vermonters make a living that sustains the valued landscape and its intactness?
- 3500 acres were just conserved in Londonderry but a road runs through the middle with increased traffic.
- Communications conundrum - how does the word get out; how do people learn or hear clear messages? There is a need for certain types of leadership and how to reach the broader community.
- The utility of values mapping in a community with a composite map as to what people value as a basis for your town plan.
- Mixed use building is an interesting option.
- "Mass timber" as a resource to consider for local wood production.
- Expanding the forest products industry - also undermined by an aging workforce - there remains a lot of value in this segment of the economy.
- Lack of early successional habitat.
- Importance of hunting/fishing as a viable means of sustenance and the value of access to this resource and lifestyle - it's the 2nd largest economic driver behind winter sports.
- Act 171 designed to identify forest blocks - not designed as a planning or regulatory approach - how to promote or incentivize an alternative to cookie cutter subdivisions- doesn't translate readily to the ground - an important strategy.
- How do we influence development patterns on the ground? Triggers a lands rights response and some partisan issues.
- Need a viable working forest economy - need more mill infrastructure.
- 95% of land mass in Germany is not developed - because fragmentation is prohibited - focus on town center outward.
- Fairbanks Museum focusing on mass timber for building.
- The state's investment in conservation via the VT Housing and Conservation Trust Fund is an incredible legacy of investment in land conservation and also affordable housing - in balance; unique in the country and can be built on for more impact.
- Green Up Day is an amazing effort, are there any stats or information on the impact of Green Up Day? Are there stats on how much trash collected - could inspire?
- Vermonters engaged in building and stewarding trails - example 8000 members of VT Mountain Bike Trail Association, 10% of Vermonters.

- Vermont has incredible access to outdoor recreation, as well as to our working landscape.
- Vt farmers have made a commitment to environmental improvement, water quality in particular - slow progress, can be frustrating, but it's important to note.
- Conserving our working lands, ensuring access to land for those who want to farm, and a system to improve and support farm businesses.
- Of the six New England states, we are the most agricultural and we provide a lot of food to our neighbors.
- Steps towards diversification of the agricultural economy
- Promoting stewardship among young people - organizations like Northwoods Stewardship Center, spreading to our youth is a hopeful thing.
- Level of collaboration between federal, state, local and nonprofits in VT is significant and successful - and shouldn't be taken for granted. This is not the case in many other states! The spirit of partnership is palpable.
- Strength of the organic farming community in Vermont - example: ¼ of dairy farmers in the state are certified organic; also an increase in organic maple syrup producers.
- Feeding people during the pandemic - with local food - impressive involvement by farmers.
- Consumer interest in local food in Vermont.
- The concept of a "Working landscape" is critical and used in Vermont more than you see elsewhere outside Vermont - great to see the State focus on that.
- Long term relationships and relationship building in Vermont - people are accountable to each other and a lot results from that; especially because it can take time to produce results from these long term relationships.
- Working lands viability - to conserve now and ensure available and successful in the future - farm and forest viability support is key. (VHCB Farm and Forest Viability program).
- NRCS funding is helpful to support good regenerative land use.

### **What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition?**

- Circuit rider planners and ways to better integrate planning.
- Need to support young people to gain skills and understand the farming / forestry / hunting / fishing culture.
- VT will not stay as a small state of 600+K people - shouldn't we plan now aggressively for more conserved/shared lands to retain farm and forest opportunities?
- Need to think of assets communally - like the Abenaki who had to work together to capitalize on their resources.
- What's the answer to: "It's my land and I'll do what I want?"
- Need to keep looking at the bigger picture and tapping into resources that we can/do share.
- Consider the costs and benefits of our decisions - wind turbines may not be pleasing to everyone but provide necessary renewable energy.
- How do we introduce people to certain aspects of rural living?
- Reduce bureaucracy - make the system easier to access; more education in navigating it.
- The Afforestation effort in the state - will this work against our efforts to support a working landscape? Efforts to eliminate management of our forestland in the name of carbon sequestration.
- Reduce barriers to businesses - from the lumber standpoint, all our wood is leaving; not enough value-added infrastructure in Vermont - how can we change that? What needs to change to make it easier to start these businesses in VT.
- Reduce/stop forest fragmentation - the smaller they become, the less available they are to be used for forest management, accessed for recreation, etc.
- Linking conservation through use - increase appreciation for the land.
- Make Vermont a more welcoming and inclusive place for all - working landscape will benefit from more diversity, will make us more resilience.
- Land access for beginning farmers - economic and social barriers.
- Reduce zoning barriers - to allow for creativity and flexibility; and not perpetuate old concepts of what is agriculture.
- Recognize the importance of our local food system - real opportunity to reduce supply chain issues etc. (pandemic taught us that).
- Broadband across the state is so important - touches everything! Technology is key.
- Level of coordination required to get projects done can also be a barrier - administrative overhead has been increasing, fragmentation of funding sources, etc. - takes time away from being in the field.
- Echoing what Monique said in the opening today - we need to be ready to reinvent ourselves, to throw away "how it's always been done" and allow ourselves to do more and include more people.
- The pandemic has caused us to throw away some rules/constraints in the moment - let's not lose that.
- We need more workers - key to invite and welcome more people here - of all types.
- What's up with Starlink? Is it a solution to the broadband issue? Or community fiber efforts (Cambridge is an example)?
- Outdoor recreation is not showing up in the proposition - shouldn't it be in there more explicitly? FFF - farming, forestry and fun (recreation) as the working landscape.
- Expand ownership models for farms, to be successful, could more collaboration be a benefit - share resources.
- Need for affordable housing - will support our efforts to support a diversity of residents and also those trying to start new land-based businesses.
- Shorter supply lines; better distribution networks.
- Vermont First effort - produce more here? Reduce on-line ordering out of state.
- Need to recognize the tension between housing and open land - need a better balance in parts of the state (this from someone in South Burlington).
- Need for better permitting in the forest industry.
- We need to make better connections across the supply forest products supply chain.
- We need to ensure the ability to make a living for all workers in the supply chain of forest products.

