

**DERBY  
COMMUNITY VISIT  
REPORT AND ACTION PLAN**



**Vermont Council on Rural Development  
January 2008**

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## Introduction

We are all, to some extent, a product of our culture, history and geography. As much as any other place, life in Derby is shaped by its proximity to others and its complex topography of hills, valleys and waterways. With Quebec just to the north, and Newport to the west, Derby has a history that presents challenges: the unique reality of two incorporated villages, one town government, a rapidly developing commercial sector in a formerly rural section of town, and a residential pattern of hamlets and neighborhoods dispersed throughout this northern Vermont community.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visit to Derby revealed some of the complications of that geography, including sewer, water, municipal government, traffic and commercial development. Through their participation in the program, residents revealed a strong desire to address these issues and others impacting their town. In small group forums and a larger community discussion, participants faced complex topics: the need for an affordable national chain store and the desire to ensure that a retailer is appropriate for Derby in size and structure; the identity and expectations of three independent municipalities and the potential benefits and efficiencies of merger; the importance of vibrant commercial development and the value of agriculture and the natural environment.

Residents explored other issues as well, issues that resonate in communities throughout Vermont. How do we teach and support families in a society that sometimes seems less safe and more fragmented? How can we effectively address concerns around substance abuse and depression? What are the recreational opportunities that can engage and unite a community? How do we use our strengths and terrific community assets to succeed in the face of rapid economic and social change?

Ultimately, three issues were selected as priorities by the community and task forces have formed to address them. Two of the issues are familiar ones in Derby, and the fact that they surfaced with such clarity will allow residents to approach them with renewed energy and fresh ideas. The third arose from the floor in the public meeting and speaks well of Derby's desire to maintain a balance between commercial development and support for agriculture and the natural environment.

The **Commercial Development** task force will work to draw a big box department store to Derby, to create an environment that attracts the types of businesses that are compatible with the community's needs and vision, to incubate new and innovative businesses, and to provide guidance and communication for both residents and developers. The task force on **Merger** will gather and disseminate data on possible merger structures and impacts, convene public forums for input and information sharing, and could develop a merger plan for public consideration and decision. The third task force will focus on **Supporting Agriculture, Open Lands and Natural Resources**. The group could explore the use of agriculture and natural resources for economic development, recreational opportunities, and conservation.

VCRD appreciates the support of **Brian Smith**, Derby Selectboard, **Perry Hunt**, Derby Line Planning Commission and **Rosemary Jacobs**, Derby Center Trustee for their help in

initiating and organizing the Visit. Thanks are due also to the **Derby Steering Committee** for their logistical assistance, and especially to **Fred Barker** and the **Youth Group** at the United Church of Derby for hosting forums and putting on a wonderful community dinner. Thanks also to the administration and staff of the Derby municipal office and Derby Elementary School for providing meeting space. Finally, VCRD would like to thank **Bill Gardyne** for accepting the role of Community Visit Chair in Derby and for his leadership now and into the coming year.

Accomplishments in the Community Visit Program result from local leadership and community effort, however VCRD is eager to support implementation. We suggest that you carefully review the Recommendations section of this report for concrete resources and ideas and that you call upon members of the Visiting Team (listed at the end of this report) and VCRD staff for help.

## The Community Visit Program

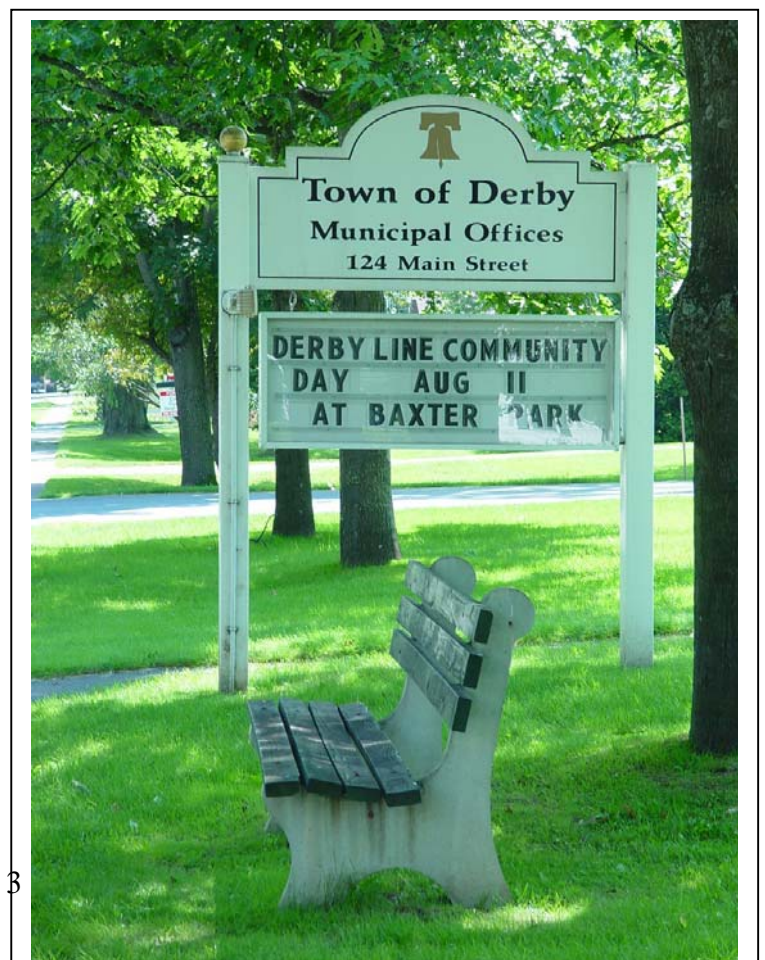
The Vermont Council on Rural Development Community Visit Program is a structured process that enables a community to identify and prioritize goals, fosters local leadership, and serves as a catalyst for the development and realization of concrete, achievable action plans. The program consists of three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

1. **Community Visit Day** - Open to all community members, participants meet in focus groups throughout the day, and provide testimony to Visiting Team Members with expertise in the areas of concern. The meetings result in an initial list of challenges and opportunities.

2. **Community Meeting** – Participants review, discuss, and refine their initial list of challenges, and ultimately vote on the top issues of concern. Community members sign up to work on a task force that will create strategic action plans for the selected topics.

3. **Community Resource Day** – Task Force members meet with a new Resource Team to design action steps, and identify state, federal, non-profit, and private resources that will allow them to advance toward solutions.

4. **Resource Team Members** agree to serve in an ongoing capacity as advisors, referral agents, and liaisons for the Derby Task Forces. Members of the Resource Team listen closely to residents' concerns, and carefully consider opportunities for addressing each issue.



## **Derby Challenges and Opportunities** **Identified in Town Forums October 30, 2007**

Of the nine focus forums that met in Derby on October 30, the most heavily attended sessions by far were those that dealt with municipal issues such as merger, commercial development and infrastructure. That attendance sent a clear message about the importance of those topics to the town. However, thoughtful and important conversations were held around the difficult issues that impact families, schools, and individuals in a deeply personal way – substance abuse, family violence, marginalized members of the community and how to nurture and support our youth. One Visiting Team member remarked, “I am struck by the gentle and positive attitudes presented. The group identified a number of critical issues, but also validated the positive work that is happening. That attitude reflects back on the community in a hopeful and positive way.” Following is the initial list of challenges and opportunities that were derived from the town forums.

### **Commercial Development**

Many residents would like to attract an affordable department store, as long as it is appropriate for Derby in size and structure. At the same time, there is support for the development of new and existing small businesses. A commerce and economic development task force could work to create a platform that provides guidance and communication between residents and large developers to ensure the town’s vision is met. The committee could also work in partnership with Lyndon State College and E-business developers to incubate new and innovative small businesses, and consider the development of a commercial business and industrial park.

