

**TROY / WESTFIELD / JAY
COMMUNITY VISIT
FINAL REPORT**

**Vermont Council on Rural Development
June 2002**

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Troy / Westfield / Jay Community Visit Introduction

The Community Visit process digs deeply into the challenges before a community. It is fascinating to see the weight of these challenges enumerated at the outset of the process and then, as outsiders, to observe the strength and capacity of the community revealed as these issues are prioritized and plans of attack are developed to address them. This was particularly true in the Spring 2002 Community Visit to Troy, Westfield and Jay in the beautiful northwest corner of the Northeast Kingdom.

The Community Visit Team was deeply impressed with the beauty of the landscape—from the Missisquoi River to the farms and forests, Jay Peak, the Canadian mountains, and the ring of hills to the east. Just as compelling was the commitment and dedication of participants and local leaders from each town who put themselves on the line to confront the fundamental challenges before their communities.

The Community Visit had three major parts:

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on April 1st, Visiting Resource Team members heard testimony from Troy, Jay and Westfield residents in eight focus group areas that had earlier been identified by the local steering committee. Notes and issues raised in these sessions are detailed in Part V. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the Major Challenges before the community (Part II).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the Troy/Westfield/Jay **Community Meeting** on April 29th, when VCRD presented the Major Challenges list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **Prioritized Challenges** (in Part I) were the focus for the formation of Task Forces set to build plans to address them.
3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on May 15th, the Task Forces met with a second Visiting Team to build Action Steps and consider state, federal, non-profit, and private resources that may be available to support their work toward the progress of the regional community. The **Task Force Action Steps** they defined are listed in Part IV.

Resource Team Members (listed in Part VI) signed on with a commitment to serve in an on-going way as sounding boards and referral agents for the Troy/Westfield/Jay Task Forces. Many of these visitors can be partners in the work before the committees, others can be a great source of advice or connection to other resources; call on them for help. Members of the Resource Team listened closely to the issues brought forward by town residents and have made suggestions in support of Northfield's efforts in each challenge area. Their **Recommendations**

(Part III) are not prescriptions; community members are in the best position to make decisions about their next steps and strategies. Recognizing existing local efforts and the leadership of the Task Forces, these recommendations are offered, rather, as suggestions for next steps, and as lists of potential resources as the Task Forces make their way forward.

We need to thank each of the Community Visitors, our co-chairs, Bobby Starr and Harold Haines, the Troy School crew led by Rosemary Mayhew who hosted the Community Dinner on April 1st, and especially Lucille Cadieux, Troy Town Manager, for taking the lead with local organization and logistics.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is dedicated to helping Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources.

The Council, which produces and facilitates the Visit process, does not always foresee the direction communities will take in establishing priorities. We are sometimes surprised by the issues which, after consideration and evaluation, emerge as the Priority Challenges. In Troy, Jay, and Westfield these issues converged in a way that we had never seen so clearly: Four priority challenges centered on economic development issues, and the fifth on education, arguably also a long-term economic development issue. The communities came to near unanimity on the need to promote economic development through tourism, agricultural diversification, value-added processing and agro-tourism, and development in conjunction with the natural resource economy. The Task Forces that formed represent a powerful commitment to attack the fundamental challenge of ensuring economic opportunity for residents today and in the future.

After Rosemary Mayhew, newly elected chair of the Education Task Force, reported the Work-Plan of that group, Paul Costello from VCRD emphasized the importance of that group's plan by quoting William James. At the turn of the last century James claimed that in a democratic society, "Education is the functional equivalent of war." But it's really more than education. Democracy itself depends on "fighting the good fight", under sometimes less-than-heroic conditions, on committees and in meetings, for the sake of the community, its children and its future. The Visiting Team commends the community-spirit of the Task Force members and pledges its advice and assistance as the Task Forces work step-by-step towards success in building real and lasting results.

At the end of the Community Visit Resource Meeting on May 15th, 2002, Bobby Starr, a co-chair, closed the event by summing up what everyone seemed to feel, "We can't wait for anyone to solve these problems for us. We have to work together, now, for the community our children will live in after we are gone."

I. Troy / Westfield / Jay – Priority Challenges **Identified By Residents at Community Meeting – April 29, 2002**

- ❖ **Economic Development Issue:** The area has seen several devastating plant closings with accompanying job losses. An area economic development action group could help the communities build momentum by prioritizing needs and beginning to address them with practical steps.
- ❖ **Natural Resource Economy Issue:** There is a great need for coordinative action to develop natural resource/recreational areas and to collaboratively market them to bring the tourist economy more deeply into the region.
- ❖ **Dairy Processing /Agricultural Diversification Issue:** A. With unstable milk prices dairy farmers in the region need to thoroughly evaluate market opportunities for local dairy processing, value-added dairy production, and cooperative marketing. B. A regional market analysis is needed to determine realistic opportunities for the competitive production of non-dairy value-added agricultural products in the area.
- ❖ **Educational Issue:** A. Curriculum: There is a need to improve school curriculums through a review and planning process to take advantage of distance learning opportunities, update the curriculum, and focus educational resources to meet the needs of students in the 21st Century. B. Middle School: The potential should be examined for a regional Middle School which might boost the region's educational offerings and have a positive impact on youth and community morale. C. Parental Involvement: Parental involvement in the schools should be systematically improved: a Parent/Teachers Organization or booster club could help promote and support the school and youth activities; there is a strong sentiment that this would help address problems related to poor behavior and vandalism.
- ❖ **Tourism Issue:** A. Marketing: As Jay Peak works toward year-round resort operations, the regional community should work to systematically integrate tourism-related businesses with the resort's planning and marketing for their mutual benefit. B. Agro-Tourism: Currently the region does not systematically take advantage of Agro-tourism opportunities; a local agro-tourism planning group could be formed for communications and cooperative marketing in conjunction with Jay Peak's year-round resort campaign.

II. Troy / Westfield / Jay - Major Challenges

Identified by Focus Groups – April 1, 2002

- ❖ **Economic Development Issue:** The area has seen several devastating plant closings with accompanying job losses. An area economic development action group could help the communities build momentum by prioritizing needs and beginning to address them with practical steps.
- ❖ **Natural Resource Economy Issue:** There is a great need for coordinative action to develop natural resource/recreational areas and to collaboratively market them to bring the tourist economy more deeply into the region.
- ❖ **Dairy Processing Issue:** With unstable milk prices dairy farmers in the region need to thoroughly evaluate market opportunities for local dairy processing, value-added dairy production, and cooperative marketing.
- ❖ **Troy Town/North Troy Village Issue:** The Town of Troy and Village of North Troy should consider a merger to rationalize utilities and services, support community-wide planning, simplify community and municipal communications, raise the image of Troy, and promote a common identity among Troy residents as members of a unified community.
- ❖ **Educational Curriculum Issue:** There is a need to improve school curriculums through a review and planning process to take advantage of distance learning opportunities, update the curriculum, and focus educational resources to meet the needs of students in the 21st Century.
- ❖ **Tourism Marketing Issue:** As Jay Peak works toward year-round resort operations, the regional community should work to systematically integrate tourism-related businesses with the resort's planning and marketing for their mutual benefit.
- ❖ **Middle School Issue:** A regional Middle School could have a major potential to boost the region's educational offerings and have a positive impact on youth and community morale.
- ❖ **Parental Involvement Issue:** Parental involvement in the schools should be systematically improved: a Parent/Teachers Organization or booster club could help promote and support the school and youth activities; there is a strong sentiment that this would help address problems related to poor behavior and vandalism.
- ❖ **Youth Recreation Issue:** A Youth/Adult Recreation Committee is needed to coordinate activities, including indoor recreation and arts/music events, especially for older teens.
- ❖ **Transportation Issue:** There is no public transportation, especially for young people to get to activities in Newport or at the IROC.