- We need to improve in-state infrastructure for the forest industry-eg we need to make access to local lumber easier, access to sawmills etc.
- More public and private funds are needed for conservation of forestlands-very limited funds are available for easements for smaller properties. Most of the federal funds are only available for larger tracts of land (1000+acres).
- Make the Clean Water Revolving Fund (ANR/EPA) permanent. (It is about to sunset).
- We need to reward landowners of any size property to steward their property (lower acreage to enable eligibility for programs like current use, for example).
- Create more opportunities in the Carbon Market and payments for forested lands. (USDA Forestry Funds)
- Create more opportunities for Payment for Ecosystem Services (Swiss model).
- Increase the visibility and appreciation of the working forests/forestry. It is often overlooked-Agriculture is much more visible.
- We need to begin to work with intention on reparations for the Indigenous community. We need to acknowledge Vermont is unceded indigenous land. We need to recognize that land is being commodified without acknowledgement of whose land this was. There's also a need to continue to expand access to land ownership for Black Vermonters. The working lands conservation has often centered around the dairy industry which itself sometimes has issues with fair treatment of migrant farmworkers.
- We need to provide capital and land access (including ownership) to the Black and Indigenous community who have been excluded from a white dominant system and have historically been pushed off the land and been intentionally left out.
- We need land justice policies that remove barriers and create equal access to land. We need to acknowledge and invest in new and less traditional business models of agriculture for keeping our lands viable (cooperative, community farms, Indigenous-led projects, and agrarian commons) and acknowledge additional benefits beyond production but as safe spaces for healing and celebration.
- "We need to look back to look forward." We have a myopic view of Vermont and need to be more inclusive of the indigenous people who have been living on this land for 13,000 years and recognize settler colonization is only a few hundred years old. We need more authentic Indigenous representation. Indigenous voices and perspectives need to be included going forward especially included in land use planning conversations, including Act 250 regional planning commissions.
- We need to develop policies that move away from the model of private land ownership towards "the commons."
- We need to address the negative impacts on landuse and the landscape of subsidizing renewable energy development. We need to map appropriate sites for renewable energy development.
- We need to invest public dollars in cleaning up brownfield sites to be repurposed.
- We need to change the Current Use program to a tiered system to create incentives and reward property owners for providing multiple benefits (e.g. regenerative practices, recreation etc.).
- We need to address forest and land fragmentation
- We need to invest in Workforce Development, we have an aging population of people involved in the working lands.

### **Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?**

- We need to include all voices that have not been included historically. Compensation for participation should be provided. Representation needs to be expanded. It is not adequate to have only one BIPOC seat at the table and check off the box. That causes more harm.
- Tying together economy, ecology, and community.
- Finding a common "place" to address these issues .
- VT motto: Freedom and unity--unity is the important piece.
- Pandemic sent people outside for the first time - how can we bring Vermonters together around our connection to the land?
- The response to the pandemic is a good model.
- Landowners opening up the land for others.
- Reach out to newcomers, New Americans to help them understand VT but stay resilient.
- Thinking about schools and supporting education about the land.
- Incentivize without legislation ...town zoning has potential.
- Discussed the European model of central villages surrounded by open space.
- Could we partner with UPS/FedEX for inter-town connectivity.
- Share lands for multi-uses...farms could have ski trails/forests with wildlife corridors, etc.
- Skills and interests to get people invested in the landscape.
- When personal and professional life get tied to the landscape - mention of "preservationists who want to protect land from "the outside" rather than getting people who are inside engaged - they then contribute...70-80% of F&W funding from 20% of the population (hunters and fishing enthusiasts (these numbers were questioned)).
- Small towns cannot support development without wastewater service - that they don't have - impediments to clustered development.
- Need to fund local planning capacity.
- Generational knowledge and impediments to newcomers.
- Land is power and privilege - public lands are free - people don't feel welcome with this system of land and privilege - welcoming people on to the land instead of "keep out."
- Very difficult in VT to "get on the land" and not wealthy newcomers are marginalized by the native Vermonters vs. flatlanders dichotomy.
- Landed people sometimes promote that form of exceptionalism, but it can be very difficult to get on the land.
- How do we change the impediments facing young people who want to farm to have access to the land?
- BIPOC experience with VT and Vermonters.
- Capital is always an issue for getting into the working landscaping.