### **Recreation Department**

The schools have worked hard to provide safe and healthy activities for children. A Derby town recreation department with a budget and staffing could develop programs for entire families that would provide multi-age activities and accommodate diverse abilities. The town has strong natural resources including forests and lakes that could be developed to promote outdoor recreation among both townspeople and visitors. A recreation task force could develop a plan for a town recreation program to present to the selectboard and citizens of Derby.

### **Youth Mentorships**

Many young people lack the family support and relationships that can direct them toward positive employment and a constructive connection to their community. A mentorship program could help meet that need; however, there is a shortage of skilled volunteers and structured programs. A task force could develop a systematic plan for a mentoring program targeted at recruiting people with mentorship skills, training mentors to reach young people in many different settings, and creating and implementing a variety of activities for youth.

### **Health Care**

Derby has skilled and dedicated mental and physical health care providers, however, there are not enough providers to meet current and projected needs. Residents expressed particular concern around substance abuse and depression and believe that the rural nature of the area and issues of affordability make it difficult to attract providers. A committee should explore the feasibility of developing a health care facility to provide consistent and accessible mental and physical health care. This group could lead strategic marketing to promote Derby's assets and help draw health care professionals.

### **Traffic**

Derby has begun addressing concerns around increased traffic-especially truck traffic-congestion, and safety by conducting a third-party traffic study. Residents recognize the importance of citizen input and the need to plan carefully for the future. A traffic task force could develop forums to take input, communicate with other towns experiencing similar issues, and work with town government toward developing and implementing a long-range plan. Derby also has an opportunity to expand tourism by networking with bike trails north of the border and should expand bike paths and lanes as part of its transportation planning.

### **Engage and Strengthen Families**

Single parent families, electronic and Internet influences, longer work hours, an increasing emphasis on material goods, family violence and disruptive behavior- these are societal shifts felt around the state and echoed by Derby participants. A task force devoted to engaging and strengthening families could provide parenting classes and support groups, develop family centered activities such as barn dances or festivals, provide workshops on interpersonal relationships and mediation, and create intergenerational projects.

### **Canadian/American Opportunities**

Derby's location on the Canadian border provides unique opportunities for economic, cultural and professional collaboration. A sporting competition such as a bike race would provide benefits to both countries. Music and cultural festivals have proven to be popular with Canadians. Developing an international festival would strengthen bonds and promote the area to a broad audience. A task force should work to build such events and to foster the development of a strong trade corridor.

### **Collaborative Business Network**

Derby has many activities and assets in the town, and numerous supportive media outlets, however, there is a need to unify efforts and develop a strong marketing plan. A collaborative business network could take an inventory of local and nearby businesses and develop opportunities to promote the town and its resources. An Internet presence should be created, and a network of partner organizations should work to create strong and consistent communication. A task force could explore options including boosting the leadership of the Up East Chamber, partnering with the Newport chamber, or developing an independent Derby business association.

### **Municipal Public Safety Staffing**

Derby has a dedicated cadre of volunteers that provide essential services such as fire and emergency response. However, as Derby grows, reliance on volunteers becomes more challenging. A committee should explore options for funding, staffing and training for a full-

time fire department. Residents have expressed a desire for greater police protection and a juvenile officer to work with area youth. A committee could examine the viability of developing a Derby police presence, or work to collaborate with Newport's existing force.

### **Sewer**

Derby's structure for provision of sewer allocation is complex and impacts many aspects of the town's economic and residential development. A water/sewer Task Force should consider a number of solutions including hiring professional municipal staff to oversee sewer development and allocation, consider the potential for the construction of a sewer facility in Derby or the location of several small systems in town, improving collaboration with Newport, and the potential for a transition from the Derby Village system to a town owned and managed system for the developing Rt. 105 corridor.

### **Town Staffing**

A task force should examine the current town staffing structure and analyze the costs, benefits and implementation steps required to fill a professional position such as Town Manager. A Town Manager could provide technical assistance and oversight for community initiatives, develop grant opportunities, help integrate municipal services, and support long-term citizen/government planning.

### **Elder Care**

Derby has a very active senior meals program and excellent high-care facilities for the elderly, but no assisted or transitional living. A task force could consider strategies to develop an all-inclusive facility that accommodates elderly resident's changing level of need.

### **Merger**

Development pressure in Derby has reawakened public interest in exploring the benefits and disadvantages of a merger. A merger task force should gather factual data pertaining to costs, benefits, efficiencies and resources, infrastructure and services, and implementation options to merge the villages and town. Public forums should be convened and targeted outreach conducted to present information and gather input on potential processes and impacts relating to merger. Ultimately, the exploratory task force could decide to develop a merger document for public consideration and decision.

### **Healthy Communities**

Derby residents expressed particular concern about substance abuse in both youth and adults. There is a tremendous awareness of the issue and several good programs in place, however, Derby's border location, very large union school, high rates of depression and lack of care providers were cited as concerns. A Healthy Communities task force should work to develop a network of paid and volunteer staff to create positive social models in schools and in the community. Placement of a resource officer, development of Big Brother/Sister programs, and obtaining funding to expand and support preventative and treatment programs could be explored. Residents would also like to see improved services for people with disabilities.

### **E-Commerce Development**

Many opportunities exist through technology, including development of E-medicine services to offset a shortage of on-site care providers, improved communication and internal

networking within Derby, marketing and tourism opportunities, and distance education. A task force could work to improve Internet access, develop collaborative electronic models for community communications, support online business opportunities and new commercial applications, and expand educational opportunities.

**Supporting Agriculture/Open Lands/Natural Resources**

Derby residents recognize the importance of maintaining a balance between commercial development and support for agriculture and the natural environment. This task force could work to ensure that Derby has a vibrant and diverse agricultural community, establish parameters for the use of open land for conservation and recreation, and develop opportunities utilizing Derby’s natural resources.





## **Derby Priorities**

**Selected by vote in community meeting November 27, 2007**

Nearly fifty community members gathered at the Derby Elementary school to consider the merits of the topics before them, decide how to strategically approach the issues in order to obtain the most effective results, and finally to vote for the top priorities for action and sign up to work on task forces. It is important to note that many issues are interrelated, and those not specifically chosen will likely be addressed as a component or factor within the newly formed task forces. The final three priorities are:

### **Final Three Priorities**

#### **Commercial Development**

Many residents would like to attract an affordable department store, as long as it is appropriate for Derby in size and structure. At the same time, there is support for the development of new and existing small businesses. A commerce and economic development task force could work to create a platform that provides guidance and communication between residents and large developers to ensure the town's vision is met. The committee could also work in partnership with Lyndon State College and E-business developers to incubate new and innovative small businesses, and consider the development of a commercial business and industrial park.

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## **Resource Day/Task Forces**

### **Developed in response to the three Derby priorities on January 10, 2008**

On January 10, 2008 task force members met with a resource team to assess the current status of their priority issues, map out action steps and identify human and financial resources. Chairs were appointed for each task force and these chairs will work with committee members to move future agendas forward.

## **Commercial Development**

Chairperson: **Melissa Pettersson**

Facilitator: **Kiersten Bourgeois**, Chair and CEO, VT Development Cabinet

Resource Team Members: **Steve Patterson**, Executive Director, NVDA,  
**Steve Sease**, Director, Agency of Natural Resources

### **Action Steps – Note, the task force focused exclusively on one aspect of commercial development, that of building a box store in Derby.**

1. Establish a welcoming environment from the state.
2. Schedule site visits, including a corporate visit to Walmart in Arkansas and arrange for developer Jeff Davis to conduct an informal site walk.
3. Work with village and town officials to ensure the proper zoning, water and sewer requirements are in place.
4. Gain support for a box store from the legislative delegation.
5. Work to ensure a fast and predictable process.
6. Communicate closely with Jeff Davis, inviting his participation at Selectboard meetings when appropriate.
7. Promote the development in a positive way.
8. Meet with other municipalities who have completed or have initiated a similar development process.
9. Conduct an inventory of commercial development land.
10. Enlist the formal support of NVDA.