- ❖ **Downtown Beautification Issue:** North Troy needs a “Downtown Committee” to plan and lead beautification efforts to spruce up the appearance of the Village and address issues of blight, signage, and traffic.
- ❖ **Housing Issue:** North Troy needs to address issues of absentee landlords and poor maintenance, and systematically support the refurbishing of run-down housing stock.
- ❖ **Senior Housing and Services Issue:** A Senior Housing and services facility would serve the needs of older residents of the entire area and could be an anchor of a North Troy revitalization.
- ❖ **Agricultural Diversification Issue:** A regional market analysis is needed to determine realistic opportunities for the competitive production of non-dairy value-added agricultural products in the area.
- ❖ **Agro-Tourism Issue:** Currently the region does not systematically take advantage of Agro-tourism opportunities; a local agro-tourism planning group could be formed for communications and cooperative marketing in conjunction with Jay Peak’s year-round resort campaign.
- ❖ **Arts and Culture Issue:** Arts, music, and cultural organizations should work together to develop, obtain funding, schedule, and market arts and cultural activities for residents and tourists alike—both on the mountain, and in village centers.

III. VCRD Resource Team Recommendations

In response to the Five Troy / Westfield / Jay Priority Challenges

General Recommendations

- The three towns and Jay Peak Resort could combine forces, resources, energy and vision in a three-town/one resort effort at community development that could include the work of each of the five task forces. There may need to be a three-town public/private partnership that allows collaboration not normally seen. This would likely require a clear vision and business plan that would require commitments by all involved and need to be endorsed by the voters and by the owners of Jay Peak. It would also allow development to be focused at Jay Peak while protecting the traditional town centers and thereby allowing for the direction and support and encouragement of appropriate activities that reinforce the traditional Vermont village character and atmosphere.
- A Jay regional image and brand could be sold to the large market to the north as well as to the south; this image could be built and capitalized on the traditional Vermont village community image - the real Vermont with dairy farms, friendly rural people in a beautiful recreational rich area – with Jay Peak Resort as cornerstone, such a marketing campaign could utilize and celebrate the full three-town area and all its resources like the river, the country stores, farms, and local restaurants.
- Such an integrated partnership between towns and a private company may be unique. This may require some special actions at the town or state legislative level. It might also make for an attractive target for foundation and public grant support, new resources for the implementation of the vision for the partnership.
- A new dynamic vision for these communities needs to be articulated which will capture the imagination of not only the residents but also of those foundations, organizations, private sector entrepreneurs and various levels of government that could bring new resources of all types to the table for investment in this area. Leadership, creativity and perseverance will be critical to any effort
- Sherry Paige (828-6034), from USDA RD, is ready and willing to provide on-going support and facilitation to **any** of the Task Forces; she is also an expert in USDA grant guidelines and procedures.
- As Northeast Kingdom communities, Troy, Jay and Westfield are in a federally designated REAP zone; this increases the possibility for project funding through USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) or Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG). These grants could support projects in any of the Task Force Areas. Contact Sherry Paige at 828-6034.

Economic Development Issue

- On the issue of Railroad Street in North Troy needing slum improvements: Investigate grants to paint, improve outside of occupied homes and buildings and possible grants to the owners or renters to improve the inside of these properties. The Gilman Housing Trust has put together a program that helps refurbish decaying housing stock. Contact Ed Stretch at 334-1541 on this program and for advice.
- USDA RD can also be of assistance with run-down housing. Contact Robert McDonald at 828-6015.
- Contact Mary Paull at NVDA (334-5861) or John Hall, the NVDA Director (748-5181) for economic planning assistance, help with potential grants, and on-going help with area projects. NVDA is the Planning Commission and the Regional Economic Development Corporation for the Northeast Kingdom. They can help communities writing grants, planning, and implementing economic development strategies.
- Other state agencies dedicated to supporting economic development strategies include: The Vermont Economic Development Authority, 828-5627, www.state.vt.us/veda, The Vermont Economic Progress Council, 828-5626, fkenney@dca.state.vt.us, and the Vermont Community Development Program, 828-3211, cdaley@dca.state.vt.us.
- On the issue of the abandoned gas station with underground storage tanks: Contact the Agency of Natural Resources in Waterbury - Andy Shively, Environmental Analyst specializing in Underground storage tanks 802-241-3485, June Middleton, Permit Coordinator 802-241-3871, Chuck Schuer, Section Supervisor for Site Management – oversees the Petroleum Cleanup Fund (PCF) at 802-241-3876, and finally Thomas Unkles, Underground Storage Tank Program Coordinator at 802-241-3882.
- For help on the Tranquil Gardens or Firehouse Gallery projects contact Alex Aldrich, Vermont Arts Council Executive Director at 802-828-3293 and Addy Smith, NeKAC, Northeast Kingdom Arts Council via email at addy_smith@hotmail.com.
- On these projects (or Natural Resource Economy projects which seem to overlap between these two task forces) contact Steve Patterson, Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Community Development at 828-5208. He is leading the Successful Communities Initiative in the Northeast Kingdom and can provide the Planning Grant application information. <http://www.state.vt.us/dca/>.
- Contact Jane Lendway, Preservation Planner, Certified Local Government Program, Downtown Program at 802-828-3042 or Joss Besse, Downtown Program at 802-828-5212. They are experts at helping downtowns make progress and know of all state and non-profit resources that can help a downtown development program.
- Northeast Kingdom Community Action has a Micro-Business Development Program headed by Don Welch. This program has worked actively and successfully with entrepreneurs to get small businesses up and running. They could be encouraged to run workshops and provide services in a Troy location. Mitch Gordon is the NEKCA Executive Director (748-8997).
- On the issue of Intersections and Crosswalks in N. Troy along Route 243 and in Troy Routes 101 & 100 & South Pleasant Street and sidewalk improvements at least on

one side of road: Contact the Agency of Transportation, Policy & Planning Division, Sandy Aja at 802-828-2544 for information regarding Transportation Enhancement Grants and other possible supports.

- The three-town region should work together to leverage the resources available through the presence of Jay Peak. Its destination and day visitor recreation resources should be further developed through collaboration with the towns. Its close proximity to the local communities offers a chance to create a different ambiance than exists in many ski areas. With sewer and water capacity the ski area could become a growth center and if all three towns put in resources there may be a way to share the resulting property tax revenues as well as the resulting spin-off economic activity.
- Provide incentives and support for entrepreneurs. Target those efforts at the activities that are missing to keep visitors in the area. For example, if the town of Montgomery can have quality bed and breakfasts and restaurants then so can Troy and Westfield.
- On Broadband: Invite Ken Camp (372-8860) or Sigurd Anderson (748-2877) of VCRD's Northeast Kingdom Connect project to come to the region to see if the area could become a first community where local education, business, and home needs are aggregated and supplied through a cable or wireless system; this could be a real stimulus for future jobs.