- Mad River Valley gave Sap buckets to new landowners - with information about how to use them.
- Current Use and other opportunities and facts about where they were moving to.
- The value of face to face relationships with landowners and bringing communities together as we did when our town celebrated the 250th anniversary of our chartering- ways to break down barriers.
- Engage with and involve the Abenaki.
- Access and accessibility - key; make land accessible to all within walking distance and for all mobility types.
- Better planning and preparation for change - new residents, climate refugees - be ready to plan our future well; will be important to maintaining our working landscape.
- Conservationists and preservationists - open dialogue.
- Vermont conservation design as a road map.
- Vermont renews coalition is a good example.
- It's not just bringing people together - it's about creating a structure that is inclusive - HOW the conversations are had, not just having them.
- Federal agencies who aren't in these conversations are key - and the reforms they could institute - Example: USCIS (80% of our milk is produced with foreign workers).
- Break down the silos! Healthcare and childcare - impact ag but not in the conversations - intersection of issues is key and need to address in order to move more forward.

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## A9 – Encouraging Local Democracy & New Leaders

### What is already happening in this arena?

- The pandemic has made meetings more accessible because of Zoom, which has led to more diverse participation.
- Increase in accessibility to make change. The Brattleboro Selectboard, for instance, now offers child care support to its members.
- Study in Brattleboro looking at how to increase community safety for people who have been historically marginalized.
- There has been a willingness to flex around education. Teachers had to quickly adapt to new realities, and in many cases will never fully revert.
- Vermont Community Learning Network. Kids doing community asset mapping. Whole school / community partnerships.
- Rising power of youth voices. Youth Lobby in Montpelier.
- Brattleboro Quality Youth Development Council has a 10-part certification process for youth-forward communities. Brattleboro met 3 out of 10 qualifications, a few VT communities met all 10.
- The question “who is missing” is being asked much more often and authentically.
- There is a national group, Better Angels, bringing together folks on both sides of the political spectrum together to build connections & trust.

### What should we do to advance this element of the Proposition?

- Engagement in safe spaces for Select Boards and public / government meetings.
- Would love to see something in the Proposition about enabling folks with non-flexible jobs--sawyers, farmers etc.--to hold meaningful positions of leadership, so that leadership is not dominated by the professional class.
- Rethinking systems that now serve the privileged, professional class and setting goals about who those systems will serve 20-50 years ahead.
- The intermediaries in our communities like agencies, non-profits, etc. can and should play a big role in supporting and developing community leaders, but in turn they need our support.
- Legislature & select boards - only people who don't have to work for money can participate. We need to take a long hard look at compensation.
- Investment in portals of safety for new and diverse leadership. Look at how many women of color have been driven from positions of leadership by acts of racism.
- Structural inequities are embedded in our systems.
- The elements of the Proposition need to be considered together, given the intersectionality of strategies to implement them.

### Who needs to be brought together to advance this effort?

- Al Wakefield's declaration of inclusion is a good starting point. We will not grow or retain youth without diversity & inclusion.
- Youth - how are we reaching out to them?
- How are we bringing folks experiencing homelessness into planning conversations?
- VT has high H.S. graduation rates, but low college graduation rates. How do we enable young people to pursue higher education without taking on debt?
- Post-secondary education needs to be relevant to the future of the economy.
- Hierarchy can be a bottleneck when waiting for established leaders to step aside. Can we create a buddy system that pairs older more experienced leaders with new ones in a mentorship role?
- We need cultural liaisons between distinct cultural communities who can facilitate connection and translation between groups with different ideologies.
- Sometimes people don't really understand what they're voting on. We need to educate.

The Summit on the Future of Vermont was produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development. From local citizen-led efforts to policy councils that build collaboration between state, federal, nonprofit, and private sector leaders, VCRD brings Vermonters together across political lines and organizational boundaries to create a better future.

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