### **Resources**

1. NVDA
2. Agency of Commerce and Community Development
3. Agency of Natural Resources
4. Derby Selectboard
5. VT Agency of Transportation

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## Merger

Chairperson: **Sue Best**

Facilitator: **Paul Costello**

Resource Team Members: **Steve Jeffrey**, Director, VT League of Cities and Towns  
**Dan Hill**, Hardwick Town Manager, (Retired)

### Action Steps

1. Place articles of warning at the Town of Derby and Derby Center Town Meetings to designate the Merger Committee as an official entity to explore merger.
2. Research the tax implications of merger on the town and village.
3. Review the 1999 merger document.
4. Work to clarify the financial and contractual status of water and sewer in Derby Center.
5. From this research, create a basic fact sheet on merger.
6. Develop community forums to stimulate discussion on the idea of a merger. Provide public education with letters to the editor, press releases and website updates.
7. Review the Title 24 Appendix, which has merger documents that detail adoption of a charter.
8. Explore the potential for preparing a merger document for Election Day in November 2008.
9. As a separate issue, the task force could lead a discussion on a united Derby and the need for a Town Manger.

### Resources

1. Vermont annotated documents.
2. Vermont League of Cities and Towns could review documents and potentially consult on a fee for service basis.
3. Municipal lawyers, Smart and Stitzel, who worked in Stowe.
4. Jeanne Young, who led the last merger effort.
5. Agency of Natural Resources to determine if Derby could build its own sewer plant.
6. Some municipal funding could be procured for legal services.
7. Invite a Derby Center trustee to join the group.
8. Developer Butch Crandall to provide testimony.
9. Paul Guliani, Esq. of Montpelier could be contracted to adjust the charter documents for a merger proposal.

### Task Force Members

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## **Supporting Agriculture/Open Lands/Natural Resources**

Chairperson: **Scott Worthin**

Facilitator: **Chip Evans**, Workforce Development Council

Resource Team Members: **Tracy Zschau**, Regional Director NEK, Vermont Land Trust  
**David Lane**, Deputy Secretary, VT Department of Agriculture

### **Action Steps**

1. Examine zoning options that would help keep land open and working without limiting the ability of the community to grow. (Led by task force members: Andy Major, Walter Medwid, Maureen Fountain)
2. Look into red meat slaughtering laws and regulations and provide guidance to people who are interested in small-scale beef production. (Led by Scott Worthin with assistance from David Lane at Dept. of Agriculture.)
3. Build community awareness:
  - Develop a guide to local agriculture
  - List all farms that sell or host guests
  - Inventory significant agricultural assets
  - Develop a guide to recreation including town forests, birding, VAST trails, and Bed & Breakfasts
4. Address access issues by inventorying the ancient roads – be aware of state deadlines. (Point person, Charles Capaldi)
5. Conduct an education campaign to help people understand that even small properties can produce food and protect wildlife. Encourage small backyard gardens. (Point person, Ruth Place)
6. As a long-term goal, consider creating a Conservation Commission to advance these goals.

### **Resources**

1. Tracy Zschau of the Vermont Land Trust can provide information on creating a Conservation Commission.
2. There are numerous resources to develop and expand local food production, including the Northeast Organic Farmers Association, Rutland Area Farm and Food Link, and the Intervale in Burlington. David Lane, Department of Agriculture will provide additional resources.
3. Dave Snedeker of NEV Development Association can provide guidance on ancient roads.
4. Contact VT Wood Manufacturers Association for assistance in marketing local forest products.

5. The VT Department of Agriculture can arrange for a staff site visit to explore alternative meat processing opportunities.

**Additional discussion points for committee consideration:**

- There are people who lack access to open land.
- There is a need to balance increasing subdivisions with aesthetics. Small parcel development is replacing open land.
- The group is not opposed to thoughtful development, but is concerned about haphazard development. Current zoning permits many small lots.
- There is a lack of understanding about farming and what that entails, including certain sounds and odors.
- There needs to be increased mindfulness of farming: farmers often resent intrusions into their business; self-sufficient farming is different than commercial farming.
- Land is increasingly posted and restricted. There is a concern about livability and a need for education.

**Task Force Members**

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## **VCRD Resource Team Recommendations**

Resource team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state, and agree to serve as partners and advisors to Derby Task Forces. Their recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs. It is hoped that community members will turn frequently to these pages for concrete ideas and resources. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work. Following are recommendations compiled from the Derby Visiting and Resource Teams.

### **Commercial Development**

Derby residents expressed the desire to achieve a department store design that is compatible with the character of the town. Many retailers are willing to negotiate and some communities have successfully hired a professional to undertake this role. **USDA Rural Development** could provide funding for this position and to attract other retailers, as well as funding to assist with planning needs, with a Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG). Derby is a designated REAP zone, which greatly increased the possibility of being awarded such a grant. Contact **Mark Koprowski** at (802) 748-8746. Also available through USDA RD is a 1% loan and grant program that can be used by non-profit economic development organizations to create a revolving loan fund for businesses.

The town of **Littleton, New Hampshire** garnered valuable insight into the need for negotiations with large retailers, including the need to address traffic lane improvements during their recent commercial development process. Contact former Littleton Main Street Director, **Ruth Taylor** at (603)-444-2553.

**VCRD's ConnectNEK** project can help small businesses implement WiFi hotspots, and can also help identify Internet applications that will assist in the improvement of existing businesses. A new project, **E-NEK** will be implemented in other Northeast Kingdom communities and some training or education opportunities may be available. Contact **Al and Laura Duey** at **Duey Associates**, (802) 467-1266.

**Northeastern Vermont Development Association** has had substantial success in attracting businesses to the St. Johnsbury-Lyndon Industrial Park. Contact **Steve Patterson** at (802) 748-5181. It is interesting to note that most economic development in this park and in other areas is from local firms who would like to expand. A first step is to inventory existing businesses to determine what their future aspirations are and what obstacles they are facing that may limit their expansion.

The **Main Street Program** is an excellent resource for "how to" information on economic development. (802) 442-5758

**Northern Community Investment Corp.** provides assistance to create a vibrant region through job creation and retention. Among the available opportunities are technical assistance grants for businesses in the Northeast Kingdom to hire outside services they might



not otherwise be able to afford, development of a regional marketing program to expand retail and hospitality based sales, the wireless LINC broadband infrastructure project, investment in higher paying businesses to create local jobs and adult education facilities in remote areas.  
**Jon Freeman** – (802) 748-5101.

The **Vermont Community Development Program** offers block grants (CDBG) for up to \$30,000 or 75% of a planning project, whichever is less. (802) 828-3211

The community is strongly supportive of a “box” or discount retail establishment. Task force members should work closely with the developer, municipal governments and community members to ensure that the structure meets the size and type of business that is compatible with the towns’ needs and desires.

**Preservation Trust of Vermont** has helped towns that are working to negotiate with WalMart to develop stores that fit into the community (like the Rutland store) or that are of a scale and with products that complement existing commerce. If Derby is interested in advice or assistance, the town could contact Paul Bruhn at 658-6647.

The **VT Agency of Transportation** should be included in development discussions to make sure that traffic impacts are carefully considered. (802) 828-3960.