Natural Resource Economy Issue

- The UVM School of Natural Resources (656-4280) has faculty and students who focus precisely on these issues and might be interested in assisting the community in developing opportunities. The UVM Center for Rural Studies could also provide aide and help contact other UVM assistance (656-3021).
- The Missisquoi River is a recreational asset that seems to be undeveloped for the community as well as visitors. Planning and short-term work on signage could improve public access.
- Work with and support establishing "Tranquil Gardens" in North Troy at Standish Farm area or on property near town garage.
- For help with trail planning advice (and potentially resource advice) contact the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council at the Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation. Ben Rose (who also heads the Green Mountain Club) is their chair at 241-3690.
- The trails project could greatly benefit from a work crew of young people who could help implement trail plans. Contact the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Candy Moot is chair at 802-241-3699.
- The NEK could become a mountain bike Mecca. Kingdom Trails in East Burke has built a model mountain biking center for that part of the Kingdom. Perhaps trails in the Troy area could connect through to routes in the Burke area—a twin mountain marathon would attract many bikers! Certainly Jeff Hale, their director, could give advice and recommendations for resources (626-0737).
- These resources could be developed and leveraged in conjunction with Jay Peak Ski Resort to help diversify the attractions of the resort and the communities. There would need to be some advanced planning and agreements as mentioned above.

Dairy Processing /Agricultural Diversification Issue

- Value-Added Agriculture Development Grants could be available through USDA RD in June, 2002. There will be a short window this summer for submitting applications. Sherry Paige (828-6034) can provide advice and technical assistance. She should be contacted as soon as possible. The Task Force could also contact David Robinson, USDA Rural Development at 828-6070 or Michael Dolce, USDA Rural Development in Rutland at 775-7014 for Value-Added Development Program and Value-Added Market Development Program.
- USDA Rural Development also has planning funds to support feasibility study and market analysis work that may be necessary. Contact Sherry Paige, USDA Rural Development at 828-6034, or David Robinson, USDA Rural Development at 828-6070 for information on the Rural Business Opportunity Grant. These funds could support contracts to further conduct regional market analysis. NVDA or the Village of North Troy or Troy or Westfield or Jay could be the applicant although not the individual farmers.
- NVDA may be able to help with grant writing. Contact Mary Paull at 334-5861 or John Hall at 748-5181.
- The Task Force might contact Cabot/Agrimark (Roberta McDonald, 229-9361) and St. Albans Cooperative (Leon Berthiaume, 524-6581) for advice or to discuss possible partnerships in value-added production.
- The UVM Department of Community Development and Applied Economics would want to support this effort and may be able to provide advice or technical assistance. Contact Jane Kolodinsky, Department Chair (658-0052).
- Partnerships for planning, product development, and distribution could be the keys to success. Contact Brian Norder, Director of the Vermont Food Venture Center at 849-2000 for his advice and potential involvement.
- Ron (660-2068) and Roger Allbee (365-7213) are consultants who are providing feasibility analysis to business models for value-added production and currently working on a small farmer-owned milk processing facility in MA. They may have good advice or be available for assistance.
- There may be a way to begin to develop a Jay Brand of value-added dairy and specialized agricultural products. Shelburne Farms, Grafton, and Plymouth cheeses come to mind by way of example. All three trade on the quality of the product and the image of the area where they are made

Educational Issue

- **Expand Education Curriculum Committee:**
 1. Establish a Curriculum Advisory Committee to assist in curriculum and program development.
 2. Call upon representatives from each school district to join the work group to insure adequate representation and opportunity for each unit within the S.U. Include parents and community members on the Curriculum Committee and insure that special education staff are part of this work.

3. Train school board and community members on how to best implement the action planning requirements of the state's education reform law (Act 60). Use the skills, and experience of adults and youth toward curricular improvements.
 4. Leadership is key to all the areas but particularly so with the education issues. The communities need to find a way to identify and support the leaders inside and outside of their schools on issues of interest to the kids and of importance to a good education.
- **Improve Curriculum:**
 1. Allow the new Curriculum Director to get on board and to become oriented to the work to be done.
 2. Request a time-line and mapping for curriculum work to be done.
 3. Implement Professional Development with new sources of revenue.
 4. Contact Hazen Union Principal, Shirley Richardson, in Hardwick at 802-472-6511, to learn more about how they obtained the 21st Century Learning Center Grant. Contact Grand Isle Supervisory Union Cliff Raybourn at 802-372-6921, North Country Education Foundation, of Gorham NH Dr. Michael Hill, at 603-466-5437 and White Mountain School Administrative Unit #35, Littleton, NH, Steve Sloan, at 603-444-3925. These schools received funding from USDA's Distance Learning Telemedicine Program. The USDA Regional Contact for this program is Steve McKenzie, Exeter, NH at 603-895-8433 in addition to Rhonda Shippee, Community Program Director at 802-828-6033 or Sherry Paige, Rural Development Specialist at 802-828-6034.
 5. Invite leadership schools on both of these issues to come to the examine schools in the three-town area and share how they go about doing these things. Ask to learn from the best, and ask the best to show why their approaches are indeed successful and how they may be transferable. Grants and foundations may support such an effort.
 - **Expand Distance Learning:**
 1. Rely on Career Center Personnel to take the lead in sharing results of pilot study and to offer direction for the future.
 2. Develop a 5 to 7 year plan for putting these opportunities into place.
 3. Work with "Wild Branch Solutions" to frame programs and expand opportunities.
 - **Evaluate Special Education:**
 1. Continue to implement the "Responsive Classroom Programs."
 2. Request a fiscal and program review through Dennis Kane and Susan Hasazi at UVM.
 3. Look at the possibilities for more regional services to help with program opportunities as well as to control extraordinary costs.
 4. Continue to work with the "Northeast Kingdom Human Services Agency" to provide services for students.
 - **Assess Middle School Feasibility:**
 1. Integrate this work with the existing "Strategic Planning Committee" work.

2. Complete an analysis of student population trends and projections with a focus on middle level youth.
 3. Complete an assessment of available space in schools and possibilities for providing middle level education without new construction.
 4. Expand the middle school effort by getting more people involved with the study. Need to have all school boards represented as well as citizens from each of the five school districts that will potentially be members of the unit.
 5. Engage principals from each of the school districts.
 6. Obtain research regarding successful middle school practices. Include in this research information on student learning results.
 7. Talk to Jacqueline Wilson, principal of the Main Street Middle School in Montpelier (223-3404), about how they have designed their middle school and the help that they received in turning to a middle school format.
- **Increase Parental Involvement:**
 1. Expand student participation in community functions like events put on by the Historic Society.
 2. Utilize student performances to get more community involved in schools.
 3. Complete a survey on what is already happening in the area of parental and community involvement. Share information throughout the school districts so that they might get new ideas for expanding their opportunities.
 4. Focus more attention on students inviting family, friends and neighbors to school and to school events.
 5. Make schools more welcoming and comfortable to parents and community (especially for those who might not have seen school as pleasant or inviting).
 6. Provide food, child-care and other things that will make it easier for folks to be involved.
 7. Go to large employers in the area and engage them in helping with this challenge. This is especially important regarding migrant families.
 8. Conduct an e-mail survey to get information from throughout the state on what various schools are doing in this area.
 9. NEK Community Action Youth Services led by Ann Sparrow may be able to help (749-8997). Although they mainly work with youth themselves, they may be able to help draw parents together to talk about youth issues, host substance abuse workshops, or help consider ways of involving parents in school-related activities.
 10. Integrate ways of involving parents and community members in schools through the development of arts and cultural activities. Develop the connection between schools and the communities through fun, interesting, and cultural experiences. Look at the young people as a resource to community education and cultural experience, not just as recipients of educational programming by adults.
 11. Survey young people on their view of the assets and issues in their community, and help them design one or more Community Service Projects to improve the community (maybe a web site?). Helen Beattie from East Hardwick (472-6846) can describe how this process can work.

- **Resource People:**
 1. Curriculum:
 - Central Office Personnel in general
 - Holly Heverly
 - Judy Boucher
 - Curriculum Advisory Committee
 2. Distance Learning:
 - Wild Branch Solutions
 - Bill Romand (D.O.E.), 828-0064
 - Bob Fitts
 3. Special Education:
 - Leann Desjardins
 - Richard Smith
 - Rick Schover
 - Susan Hasazi (UVM)
 - Dennis Kane (D.O.E.)
 - Burle Adams
 4. Middle School:
 - Rod Weston
 - S.U. Strategic Planning Committee
 - Dave Merrill
 - Mike Murphy
 - Dean Vervoort
 - Joe DeMartino (Northeast Regional Lab @ Brown)
 - Bob McNamara (LNSU)
 - Nicole Larose
 - Tod Morrey
 5. Parental Involvement:
 - Rod Weston
 - Nancy Allen
 - Redge Chaput
 - Bill Crenshaw
 - Rebecca Wilson
 - Community Organizations like the Historic Society
 - School Principals
 - Students

Tourism Issue

- The Vermont Arts Council would be a good contact to consider strategies and fund development options for projects including Tranquil Gardens, the Firehouse, or an Open Studio weekend. Contact Alex Aldrich, the Executive Director, at 828-5420.
- Recognize and use such local resources. Specifically for the Tourism issue, the area has strong access to resources through Bill Stenger, who is on the Board of VOGA (Vermont Outdoor Guide Association) and is chair of the Vermont Travel Recreation Council: Jim McKimm, is also on VOGA's board.
- Continue partnering with other organizations, such as VOGA, NEKKTA and local chambers, to extend reach of dollars and human resources.
- Make sure all Jay, Westfield, and Troy businesses are participating in the Agency of Commerce, Department of Economic Development's free online Business Registry (www.thinkvermont.com - contact Robin Miller, 828-5240 for Technical Assistance).
- Make sure all tourism-related businesses are participating in the Agency of Commerce, Department of Tourism and Marketing's free online Travel Planner (www.vacationvermont.com - Business must first register in the Business Registry at www.thinkvermont.com, then register additional data for tourist use. Robin Miller, the NEKTTA or Carol Batchelder in VDTM, 828-3619, can help you add information to the Travel Planner).
- Vermont's Cultural Heritage Coordinator, Deborah Doyle-Schechtman, 828-5547, [ddoyle@arts.vca.state.vt.us](mailto:didoyle@arts.vca.state.vt.us) may also be of assistance. All of Vermont's Regional Marketing Organizations (RMOs) are listed on this website as well. The Department of Tourism and Marketing does not have monies to award, except through RMOs.
- Diane Konrady's role is Public Relations at the Department of Tourism and Marketing, and she has several decades of experience in Vermont State government. She is ready, willing, and able to support the efforts of the Task Force. If folks need help but are not sure whom to contact, they should feel free to use her as an ongoing resource and referral agent (223-2377).
- Todd Comen, Professor at Johnson State College, specializes in agro-tourism and rural development and may be able to lend advice and expertise to support this effort.
- The Regional Development Corporation (NVDA, Mary Paull, in Newport at 802-334-5861) can assist with marketing.
- Contact the Regional Marketing Organization for the Northeast Kingdom for help and support at 888-884-8001.
- Contact Joe Wynne, the Small Business Development Center business counselor in Newport, at 802-334-5861
- Contact the Vermont Community Loan Fund, Hope Campbell in Montpelier, at 802-223-1448 for Technical Assistance in Marketing.
- Contact the NEK Chamber leader Darcie McCann at 802-748-3678
- For help in planning and strategic implementation of agro-tourism projects contact Jackie Folsum, Agri-Tourism Coordinator at VT Farms! at 802-223-0929 or 1-800-VTFARMS. (jackie@vtfarms.org).
- Joyce Judy at Community College of Vermont has a wealth of experience in the opportunities and pitfalls of agro-tourism. She can be reached at 828-4060 for advice.

- Integration is the key, but stretching the partnership to new levels of visioning, and sharing resources and rewards may be necessary. The success of the towns and the resort may be so intertwined that a new approach may be necessary and attractive to outside funders.

IV. Task Force Action Plans

Established on the May 15th Community Resource Day

Economic Development Task Force

Chairperson: R. Bruce McKay

Economic Development Issue: The area has seen several devastating plant closings with accompanying job losses. An area economic development action group could help the communities build momentum by prioritizing needs and beginning to address them with practical steps.

Committee Members:

Tom Velk
Bobby Starr
Raymond Lemay
Rollie Denton
Jerome Rondeau
Charles Allen

Also signed up but did not attend the first meeting of the group:

Dexter Randall (attended/Chair of Dairy Proc. Group)
Jo Daggett (attended Natural Resource Econ. Group also signed up for
Tourism Group)
Roland Mayhew (attended Education Group and also signed up for Dairy
Processing & Tourism Groups)
Mary Taylor
Phil Shuman
Todd Alix (also signed up and attended Natural Res. Economy)

Action Steps:

1. The Task Force will investigate cleaning up the empty gas station and attempt to deal with hazardous underground tanks – search for EPA grants/Brownfields funding.
2. The Task Force will address Railroad Street/Slum Clearance. It will investigate grants to paint, improve outside of occupied buildings and other needed work inside.

3. The Task Force will work with and support the establishment of Tranquil Gardens as a tourist attraction in North Troy, in the Standish farm area or on property near the town garage.
4. The Task Force will address needs at the Troy Town intersection of 101/100/South Pleasant Street. It will look to Dept. of Transportation to put in crosswalk lines and sidewalks on a least one side of highways, there and in North Troy Village. On Rte 243 the Task Force will work to improve sidewalks and establish a crosswalk.
5. The Task Force will start a campaign to educate residents on the importance of hiring a full time constable (fully trained and certified).
6. The committee will look at the issue of asking a high school class take on the job of developing a local web site.

Resources:

1. Agency of Natural Resources
2. Environmental Protection Agency
3. NVDA – Regional Planning and Economic Development Association.
4. Planning grant from Vt. Community Development Program (CDBG).
5. Dept. of Transportation (Pandit Sandi-Tom Velk will find him)
6. State University of NY @ Plattsburgh.

Natural Resource Economy Task Force

Chairperson: Amy Robinson

Natural Resource Economy Issue: There is a great need for coordinative action to develop natural resource/recreational areas and to collaboratively market them to bring the tourist economy more deeply into the region.