## Merger

Water and sewer will necessarily be part of any merger discussions. The **Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs** is publishing “Addressing Wastewater needs in our Un-Sewered Communities”, a valuable resource for towns with concerns around wastewater. The DHCA is also planning a conference on the topic to be held in late May or early June of 2008 that will also address the topic. The contact person for more information is **Faith Ingulsrud**, [faith.ingulsrud@state.vt.us](mailto:faith.ingulsrud@state.vt.us).

Towns that have been engaged in merger discussions will be a valuable resource. Contact **Art Sanborn**, Lyndon Town and Village manager at (802) 626-9094. **Greg Federspel** led the successful Stowe merger process and can be reached at (413) 637-5500.

**Steve Jeffrey** of the **Vermont League of Cities and Towns** is an invaluable resource. (802) 229-9111. The league may be able to provide consultation services on a fee for service basis.

Other attorneys with expertise include **Smart and Stitzel** of Stowe, and **Paul Guliani**, of Montpelier.

The **Agency of Natural Resources** could help determine if Derby is able to build its own sewer plant. (802) 241-3600

Preparation for the consideration of merger necessarily involves substantial research, methodical outreach and education, and the ability to receive input from a variety of sources. To begin its work, the Merger Task Force should:

- Conduct research to gather facts and statistics on the potential financial and infrastructure impacts of merger.
- Conduct extensive public education through forums and media, and provide multiple venues for public discourse around the benefits and disadvantages of merger.
- It will be important to serve as a liaison to governing bodies, including the trustees and selectboard of each municipality.
- Communicate closely with other municipalities who have successfully completed the process.



### **Supporting Agriculture/Open Lands/Natural Resources**

**Brian Shupe** at **Smart Growth Vermont** can provide assistance with open space planning. He can be reached at (802)864-6310

The town could form a conservation commission and could participate in **The Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions**. This organization's mission is to build the effectiveness of conservation commissions and community groups working to sustain their natural and cultural resources. The organization provides a listserv that allows conservation commissions to easily communicate with each other and share resources and information. The website address for more information is [www.avccvt.org](http://www.avccvt.org).

The **Farm Services Agency** has low interest loan programs designed to improve the economic stability of the agricultural industry. (802) 658-2803

The **Natural Resources Conservation Service** helps towns to conserve, maintain and protect their natural resources. They have a grant program that can cover a portion of the cost of conservation practices. Contact **David Blodgett**, (802) 334-6090

Buy Local initiatives, farm to restaurant or farm to school programs, and farmers markets can provide small farms with marketing outlets while developing a strong connection with the community and farmers. A good resource is **Helen Labun Jordan** at the **Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets**. She can be reached at [Helen.Jordan@state.vt.us](mailto:Helen.Jordan@state.vt.us).

The **Vermont Town Forest Project** has resources to help with management and acquisition of town forests. Contact **Jad Daley** at the **Northern Forest Alliance**: [jdaley@nfainfo.org](mailto:jdaley@nfainfo.org)

**Vermont Family Forests** has information about value added wood products and management of small family woodlots. [www.familyforests.org](http://www.familyforests.org). A good resource for programs to market value added wood products is **Kathleen Wanner**, at **The Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association**. (802)747-7900 or [kmwanner@comcast.net](mailto:kmwanner@comcast.net).

The **Greensboro Conservation Commission** has produced a valuable guide to local farming. A copy can be obtained from the Greensboro Town Clerk, (802) 533-2911

**Vermont Coverts** works with private landowners on managing woods for wildlife. A link to their website is found at [www.vtcoverts.org](http://www.vtcoverts.org).

**Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist with the VT Department of Fish and Wildlife** works with communities on planning and zoning to better manage for wildlife in their towns. [Jens.hilke@state.vt.us](mailto:Jens.hilke@state.vt.us).



The **Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB)** offers a Farmland Preservation Program focused on retaining the state's quality agricultural land base in farming regions of the state. VHCB makes loans and grants for feasibility studies and for the acquisition of land and the purchase of conservation easements. Under their viability program, they also provide on-farm technical assistance in reviewing and developing business models. (802) 828-3250

The **Vermont Land Trust** provides legal, technical, mapping, stewardship, and financial support to communities, local and regional land trusts and state agencies to help them achieve their conservation priorities. Contact **Tracy Zschau** at (802) 262-1206.

## **Town Forum Notes**

Compiled from focus group discussions held with Derby residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on October 30, 2007

Although the prioritization work of the Community Visit Program requires a town to decide what is most important as its next steps forward, nothing is lost in the process from the long list of concerns and ideas expressed in early community focus sessions. Some areas of concern, although not chosen directly as priority topics, are closely related to Task Force work and will be incorporated into eventual work plans. Many excellent and diverse thoughts surfaced during the initial Community Visit conversations, and that dialogue has been preserved here to serve as a reminder of the issues explored, a repository of ideas and a possible foundation for future projects.

### **Resource Team A**

*Paul Denton, Executive Director, NEK Community Action Council*

*Al Duey, Duey Associates*

*Laura Duey, Duey Associates*

*Chip Evans, Executive Director, Workforce Development Council*

*Thomas Hark, President, VT Youth Conservation Corps*

*Rever Kennedy, Field Director, VT Agency of Human Services*

*Pat Menduni, Community Philanthropy Steward, Vermont Community Foundation*

*Sarah Waring, Program Manager, Vermont Council on Rural Development*

*Bonnie Smoren, Vermont Council on Rural Development (Scribe)*

## **Points of Testimony**

### **I. Youth Engagement**

#### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- The library is a community-meeting place, with a very high circulation, although it would be desirable to see more young people.
- The community feels like a safe place, where people are not worried about children being out.
- IROC provides tremendous indoor recreation opportunities. There is an indoor pool, walking track and computers, a community room and numerous free programs. It has

experienced growth through community education about its assets; more children use it.

- RCT provides transportation, but not many young people use it. The school has started encouraging the use of RCT.
- IROC has a teen committee that is fairly active.
- IROC sits on 10 wooded acres with the potential for trails.
- Foster parents and other groups have an opportunity to use the space to strengthen intergenerational ties.
- Schools and other organizations have good after school programs. There are opportunities to provide supervised environments for young people.
- There are seven churches in Derby/Derby Line with pretty regular attendance by a group of about 40 kids. The churches provide a lot of one-on-one work dealing with serious issues in kids' lives.
- The Technical Center is an asset, especially for non-college bound students.
- An after school bus brings students to activities, including some night events.
- There are numerous organizations that support youth, including Derby Head Start, youth soccer, border hockey and 4-H.
- Transportation is a challenge.
- There are inadequate employment opportunities.
- There are many dysfunctional families.
- Substance abuse is prevalent.
- Interaction between border control and area youth can be tense and sometimes appears excessively restrictive due to the close presence of the border.
- There is less border crossing by youths for drinking due to increased controls in returning to the States.
- Alcohol use and driving can be an issue, although it is hard to measure just how often it occurs.
- It is very easy to obtain drugs in high school.
- The school serves a large population of students from Island Pond to Lowell. Some drug deals are set up at school, but completed elsewhere.
- Students are more exposed to drugs due to easier access to information through media and the Internet.
- The Methodone clinic is extremely active - evidence of high drug use.
- Current data show a high percentage of substance abuse and lower than expected participation in resources such as the Tri-County substance abuse center. Much of the available data used is derived from the Youth Risk Behavior survey.
- Young people seem to have a great deal of money.
- It is difficult to recruit adults for programs that serve young people.
- There is no local police force, but state and border officers try to interact with youth. It is not clear how positive the relationships are.
- Changing societal expectations have led to a shaky work ethic among young people.
- The most challenging age group is 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students who are making difficult decisions. There is also concern with "couch surfers" – young people with nowhere to go.
- The 22 percent high school drop out rate can be an indicator. There are fewer opportunities than in the past for employment. There is a GED program, but most

undereducated youth end up in the corrections system. Close to 75% of incarcerated people have no high school diploma.