Committee Members:

Ann McKay
Ruth Place
Jo Daggett
Todd Alix
Harold J. Haynes

Also signed up but did not attend the first meeting of the group:

Jim Starr
Zachary Pratt (also signed up for Educ. and Tourism Groups)
Frank Douglas

**R. Bruce McKay (attended/Chair of Econ. Dev. Group)
Robert Langlande**

Action Steps:

- 1. The Task Force will map out a route for a Trail System – for pedestrians and bikers from Jay Peak into Troy Village. It will identify property owners, contact owners for permission, and develop alternative routes if needed.**
- 2. The committee will support the Tranquil Gardens initiative and support efforts to acquire village property. Members will attend next Tuesday’s Village Trustees meeting to support project.**
- 3. Missisquoi Basin Association – The committee will work to recruit members for the association.**

Resources:

- 1. Community members--to support activities and make things happen.**
- 2. Topo maps – Anne, Vast map – Todd, Tax map – Anne.**
- 3. Funding – Land & Water Conservation Fund – Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation – Ruth will investigate.**
- 4. Hazen Notch Association.**

Dairy Processing/Agricultural Diversification Task Force

Chairperson: Dexter Randall

Dairy Processing / Agricultural Diversification Issue: A. The region needs to thoroughly evaluate market opportunities for local dairy processing, value-added dairy production, and cooperative marketing, B. A regional market analysis is needed to determine realistic opportunities for the competitive production of non-dairy value-added agricultural products in the area.

Committee Members:

**Jack Lazor
Robert Judd Sr.
Jack Starr
Edeas Couture
Dexter Randall**

Also (signed up but did not attend meeting/group):

Jim Starr
Robert Bishop
Leslie Bishop
**Roland Mayhew (attended Educ. Group and also signed up for Economic
Dev. and Tourism Groups)**
Gerard Croizet

Action Steps:

- 1. The Task Force will follow to completion a Value-Added Dairy Processing Feasibility Study – this is underway through contract to UVM’s Ken Becker. Analyzing shopping habits and employing surveys this summer, the report will be concluded in August. This study will help to define the market and help the Task Force make decisions on product. SARE grant.**
- 2. Find an entrepreneur with vision & leadership to carry the project forward, then, with this leadership, gear the project to market opportunities.**
- 3. Learn from what has succeeded elsewhere: examine the facility in York, PA, and make contact with people who have been successful in WI.**
- 4. Investigate marketing to local schools.**
- 5. Evaluate grant opportunities, especially value-added resources through the USDA from the new Farm Bill.**
- 6. Talk to and recruit local farmers and decide: should one person start it?**
- 7. Investigate grant money available.**
- 8. Form an organization and build partnerships. Decide whether this effort is to be non-profit, private, or cooperative.**
- 9. Pilot an effort hosted by Jack Lazor at Butterworks. Experiment with glass bottles, with labels, and pasteurized milk or value-added products.**

Resources:

- 1. USDA- Rural Development**
- 2. Evaluate land opportunities for site.**
- 3. Merke Foundation**
- 4. Freeman Foundation**
- 5. Agriculture venture capital.**
- 6. The Vermont Community Foundation**

Education Task Force

Chairperson: Rosemary Mayhew

Educational Issue: A. Curriculum: There is a need to improve school curriculums through a review and planning process to take advantage of distance learning opportunities, update the curriculum, and focus education resources to meet the needs of students in the 21st Century. B. Middle School: The potential should be examined for a regional Middle School which might boost the region's educational offerings and have a positive impact on youth and community morale. C. Parental Involvement: parental involvement in the schools should be systematically improved: A Parent/Teachers Organization or booster club could help promote and support the school and youth activities; there is a strong sentiment that this would help address problems related to poor behavior and vandalism.

Committee Members:

Nancy Allen
Roland Mayhew
Rod Westin
Rosemary Mayhew

To be asked to join:
Mike Murphy (Jay/Westfield)
Rick Shover (Troy)
Amy Patenaude (Newport Town)
Cherry Hamman (Lowell)
Central Office Staff

Also signed up but did not attend the first meeting of the group:

Francis D. Fischer
Marie Bruneau
R. Bruce McKay (attended Natural Res. Econ. Group)
Amy Robinson (attended/Chair Nat. Res. Econ. Group and also signed up for Tourism Group)
Brandy L. Wright
Zachary Pratt (also signed up for Natural Res. Econ. Group)
Charles Allen (attended Econ. Dev. Group)
Mike Murphy

Action Steps:

1. Contact folks not present tonight (Rosemary Mayhew)

2. Evaluate Data on Student Results (middle school) (Rod Weston)
3. Call Susan Hazazi & Dennis Kane from UVM who are experts at doing Special Education evaluations of school districts.
4. E-Mail schools to investigate the opportunity to increase parental involvement.
5. Contact the State PTO to consider the opportunity for a local organization (Rod).
6. Conduct a Space & Population Analysis (Tisha will look into this).
7. Build a Strategic Planning Committee (Dave Merrill).

Resources:

1. Rosemary Mayhew
2. Rod Weston
3. Susan Hazazi/Dennis Kane at UVM
4. Joe DiMartin
5. All Principals, Career Center Director, Central Office

Tourism and Agro-Tourism Task Force

Chairperson: Jim McKimm

Tourism Issue: A. Marketing: As Jay Peak works toward year-round resort operations, the regional community should work to systematically integrate tourism-related businesses with the resort's planning and marketing for their mutual benefit. B. Agro-Tourism: Currently the region does not systematically take advantage of Agro-tourism opportunities; a local agro-tourism planning group could be formed for communications and cooperative marketing in conjunction with Jay Peak's year-round resort campaign.

Committee Members:

**Bill Stenger
Jane Beaulieu
Sam Leary
Norman Leduc
Maurice Phillips
Robert Judd Jr.
Irene McDermott
Camilla Mead**

Also signed up but did not attend the first meeting of the group:

Robert Judd Sr. (attended Dairy Proc. Group)
Dorothy Barlow
Lois Proctor
Zachary Pratt (also signed up for Natural Res. Econ. & Educ. Groups)
Ruth Place (attended Natural Res. Econ. Group)
Charles Allen (attended Econ. Dev. Group)
Roland Mayhew (attended Educ. Group and also signed up for Econ. Dev. and Dairy Processing Groups)
Amy Robinson (attended/Chair Nat. Res. Econ. Group and also signed up for Education Group)
Jo Daggett (attended Nat. Res. Econ. Group)

Action Steps:

- 1. Build a plan and improve signage to resources and businesses in the region.**
- 2. Beautify N. Troy Village – the package needs to look good.**
- 3. Set a plan and build sidewalks in N. Troy Village**
- 4. Develop environmental tourism, especially in shoulder seasons, the spring/fall – featuring birds, flowers, hiking, watch-able wildlife, naturalist programs, nature trails, and celebrating other natural attractions.**
- 5. Discover/develop an affordable way to hold an artisan/open studio weekend.**
- 6. Create Environmental Tourism Committee to maintain North Troy Nature Trail.**
- 7. Consult with Dept of Agriculture to see what has been most successful for farmers in agro-tourism and develop a program and activity outline. Inventory the farm community on their interest in participating in agro-tourism activities. Plan to review successes from other areas, deal with liability issues, develop farm visits (not just tours), form farm-inn partnerships, and consider opportunities for trail rides and other activities.**
- 8. Re-establish the Troy/N. Troy/Westfield Info Booth (at the crossroads).**
- 9. Develop farm/lodging partnerships and broaden farm partnerships for agro-tourism. As part of this process, Jay Peak will host an Agriculture Department/farm/lodging community meeting.**