- There has been a loss of population in the 20 – 24 year-old demographic because there is not enough work here.
- Conversely another participant suggested that is natural phenomena, as people in that age group have left town to go to college.

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

- Encourage young adults with the appropriate skills to develop Big Brother programs to reach out to hurting people. The people in need are not looking for help – there is a need to go to them.
- Mentorships are needed and people must be proactive in reaching out.
- Non-violent communication training could help parents and youth.
- How can we connect with people in need where they are? Most at risk kids come to church because of the individuals who care about them.
- It is all about forming personal relationships before addressing the specific problems. You will shut people out if you call a service a “drug program.”
- Schools sometimes cut budgets needed to fund a person who will work with students at risk.
- A systematic promotion is needed to encourage people with gifts – a consciousness raising specifically targeted at people with needed skills.
- A radio, television, and newspaper promotion could be directed at young adults. Personal phone calls work well to enlist volunteers.
- Training is required for those volunteers.
- There is a “middle” group of kids – those who are not athletes, and not involved in competitive sports. Derby needs a recreation department to design and fund teen activities, to make it fun to be a kid and have adults present as well to foster relationships.
- Identify and exploit informal opportunities for connecting with youth.
- How can we engage and strengthen family so kids can go to a better environment?
- There is tremendous stress on parents juggling work and family. People feel they don’t have enough time to balance work and family expectations. There are societal pressures, especially with single parents.
- Business mentorships could help youth develop financial and work values.
- Expanded technology opportunities need to be teamed with social and business skills.
- The Playworld Program provides opportunities for separate activities for parent and children.
- That is part of the problem. There is a need to encourage parents and children to do things together.

- Hunting and snow machining can be a family activity. A ski and sport swap could promote these activities.
- What can communities do to proactively support youth and families?
- Develop projects for older kids and younger kids working together.
- A recreation department is needed with a budget and town planning.
- The community relies heavily on schools; that needs to be balanced by having an active recreation department, especially for non-athletic kids and family activities.
- Plan community-wide events and activities.

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

- What do youth want? It is important to understand what they see as their needs.
- Is there a strategy for bringing community leaders together?
- There is a need to address the challenge of finding a time for leaders to meet.
- Sometimes people in their twenties don't want the peace and quiet found in a rural community. They need to find opportunities to make lives here. How do we plan for that demographic; how can we bring them back?
- There is a richness of resources within the community and a good awareness of issues. Think about how to connect those resources to pool skills and funds. The desire is there, but it is necessary to come together and build a network.
- There seems to be two groups. Youth who have opportunity who have followed a desirable path, and another group with unmet needs to address. How big is the issue? How many young people need additional support?

## **II. Community Communication**

### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- There is a good radio station that offers time for public announcements.
- There is an abundance of print media that is very cooperative and will provide solid coverage of local news and events. Papers include the Newport Dailey Express, Caledonia Record, and the Chronicle.
- The Chamber of Commerce puts out a newsletter to chamber members.
- Town meeting is big in Derby and mostly positive. It was packed this year due to a high level of interest in a controversial topic – tax relief for IROC.
- People became activated around the issue by word of mouth.
- There are a variety of methods used to communicate information to residents, including letters to taxpayers, editorials, school bulletins and newspaper.
- There is also a substantial grassroots movement with informal networks.
- There are white boards in outside public areas.
- NEK TV is widely watched.

- The town offices advertise annual events.
- Phone trees are used by the junior high school and are very effective.
- An email list is generated from anyone who has attended a Partnership Meeting.
- Telephone calls are the most effective because they are the most personal.
- Families are reached by posters at the library, reading time for children and book discussions.
- Instant messaging and online social networking such as My Space is popular among young people, who use it mostly to communicate among friends.
- Flyers can be effective.
- There are lots of things going on, but people don't know how to market them. There is a lack of marketing skills.
- The Town of Derby has a website, but it is not actively promoted.
- There are some limits to using technology for communication. The older the demographic, the less effective it is.
- The low-income community is difficult to reach. They are an invisible community because they are not concentrated.
- There is deep poverty – generational poverty – in town; people with no connections.
- It is difficult to get young people involved.
- People move to the Northeast Kingdom from places where community involvement is normal, but the natives here aren't used to it. They are just trying to get by and are reluctant to participate.
- Many people feel they don't have a voice.
- Some people are frustrated because they find it difficult to accept a large vision and think a goal is difficult to achieve. There is a need for incremental projects.
- There is always a small group of people trying to do everything.
- There are tensions between locals, between neighboring communities, because people sense changing roles. In the past, Derby has been like a little brother.

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

- Jay Peak and Burke Mountain provide opportunities to promote ideas. They are a strong external link to people outside of Derby.
- There are many resources available to tap, especially across the border.
- Bernie Sanders' staff has a good technique; emails followed by phone calls are persuasive.
- Communication is most effective when people use multiple methods – phone calls, emails letters – sometimes led by a steering committee.
- People in the arts community have developed good communication within their own network. This has been accomplished in just two years, through good press, use of photos, flyers, and utilization of free local and external media.
- The Canadian media strongly supports the area and border life issues.
- Communication goes in the other direction as well, to reach people within the community. We need to think about how to reach young people, retired people and working families.



- Derby has the largest senior meals site in the state. Announcements, flyers, and speakers at those meals are important to reach that audience.
- Going to businesses and talking directly with employees can reach working families.
- Technology offers a number of opportunities. Networks can be developed through profiles on social networking spaces and devices such as Front Porch Forum.
- Social service offices can provide contacts for difficult to reach populations, however confidentiality can be an issue.
- Orleans Community Network Partnership and other community organizations will distribute material to appropriate audiences.
- North Country school can be utilized to teach media and outreach skills. This could be an opportunity to work with young people/

### **Reflections of the Visiting Team**

- Some organizations have used a calling tree to reach Senator Sanders, and it was tremendously effective in presenting issues to the Senator. The hook is to find a relevant issue.
- There is more media and it is easier to access that one might think due to the size and location of the community.
- There is a need to entice people to show up and have a reason to come. Technology can be an important starting point, even if not everyone has it.
- We have heard ideas that will allow people to communicate beyond Derby, but there doesn't seem to be much communication in place that can actually strengthen Derby.
- A connection to people who haven't been previously involved is important to expand your network. Look beyond the circle that is involved in everything.
- A white board can be a simple and effective tool. Look at where community congregates. Look at developing a community partnership email listing, perhaps from the voter list.
- The whole town showed up over the IROC issue. Maybe the topics don't seem relevant to people. Maybe Derby is doing a better job than we think, but busy people need to be captivated to attend.
- Know your target audience and the appropriate media to reach them.

### **III. Human Services**

#### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- North Country Hospital is an asset.
- IROC provides many excellent recreational, health and social opportunities.
- Agencies work together and collaboration is good. Some existing agencies include Home Health Services, the Wellness Center and the Agency on Aging.
- There is an early action team of collaborative pediatric care providers that work to ensure that children are ready for school.
- NEK Human Services provides counseling 2 days a month for all of Orleans and Essex County. They provide both group and home counseling, but are extremely short staffed.
- WIC (Women, Infants and Children) is a good program that helps many families.
- Derby is a REAP zone and that provides a benefit when applying for certain types of funding.
- There is a psychiatrist in the area, however it is a service for adults only, not teenagers.
- The elementary school has part time counseling help. They have excellent skills, but not enough time – one day a week for all emotional and social needs.
- The junior high school has several guidance councilors that try preventative work.
- It is difficult to determine if there are more mental health problems or if people are more open about it due to better treatment.
- Derby has excellent high care facilities for the elderly but no assisted or transitional living.
- Choices for Care is an excellent program that helps people remain in the least restrictive setting possible. They are severely understaffed and under funded.
- Derby has a very active senior meal site.
- Seniors utilize the walking track and swim at IROC. It is available for free and provides physical activity, social opportunity, and a safe environment. There is public transportation for seniors to get there.
- There are great after school programs catering to many different interests and abilities. These programs provide a snack, exercise, homework support and enrichment. Budgeting may be in jeopardy, however.
- Community National Bank, the State Police and the library all have community rooms that can be used for family or community activities.
- Substance abuse and depression are serious issues. The available providers cannot meet the need.
- All practices except for one are closed to new patients for general health care. New patients need to use the emergency room.
- Part of the problem is the rural nature and economic depression in the state. Salaries for providers are not commensurate with other areas; therefore, it is difficult to attract qualified people.

- The problem of retaining health care providers is related to infrastructure. There is a lack of services such as shopping.
- Being a border community creates a smaller area from which to draw resources.
- People travel long distances for eye and dental care especially families on Medicare or Dr. Dinosaur. 70 % of children in Orleans County qualify for Medicaid.
- Derby looks rural, but has urban problems such as drug use. The border location exacerbates the drug issue.
- The high school has the most difficulty. Arrangements for drug purchases are sometimes made in school, with the actual transfer happening elsewhere. Students seem to have a great deal of money these days, and feel empowered or important by flashing it around.
- Access is easy. Sometimes drugs are given to younger people, rather than selling them.
- The crime rate has increased and that is believed to be related to drugs.
- High suicide rates and depression are prevalent in this area. More providers are needed.
- Depression starts for many people from substance or sexual abuse, or dysfunctional family situations.
- There are two categories of drug users – self-medicating and recreational.
- Often kids that are acting out have no parental support. Schools are also more lenient in their acceptance of disruptive behavior.
- There is a “medicalization” of every behavior that lends them certain credence—everything has a diagnosis. People are seeking solutions through chemistry.
- The motivation is gone for a lot of students –they need stimulation.
- A teacher noted that she has seen more social/emotional issues in the past two years than ever before. It is really frightening. Extreme emotional behaviors affect the whole school population.
- There are a lot of very stressed single parent families, with little or no support or trustworthy extended families.
- Domestic violence has increased, and that is partially due to increased drug use.
- Violence is so exposed in our culture that people have become immune to it. It is almost accepted. The level of the violence in society has increased to an almost ferocious level. Even women have become violent.
- Derby is the recipient of many domestic violence calls. Fear of domestic violence inhibits women from pursuing deadbeat dads.
- Violence contributes to poverty due to medical bills and family breakups.
- Schools provide instruction on social behavior, but it is a sort of separate reality. Children see it as curriculum, but don’t incorporate the lessons into life.
- Violence is a part of our culture – it is a power and control issue. Both abuser and victim often lack tools to avert the situation.
- A sense of community is further away than it ever has been. Schools can’t be the one place where everything is solved.
- Home health comes into homes on a flexible basis to care for the elderly.
- There is no all-inclusive facility that accommodates people’s changing level of need. This greatly impacts the quality of life of the elderly, and is disruptive to their social life and sense of belonging.

- There is no telemedicine available; however there may be some movement toward that. It can be a time saver.
- People with disabilities that are below the threshold of aging levels or not sufficiently disabled, fall through the cracks. There are people in this community living on SSI - \$700 month.
- Some doctors fail to prescribe pain medicine due to fear of Oxycontin abuse.
- Some disabled patients feel they are not respected and are viewed as drug abusers if they need pain medicine.
- People in the area have been known to sell their prescriptions.
- People who treat patients in emergency rooms don't have long-term relationships with patients and hesitate to prescribe needed medication that could be abused or sold.
- Some people are working multiple jobs or lack transportation and can't take advantage of some programs.

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

- Support is needed for families. A lack of nurturing has deeply affected some children. They are parked in front of the TV or an electronic device.
- Enforcement is needed to make fathers pay child support. This would ease the burden on single mothers. This assumes that the father can be found and is employed.
- The fee is very high to establish paternity. (\$300)
- There is a shelter for domestic violence victims and good privacy laws. There is a required intensive program for offenders, but repeat offences are common.
- Do we need to educate parents on parenting? Do we need to address something like interpersonal relationships?
- Should civility be part of the curriculum?
- Beyond schools and parents, what can the community do to provide an environment where children thrive?
- Have the school be a microcosm of the greater community by having professionals on site.
- Provide support groups for parents where they can just drop in.
- There is enough police coverage with the border patrol to cover crimes, but there is no officer with a focus on juvenile relationships. There is a need for a police officer at schools, especially the high school.
- More community effort is needed to provide monthly gatherings for parents and children centered on a theme, like animals or a barn dance. There is a need for family centered activities. This was also mentioned in the earlier youth engagement session.
- One teenager commented that the church was the only place where he felt like an equal, regardless of age.
- Elders used to be revered and respected.
- One participant expressed a wish to see more integration between youth and older people.
- The religious community plays an important role. There are seven churches in town. However, sometimes parents drop off their kids, and don't come in themselves. There

is a “me-me” attitude among parents. There is a lack of religious strength and connection in families.

- Communities need to make children feel welcome, and let there be a place for them.

### **Reflections of the Visiting Team**

- Many communities face these same problems.
- There are larger social norms that have changed – a societal shift around behavior and relationships. Is there a slippage in standards within families? Parents need to step up and do more. Two working parents or single parents impact social issues.
- One resource team member was struck by the gentle and positive attitudes presented. The group identified a number of critical issues, but also validated the positive work that is happening. That attitude reflects back on the community in a hopeful and positive way.
- Regarding the inability to draw medical professionals- there are ways to market assets.
- Creating models in the world around kids is essential.
- There may be opportunities to use technology to free up human resources – perhaps through telemedicine
- There is a longing for simple activities that can draw families together.
- All of these components are linked. The community needs to work together, and to include everyone as equal partners.



## **Resource Team B**

*Mel Adams, Director of Planning, VT Agency of Transportation*

*Lisa Aultman-Hall, Director, UVM Transportation Center*

*Jon Copans, Community Liaison, Congressman Welch's Office*

*Mark Koprowski, NEK Community Specialist, USDA Rural Development*

*Jenny Nelson, Policy Advisor, Senator Sanders' Office*

*Sonia Rae, Community Programs Manager, VT Arts Council*

*Chuck Ross, State Director, Senator Leahy's Office*

*Ruth Wallman, Executive Director, Lake Champlain Islands Regional Chamber of Commerce*

*Heather Walsh, Community National Bank (Scribe)*

## **I. Recreation**

### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- IROC provides many recreational opportunities.
- There is a beach house on Salem Lake.
- Derby has a bike path.
- The Haskell Opera House is a cultural and recreational asset in the community.
- There are natural resources that are considered assets, such as lakes and forests.
- The community is not spending enough money for recreation.
- The beach house on Salem Lake is owned by the town and could be the site for many recreational activities, however, it is not being utilized.
- The bike path has a very limited route, only going up and back.
- There is no place to ride ATV's.
- It has become difficult to pass through the border between the US and Canada.
- Canadian hiking trails are far superior to anything here.
- Some Derby residents don't want to let outsiders in.

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

- The Town of Derby needs a recreation department.
- The bike path could be expanded.
- Create a ball field in Derby for the American Legion team. Currently they play all their home games in Lyndonville. This will bring other teams along with their spectators to this area.
- It is difficult to bike on the road. Bike lanes would encourage more bicyclists to come to Derby.
- A Franco/American competition would add an international aspect to events that could increase their attraction.