Resources:

- 1. Department of Housing and Community Development, Downtown Program-Jane Lendway, Joss Besse (828-3211), NVDA, and VOGA.**
- 2. Agriculture-Market Development, 828-2416. Jackie Folsom, 223-0929.**
- 3. Green Mountain Audubon, Huntington.**
- 4. The Green Mountain Club.**
- 5. VT Department of Fish & Wildlife 241-3100. Northern Forest Council Trail (Jim McKimm has contacted).**
- 6. UVM Extension Service, Bill McMaster, 334-7325**

- 7. Department of Tourism, Commissioner, Sally Cavanagh, 828-3649. Media Relations, Diane Konrady, 828-3683. Events database, Carol Batchelder.**
- 8. Funding: Council on the Arts; ACCD – CBDG Planning Grants; USDA RBOG, Housing Commissioner Greg Brown, Division for Historic Preservation.**

V. Notes and Major Issues

Points of Testimony from the Community Visit Day, April 1, 2002

Resource Team A –Economic Development Issue and Milk Processing Issue

Paul Costello, Executive Director, Vermont Council on Rural Development (Team Facilitator)

John Hall, Executive Director, Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Molly Lambert, Secretary, Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Bill McMaster, Regional Specialist, Community Resource Development, UVM Extension Service

Connie Burns, Community & Business Outreach Specialist, USDA Rural Development (Scribe)

I. Economic Development Issue Focus Group

Terry Albee

Todd Alixe

Arch Cota

Edeas Couture

Bethany Dunbar

Jim Ferguson

Laini Fondiller

Tom Gailitis

Jim Greenwood

Emeline Harmon

Roland H. Laliberty

Dianne Laplante

Jack Lazor

Raymond LeMay

Art Limoges

Roland Mayhew

Ruth Place

Zachary Pratt

Beverly Priest

Dexter Randall

Jeanne Rogers

Bill Stenger

Gary Taylor

Tom Velk

Points of Testimony

Community Strengths

- Infrastructure for water and sewer is in place.
- The Troy/Jay municipal sewer operating at half capacity – it was built to accommodate the Agrimark milk processing plant that has since left the area.
- There is a strong farm community, especially in dairy and maple production.
- Many farmers have sold development rights so the land will remain agricultural. Larger more prosperous farms are buying smaller ones.
- Chaput Farms has 900 cows, milks in 3 shifts, and employs 15-20 people.
- There is a strong group of diversified farmers, including organics, dairy and vegetables.

- Butterworks Yogurt is a successful business; it pays \$11-14/hr. and provides health benefits.
- The quality of rural life is high.
- Jay Mountain (winter skiing season December 15 - March 15 filled 100% - only 4.5% in summer) is a great, if, so far, a seasonal asset.
- The proposed golf course development at Jay should increase the tourist season to year round.
- The mountain attracts tourism; to some extent tourists use local establishments.
- There are 21 B&B's in area with a fairly healthy winter market.
- There are many snowmobile trails; a major VAST trail goes through Jay Village.
- The Jay Peak Area Association (JPAA) markets the area with pamphlets and a map listing 120 "things to do".
- The area has many other natural resources for recreation--brooks, lake, woodlands.
- New housing construction is increasing; one contractor has 40 home orders this year.
- There are 2 large trucking firms.
- The highways are well maintained.
- The region has many interesting, talented people living here.
- It is close to the Canadian border only 1 1/2 hours from Montreal.
- The area Chamber of Commerce has 85 members.

Challenges in this Issue Area

- There has been a terrible loss of local jobs when mills and businesses have closed.
- The loss of Agri-Mark impacted 50 employees earning \$14-15/hour; nothing has taken its place.
- The Agri-Mark tax base was \$200,000; the empty building recently sold for \$17,000.
- Service jobs are mostly available during the winter, not year round.
- There are not enough jobs; people work out of the area and just sleep here.
- It is hard to compete in attracting business with the St. Albans-Shelburne corridor.
- People that travel distances to work spend their money there too.
- Businesses do not stay.
- The area is stagnant – there are not growing opportunities.
- There's a need to be able to offer tax incentives to attract new businesses.
- Most jobs offer low pay.
- There is a lack of skilled and reliable workforce.
- The workforce out of touch with current technology.
- Cell phone services are limited.
- Vocational education needs to be expanded.
- Most young people leave area.
- There is a high unemployment rate--10.5%.
- Under-employment is also very high.
- Many highly educated people find lower skilled jobs and can bump others who need them.

- There's a need for more home based businesses.
- There is no access to capital to start small business.
- Difficulties obtaining permits in VT impede progress.
- There's no public transportation; some people have no private transportation either.
- Telephone costs are very high.
- There is no access to high-speed telecommunication lines.
- Troy has a bad reputation of being a "welfare" town.
- Skiers and tourists have a perception that the distance to Jay and this part of the Northeast Kingdom is greater than it really is.
- Many skiers that support the mountain are bused there for one day and do not use neighboring businesses.
- Better local communication and marketing is needed by Jay Peak. Some local residents do not know what they offer.
- The area needs better communication with Travel and Tourism.
- Better communication and collaboration between communities is needed.
- The Canadian dollar exchange rate makes VT prices very high; Canadians do not come to spend.
- Economic vitality from Canaan to Swanton has changed with the way the border is patrolled—impediments to easy cross-border traffic hurt everyone.
- Stores are charged extra for ATM cash-back transactions.
- Property values are seen as low - banks value them higher for loan purposes.
- Need for senior housing – the senior development in Westfield might expand with help.
- There are very few shopping options.
- Many stores close at 5 PM.
- Local people resist buying local products.
- Grants are not available because of low number of residents. Grantors do not understand isolation and rural-ness.
- The Artists Guild needs grant support.
- JPAA applied for \$2,500 grant for "Summerfest" – but the budget was too low to attract funding.
- The area needs funding resources for recreational and artistic activities.
- Petty crime in area is an issue.
- Houses being built all along the roads rather than in village centers as described in the town plans. Development is between villages, not in the centers.
- Farmers need help with diversification.
- The area needs to focus on developing natural resource recreation - fishing, hiking, skiing, snowmobiling. Mills and small farms will not be back and the area needs to celebrate its strengths.

Key Challenges Summary

1. The area has seen several devastating plant closings with accompanying job losses. A regional economic development planning and development group could help the

communities build momentum by prioritizing needs and beginning to address them with practical steps.

2. There is a great need for coordinative action to develop natural resource/recreational areas and agro-tourism enterprises and to market them to bring tourists more deeply into the region.

II. Milk Processing Issue Focus Group

*Reg Chaput
Edeas Couture
Jacques Couture
Bobby Judd*

*Jack Lazor
Loren Petzoldt
Dexter Randall
Jack Starr*

Points of Testimony

Community Strengths

- There is a good land base.
- NE Kingdom has a large pocket of dairy farms.
- Ag. services and infrastructure is available - machinery & equipment dealers, grain dealers, vets.
- Region has the ability to produce milk, forest and maple products.
- Clean air and water abound.
- The beautiful landscape and small farms appeal to tourists.
- A small processing plant would enable farms to sell at local markets.
- Several large farms ensure that a good quantity of milk is made here.
- A local plant would help consumers know where their milk comes from.

Challenges in this Issue Area

- Farmers could face a challenge trying to work together.
- Thinking about giving up present milk market distributor could be huge challenge to farmers.
- Farmers need but currently lack stable milk prices.
- Milk is shipped out of state, processed, and imported back to our stores.
- Vermont has seen 1500 dairy farms go out of business since 1987.
- Hood and Agri-Mark monopolize the milk market.
- A local processing plant is needed-- possibly a cooperative with 4-6 farms to start.
- The old Agri-Mark building has been stripped of equipment and sold.
- To start, it would be necessary to find a site, construct a building, and find equipment.

- Federal regulations could be rigid - slanted toward large facilities. There needs to be two tiers of regulation, one for small and one for large.
- New equipment is much too expensive. A plant would need to purchase used.
- Making cheese would create a cash flow problem - cheese has to cure 60 days to 6 months.
- There is a financial risk for farmers who cannot go a long period of time without milk checks.
- St. Albans Coop producers are under contract to sell all of their milk to them. It would be good if farmers could use 10% of their milk for value added products and keep rest under contract. Currently the Coop will not release any amount.
- A niche product could be developed and marketed.
- We need to look into value added products. People in Switzerland, for example, make soap and shampoo from whey.
- A plant would need to have to have bottling capability.
- Marketing would be a huge issue. It would take a lot of personal commitment and organization to market, convince stores to sell local milk, and manage the display and rotation of stock.
- Changing people's buying habits would be a challenge.
- Permitting for crossing state lines would be very expensive; it would be more feasible to sell locally, at least at first.
- We would need 2-3 people with a lot of energy, vision and commitment to begin the process. Jack has learned the hard way as he went along - happy to share info.
- It would take a person with excellent vision of project to sell idea to farmers and make it all happen. Leadership is critically important to this kind of success!

Key Challenges Summary

1. With declining milk prices, farmers in the region need to thoroughly evaluate market opportunities for local dairy processing, value added production, and cooperative marketing.
2. Vision, cooperation, and resources will require united leadership to build success.

Resource Team B – Education Issue and Youth Recreation Issue

Jeff Francis, Executive Director, Vermont Superintendents Association (Team Facilitator)

David Tucker, Director, Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity

Carlen Finn, Executive Director, Vermont Children's Forum

Chuck Ross, State Director, Senator Leahy's Office

Candy Koenemann, Executive Assistant, Vermont Council on Rural Development (Scribe)

I. Education Issue Focus Group

*Nancy Allen
Dorothy Barlow
Chris Beaulieu
Jane Boutin
Jim Davis
Donna Dillon
Francis D. Fischer
John Guyette
Patrick Kilday*

*Cindy Laramée
Rosemary Mayhew
R. Bruce McKay
Michael Murphy
Justine Shover
Richard Shover
Eric Snyder
Jim Starr
Rod Weston*

Points of Testimony

Community Strengths

- The Student/Teacher ratio is low.
- There is a high interest at all levels for students to be educated properly.
- There is a new community college in the area, which is growing and attracts high school students.
- There is plenty of outdoor space to learn healthy activities.
- There is proximity to culture (VPR & CBC).
- The new Troy library will be triple the size of the current library.
- Some students come back to the community as teachers.
- The High School has an excellent program to transition students from elementary schools.
- The kids in the community are terrific; they are considered polite and thoughtful.
- The teachers are caring.
- The High School offers a lot of choices and gives much support.
- There are both preschool and after-school programs.
- Parent involvement at the elementary level is good.
- Education is high priority for the community and provides resource access to a broad range of age groups. (Example: elders and students can access computers and Internet in the library.)

Challenges in this Issue Area

- Some students suffer from the lack of parental support.

- Communities differ in willingness to bear the cost. (Example: Westfield residents passed school budget at a 4:1 ratio; Jay residents tried to defeat the budget due to dissatisfaction with Act 60. Jay has to send money to Sharing Pool.)
- There is a frustration with federal and state mandates which lack attached funding sources.
- The community needs better communication about the Community College and its offerings to let people know of availability.
- One resident expressed concern about educating parents and students about problems related to drugs, alcohol, some student behavior, poor student nutrition, need to promote physical fitness and reduce info overload/stimulation from television, videos, etc.
- Some residents are concerned about poor behavior and potential violence from some students.
- Several residents commented about the need to find mechanisms to be more efficient in the delivery of education, especially with the current economic situation. The community should do more with less and maximize usage by informing the public about what is available.
- The need for more school space was expressed several times.
- Education programs need to be directed toward technology and more modern job fields.
- There is a need to develop a curriculum that works for future job opportunities; there is a concern that too much time is given to “old” history and reading of “too much” Shakespeare when classroom time is so limited.
- Reading and writing should be emphasized to prepare students to be successful at high school and beyond.
- Special need students take away resources from the majority of the student population. Residents want to find another way to address these needs.
- Student transportation needs to be changed; students spend too much time on the bus.
- Literature and Arts need to be kept in the curriculum and not targeted for budget cuts.
- The schools should find creative ways to integrate arts for applied credits, such as history credit for studying art history.
- The schools should apply for grants (as for the new library) to bring more technology into the schools.
- Elementary schools are a combination of grades from K-6 and K-8. The community needs to address the challenges of transitioning and consider an area middle school.
- Many adults and students feel that too much homework is assigned; a population of students do not receive parental support and sometimes students stay home from school because they are too tired to get up the next day.
- Parental involvement seems to follow socio-economic lines and needs to be improved.
- There is a shortage of qualified teachers due to low pay, location, and the expense to advertise vacancies. VT’s teaching waiver requirements make hiring difficult; restricting teachers to specific grade levels prohibits the flexible use of current staff and potential candidates. (High School had 18 teachers on waivers last year.)
- There is a need to consider distance learning opportunities for subjects such as technology.

Key Challenges Summary

1. There is a need to improve the school curriculum through a review and planning process to take advantage of distance learning opportunities, update the curriculum, and focus educational resources to meet the needs of students in the 21st Century.
2. A regional middle school could have a major potential to boost the area's educational offerings.
3. Parental involvement in the schools should be systematically improved: a Parent Teachers Organization or booster club could help promote and support the school and youth activities; there is strong sentiment that this would help address problems related to poor behavior and vandalism.

II. Youth Recreation Issue Focus Group

*Chris Beaulieu
Jane Beaulieu
Paul Bosco
Jim Davis
Donna Dillon
Patrick Kilday*

*Sam Leary
Rosemary Mayhew
Margaret Meunier
Tom Velk
Graham Wingate
Jesse Wingate*

Points of Testimony

Community Strengths

- Little League is available (but participating numbers are decreasing).
- There is a good Junior Hoop League.
- Several residents praised the qualified instruction available in martial arts.
- Private funding provides a strong tennis program and tennis courts in North Troy.
- There is a fine nature trail off Dominion Avenue, but needs to be part of the town budget to ensure proper maintenance.
- Diverse sports are available in the area (skiing, soccer, tennis, hiking, snowmobiling).
- Jay Peak provides a nice ski area and offers a program for schools.
- The area is in close proximity to IROC sports complex.
- The Jay Athletic Association (JAA) provides support and interesting activities for youth.
- One resident is in the process of applying to a grant to provide an art guild and gallery with the intent of including a youth section and allowing a young person to serve on its Board.
- Many artists of different types live in the area and could potentially be activity resources.
- Hunting and fishing opportunities are available.