- The Bread & Puppet Festival and the Fiddlers Contest are no longer conducted. These were a big Canadian draw. Developing performance events like these could bring a strong audience.
- Link IROC's website to Derby's website to help promote recreational opportunities.
- There is a need to market across the border to get the Canadians down here to use our facilities.

### **Reflections of the Visiting Team**

- There are enormous assets in town, ranging from bike paths, a border location and good roads, but there is a certain resistance to change.
- There are eight paid employees at IROC that are focused on recreation. That's a wonderful asset, but old baggage can impede positive relationships.

## **II. Tourism**

### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- There are festivals and events like the Borderfest in Rock Island and the Orleans County Fair.
- Lakes are an asset, including Salem Lake, which has a beach house, and Lake Memphremagog, part of which is in Derby.
- Several participants noted rural assets, including forests and foliage and an elk herd.
- There are good productions at the Haskell Opera House.
- Jay Peak and Burke Mountain are important tourism assets.
- The town holds fishing tournaments.
- The Stanstead ice arena is a nearby asset.
- A boat tour is coming to Newport, which may provide tourism opportunities in Derby.
- Newport has a country club with a golf course, although 90% of the course is located in Derby.
- There are VAST trails for snow machines.
- The town has a Civil War monument.
- Derby has many assets that are not fully utilized, for example, the forests and the beach house on Salem Lake.
- There is difficulty in crossing the border. Even if people make it across the border, they don't stop in Derby.
- Tourists do not necessarily spend their money in Derby.
- The library is only open part-time and there is not enough staff to conduct tours.
- Derby lacks a good hotel.

- Animosity exists between Newport and Derby, which inhibits completion of some projects.
- Derby relies on Newport for its sewer.
- There is no police force.
- Not enough community members are involved in planning events.
- Numerous people noted that having no recreation department is a challenge.

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

- Make hiking trails through the forests and have guided hunting and fishing excursions.
- The beach house on Lake Salem could be the site for many recreational events.
- A French/American festival could be held which would strengthen the bond with our Canadian friends and promote the area.
- Events need to be publicized in one central place.
- Area businesses have an interest in making Derby look good. Encourage businesses to promote Derby events on their websites.
- Work to attract visitors who come to nearby ski areas off the mountains by promoting Derby on ski area websites or add a link to the Derbyvt.org website.
- Encourage businesses to advertise on [www.vermontvacations.com](http://www.vermontvacations.com).
- Approach Newport Chamber of Commerce and ask for their help in promoting Derby.
- Hire a town manager.

### **Reflections of the Visiting Team**

- People don't believe all of their assets are being utilized.
- Derby feels somewhat overshadowed by Newport.
- There are many activities and assets in the town, but people need to learn how to market and communicate about those things.
- Real opportunities can be realized, not just in Derby, but also by collaborating with neighbors including Jay Peak and Canada.
- Take an inventory of organizations and think about how to work together.

## **III. Traffic**

### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- A third party study was conducted within the last year and a half.
- There is a willingness among people to help plan solutions and work to fix existing problems.



- Alternative routes are available, including West Street, Hinman Settler Road and Crawford Road.
- There has been an increase in commercial traffic going through Derby. Many trucks are too heavy to go on the highway, so they are using Route 5. This is putting area children in danger as well as tearing up the streets and shaking houses.
- The speed limit is not enforced on Route 5 from Derby into Derby Line.
- There is congestion at the T by the Cow Palace.
- The curb cuts to the commercial establishments on the Derby Road make it difficult to get in and out of each business.
- More businesses equal more traffic.
- More traffic lights would help now, but it might not be a long-term solution.
- Everyone has to go through Derby to get anywhere.

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

- State and federal weight limits should be the same so that commercial traffic could run on the interstate.
- The T at the Cow Palace is a big issue. There has been talk of a traffic light there, but that might take up to five years to complete. People have considered a 3-way stop sign. A traffic circle has also been discussed.
- A traffic light at Shaw's might help.
- Perhaps a road from Shaw's to Sumner Tire located behind current businesses would build up businesses there and make use of that new road.
- There could be three lanes for traffic all the way to the T at the Cow Palace.
- Shared driveways for businesses are an option, although there are insurance issues that would need to be addressed.
- Bring the 3<sup>rd</sup> party report to the people. Make citizen committees and don't leave it up to the selectboard. People need to be included in the decision making process.
- People should get involved with all decisions in the town; sewer issues also affect traffic and many other areas.
- Talk to other towns to see how they handled these issues.
- People come here because they like our way of life. Some roads shouldn't be developed in order to keep this area rural. That's the charm factor.

### **Reflections of the Visiting Team**

- There is considerable concern over traffic congestion, particularly on Routes 5 and 105. This creates challenging issues around both safety and time.
- There was concern expressed that decisions have been made quickly and this has raised permit questions. People understand the need to plan carefully for the future.
- There is a need to have greater input by the community in the decision making process.

- Overweight trucks are a significant problem. There is a need to equalize weight limits between federal and state roads.

## **Resource Team C**

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

*Kevin Dorn, Secretary, VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development*

*Jon Freeman, Director, Northern Community Investment Corp.*

*Steve Jeffrey, Director, VT League of Cities and Towns*

*Steve Patterson, Executive Director, Northeastern VT Development Association*

*Rhonda Shippee, Community Programs Director, USDA Rural Development*

*Leanne Tingay, Downtown Specialist, VT Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs*

*Brandy Davis, Community National Bank (Scribe)*

## **I. Managing Commercial Development/Box Stores**

### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- The town has been unsuccessful for years in obtaining sewer allocation for a box store. Some feel that we need help from Montpelier to get a box store.
- It is difficult start a business now with all of the bureaucratic challenges. That could deter business from coming to the area.
- The town wants an outlet to replace Ames, but doesn't want to put the cost of a box store on the taxpayers. These costs might include development, water and sewer costs.
- It is not the local control that is stopping development; there isn't really a problem passing permits at the local level. The difficulty seems to be at the state level.
- A store should be built to fit Derby's needs. We don't need to have a store with the largest square footage.
- The town doesn't necessarily want a WalMart, the town just needs a store like WalMart – a place for affordable everyday goods.
- Would bringing inventory all the way up here be an issue?
- If there is going to be more development in the town, then a traffic study should be done because the traffic is getting really crazy. It is possible that Route 5 will become four lanes within ten years.
- The town expects to see permits for a Lowes and a WalMart.
- A box store would impact the sewer allocation as well as other development in the area.
- Derby needs more affordable housing. People want to move to Derby because of the great school system but there is not much affordable housing.

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

- If Derby develops as it is expected to, perhaps the town should think about getting its own law enforcement. WalMart may be willing to contribute to the costs of local law enforcement.
- Since sewer allocation seems to be such a big problem, should Derby have its own sewer plant? The Crawford Road has been mentioned as a possible site for this. Maybe a sewer plant committee would be a good thing to start.
- The fire department may need to have full time employees in order to provide more coverage. Maybe an auxiliary station close to the interstate would be a good central location.
- Local entrepreneurs could expand and increase, instead of a box store. Pick and Shovel has brought in many kinds of products to prevent having a box store.
- The town could communicate with box stores to inform them about what the residents of Derby want; make it appropriate for residents in terms of size and appearance. Other towns have specified what storefronts need to look like in order to locate in their town.
- An environmental group may appeal a WalMart. Can they do this since it is not a local group?
- Lyndon State received a grant to “incubate” businesses in the area. It is for new or existing smaller businesses, not really for a box store, but maybe some existing businesses could look into it.
- The town needs to show a box store that they can be profitable in this area. The Ames that was in Derby was one of the most profitable stores within the chain before they went out of business.
- There should be more traffic lights. The one that was recently put in on Route 5 has really helped, but traffic is still a problem.
- Derby Line has four or five empty storefronts. Maybe a restaurant or coffee shop could go in them.
- A box store in the area would attract people from out of town which may help the smaller businesses that are already here by drawing more people into the area.
- Town of Derby residents have written letters to their local representatives about the need for a box store within the town, and will continue to do so.
- Having Route 5 as the commercial district would keep traffic all in one area. People have decided where they would like the development and where they wouldn't.

### **Reflections of the Visiting Team**

- The box stores that come to Derby will be regional stores if Newport cooperates with Derby and works together to get the stores here.
- Build the stores for the locals now; the visitors will come when the store is here. Build it to suit the needs of the local people.
- Ask yourselves what the manufacturing future is for the town and consider having a Commercial Park.

## **II. Infrastructure and Municipal Services**

### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- Derby Elementary School has room for more students as does the junior high and high school.
- The Derby portion of the Fire Department will not be adequate to meet needs if all of the development happens. The fire department is having a difficult time staffing the department due to all of the requirements to become a volunteer firefighter.
- There is plenty of vacant land in Derby to create a better tax base.
- The Village of Derby Line shares their water and sewer with Canada.
- The residents who have their own septic are paying for a bond that was passed for more sewer allocation from the City of Newport.
- There should be more law enforcement. Right now the State Police are strapped for help and there is very little help from the Sheriff's department.
- The lake front property in Derby is a great asset to the Town. The lakes must be kept clean to keep the tourists coming to the town.
- The recycling center is an asset to the infrastructure of the town; it is very busy every Saturday.
- It is a challenge now for the Derby Center trustees to manage the water and sewer allocation and it will only get more difficult as Derby grows.
- A challenge in the Village of Derby Center is that most of the developable land within the village is tied up in the current state agricultural laws. There is a New Neighborhood issue in the legislature currently that could help with this.
- There will be a lot of heavy truck traffic with the border expansion. Will the Village of Derby Line be responsible for maintaining the roads during this time?
- There is a new career center in the area and this could attract more jobs for local people.
- Agriculture is the town's greatest export.

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

- The dirt roads that meet the pavement are all torn up because of where the cars have to stop and then pull on to the pavement. Maybe the pavement could be extended a short distance onto the dirt road.
- The town needs better Internet. Unless you are right in town, the only option for Internet is dial up.

- The Village of Derby Center needs help with the water and sewer department. Professionals should be running this department.
- Perhaps the fire department should become regionalized. They are covering a lot of area with very little help. Maybe it is time for a full time staff.
- Derby is experiencing development and population growth. It may be time for a Town Manager or an Administrative Assistant.
- It may be beneficial for Derby to have its own sewer plant instead of having to rely on Newport; however there is a trend toward having smaller plants rather than one large one.
- Traffic is a problem. Maybe there could be a bypass around Route 5 for the people who don't need to travel it.
- Route 5 could be a road that allows no left turns; this would avoid a bypass around Route 5.
- Rather than Derby having its own police department, there could be collaboration with Newport, since they already have a police department in place.
- More sidewalks should be put in to allow people to walk more safely.
- Increase formal recreation: the town has forests that could have walkways and a couple of local parks.
- The RCT should be for all Derby residents. Right now is not and when it is running, the runs start late and end early.
- It seems like the same roads are being paved every couple of years. Maybe the town should increase spending on this and pave roads so that the work lasts longer.
- The town needs industry. Young people are leaving the area because of a lack of jobs.
- It is difficult for many people to afford to build a home with all of the permits that need to be submitted and paid for, along with septic regulations.
- There are sewer problems on Salem View heights.

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

- Is it really practical for the town to rely on as many volunteers as it does with all of the growth that there is?
- There is a lot of concern about the Fire Department and the difficulties of staffing the department.
- If a commercial park is the way for Derby to go, decide where the water and sewer lines are going to be and that is where the park will be.
- Economic development is an issue.
- Make sure that services will create a vibrant region; it needs to attract all generations.
- Continue to work with Newport on sewer allocation; maybe Salem View heights could have a small separate plant.
- Communicate with RCT; they will probably be willing to work with the town to open it to commuters.
- Continue to work on keeping young people in the community.

### **III. Municipal Merger**

#### **Assets and Challenges in this Area**

- 15 years ago, the town voted to merge with the Village of Derby Center because the water system needed to be expanded and the vote did not pass.
- There is challenge with development because the Village of Derby Center controls the sewer and the development is happening outside of the village.
- There is the potential for substantial growth in the town. Is it best to meet the needs separately or together, consolidate resources or work independently?
- The Village of Derby Center and The Village of Derby Line have different issues. The town needs more resources and it would run more professionally as one entity.
- A challenge in the Village of Derby Center is that people who only own land and don't live in the village still pay for sewer allocation.
- The town clerk's office is known for how well it is run. Both villages could gain from a merger and run it more efficiently.
- A challenge is helping people understand that with a merger, residents would not pay for water and sewer unless they were using it.
- Maybe the town could be divided into districts if the two villages and the town merge. Each village could be a different district and the town could be a district so that it would be easy to determine which district paid for what services.
- Both villages have trouble getting trustees to run.
- The Village of Derby Line has different expectations regarding plowing of roads, they are very well kept in the winter time and the people of Derby Line, expect those well kept roads every winter. Would they be as well maintained if there was a merger? They are also paying for paved roads.
- If Derby Line were to merge with the town, there would be many legal documents that would have to be redone due to international issues.
- If the two villages were to merge with the town would it all happen in single act? It would be best if it were to happen at different times.
- If there was a merger things could be done faster, as everything would be in one location.
- Someone asked that if water and sewer were not an issue, would a merger be an issue? The general response was that a merger would not be an issue.
- Not having to maintain three offices is an advantage.
- There are staffing issues in the Village of Derby Center. There is one gentleman who takes care of the water plant in Derby. It is unsafe for him to be working by himself with no one else there.
- Town residents are concerned that they will be responsible for paying for services such as water and sewer and taxes that both villages pay for.
- If there were a merger, it would eliminate a couple of boards. There are too many boards between the villages and the town and they have a difficult time agreeing on the same things.

- Residents of both villages are concerned that if there is a merger, it will cause the taxes, water and sewer to go up.
- Some participants wondered if there were a merger, would current town and village employees lose their jobs?

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

- Communicate the benefits and disadvantages of a merger with residents of the villages and the town before a vote is done. Investigate what a merger would do and get the facts out.
- The town should work toward a merger and do it at separate times for each village.
- A resident of Derby Line said that there is a very close kinship with their “Canadian friends” and that they would like to stay the Village of Derby Line.
- Could the Town of Derby purchase the assets of the Village of Derby Center water company?
- There should be a merger and then a town manager should be hired.
- The town should take over the Village of Derby Center assets and liabilities. The residents of Derby could also pick up the bill for streetlights and sidewalks so that the Village of Derby Center can merge with the town.
- A non-binding resolution could be done with the upcoming primary to get a sense of how residents feel about a merger.
- Development pressure is a primary reason for a merger.
- The select board seems more willing to see a merger happen now than they did fifteen years ago.

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

- There was some confusion caused by the government structure; it could be smaller and more efficient.
- Goodwill has to be present on all sides in order to make the merger work.
- Reduce costs and increase efficiency.
- Make the public aware; public information is key.
- Provide sufficient information, and then make the decision.
- Make it simple and concise.
- Take the information to the residents if they don’t come to the meetings.
- Don’t worry about your identity. It will stay with you.
- Look at the long-term perspective.

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