- Ice hockey is well established for boys, and girls' hockey (grades 4-12, as well as adult women) is developing and growing.

Challenges in this Issue Area

- Some activity fees are too high and prohibit some children from participating. Grants or sliding fees should be established.
- Sports should be promoted more for fun rather than as pressurized measures of achievement.
- Cross-generational understanding is needed so that youth needs are not ignored.
- The community needs to support multiple activities such as Halloween parties to help discourage juvenile crime.
- Funding to provide law enforcement in the community is needed.
- Many residents are concerned about how to prevent vandalism by students and young adults.
- The nature trail suffers from misuse through inappropriate activities such as snowmobiling and 4 Wheelers, thus prohibiting non-motorized use.
- There is a need to explore possibility of converting a vacant building to use as an indoor recreational area for skateboarding, rollerblading, and biking.
- Transportation needs to be established to the Newport area so youth can access activities.
- It's tough to recruit enough kids to generate interest in a variety of activities.
- Towns cannot afford to add money to budget to start up a recreational facility.
- An IROC representative explained their intent to find funding to develop IROC facility into a community center; the lack of transportation for the community would limit number of youth who could participate.
- Car pooling is not the answer since personality conflicts will impact who can ride with certain drivers.
- The "criminal element" from drop-outs and older negative role models causes a division among the youth.
- A mentoring program is needed in the area.
- A band stage where arts and music could be performed should be developed for dances and other community activities.
- Funding must be found for the maintenance of basketball hoops and tennis courts.
- The community must promote youth ownership and positive behavior and reduce vandalism.
- A place should be identified for pick up street hockey.
- IROC is willing to serve as a resource for funding ideas and strategies.
- The IROC representative suggested that community members should present a challenge to VT officials. Newport Correctional Center provides one of the best recreational facilities (costing 7.8 million dollars to build) for the use of inmates but the state provides no funding resources for recreational purposes for law-abiding youth. Providing wholesome recreational opportunities for youth serves to prevent crime rather than "rewarding" inmates who are incarcerated for crimes.

Key Challenges Summary

1. A Youth/Adult Recreation Committee is needed to coordinate activities, including outdoor recreation and arts/music events, especially for older teens.
2. There is no public transportation for young people to get to Newport or IROC.
3. There is a common concern about vandalism and petty crime and interest in improved law enforcement and alternative activities for youth.

Resource Team C – Village Restoration & Beautification/Housing Issues, and Town/Village Merger Issue,

Hal Cohen – Executive Director, Central Vermont Community Action Council (Team Facilitator)

Al Perry, Richford Community Leader

Ed Stretch – Executive Director, Gilman Housing Trust

Bob McDonald, Vermont Housing Director, USDA Rural Development

Jason Duquette-Hoffman, UVM Center for Rural Studies (Scribe)

I. Village Restoration & Beautification/Housing Issues Focus Group

Jane Beaulieu

Marie Bonneau

Sharon Diner

Frank Douglas

George Douglas

Sam Leary

Irene McDermot

Anne McKay

Jim McKimm

Georgia Pancoast

Nancy T. Pelletier

Mal T. Roy

Mary Santaw

Chris Sellers

Denise Wilkins

Points of Testimony

Community Strengths

- Troy/Westfield/Jay are in a beautiful area.
- There are many talented hard-working people in the community.
- There are good natural resources.
- There is adequate sewer and water.

- The hydro plant used to furnish electricity to all of N. Troy and Westfield.
- While beautification is an issue, there are nice homes and historical homes in the area.
- Village has acquired excellent space for the new and expanded library.
- There are public tennis courts, nature trails, the river, and Jay Peak for residents to use.
- The new golf course at Jay will be one of many recreational opportunities in the region which should boost the tourist economy.
- The covered bridge is beautiful but its upkeep is a concern.
- The “Big Falls” natural resource area is a real asset to the community.

Challenges in this Issue Area

- Trash is a concern; people are just dumping trash.
- Businesses are leaving town: St. Marie’s Market, Poulin Lumber, Chittenden Bank have all left.
- There is an abandoned building on Railroad Street.
- Those buildings that are not abandoned are not being kept up (primarily in N. Troy).
- Enforcement of laws is lax around ordinances about dumping, trash, abandoned housing, housing codes and zoning.
- Troy seems to be getting better, but No. Troy seems to be getting worse.
- There’s blight on Railroad Street.
- Affordable housing is an issue in Jay; it is all seasonal housing with no rental opportunities. Renters come from Newport area.
- There is too much truck traffic through the community and truckers don’t obey speed limits.
- A number one challenge is to fix up the buildings in N. Troy; adding sidewalks would be nice, but people don’t have the money.
- There are no resources to fix up buildings.
- There is no motivation to fix up homes because afterwards residents’ or landlords’ property taxes go up.
- The border used to be a benefit, but is not any more because of the current exchange rates.
- Residents wonder why border towns in Canada look better. There seems to be a better mindset and economy across the border.
- A Lister commented that, “a lot of older folks don’t have the money—there are lower appraisals due to decline in values”. This is becoming a problem for paying for services.
- People are discouraged; some feel they will never be able to sell their homes. Some stated reason for the declining appearance of North Troy Village was due to job and economic issues and the lack of investment by absentee landlord/owners. However, the Lister stated that 65-75% of homes are owner-occupied.
- North Troy does not have a good reputation.
- There is no signage in the village to let people know what is available—ie. the nature trail or the falls on the Missisquoi.
- There is no real presence of services in town for seniors in the community.
- Leadership is an issue. There were some mixed signals by long-time residents over stewardship and environmental concerns. A tension has developed between the freedom

to do as you wish, championed by native residents, and new residents who want changes and laws to be upheld to clean up area. An example is the presence of junk cars or excess cars on properties throughout the area.

- The speed limit is not enforced in the North Troy Village
- “The state ignores the Northeast Kingdom.”

Key Challenges Summary

1. North Troy needs a “Downtown Committee” to plan and to lead beautification efforts, to spruce up the appearance of the Village, refurbish housing stock, and address issues of signage and traffic.
2. A Senior Housing and services facility would serve the needs of older residents of the area and could be an anchor in a North Troy revitalization effort.

II. Town / Village Merger Issue Focus Group

*Terry Albee
Nancy Allen
Mary Bonneau
Lucille Cadieux
Frank Douglas
Tom Gailitis*

*Roland Mayhew
R. Bruce McKay
Ruth Place
Richard G. Shover Jr.
Rod Weston*

Points of Testimony

Community Strengths

- Existing Town and Village equipment is in relatively good condition. The Village hires the Town to do the grading, otherwise each are independent of each other.
- The Town has a planning committee and zoning board, but the Village does not have a separate committee.
- The Lister serves all of Troy, both Town and Village.
- The school in the Village serves all of Troy and N. Troy.
- Extracurricular activities are conjoined.
- Town and Village have their own water and sewer.
- The library in North Troy is funded by the three towns; the new facility is to be located in N. Troy.
- The villagers pay Town and Village taxes.
- The Village has a historical society that serves the broader community.

- Each has a clerk (Village Clerk and Town Clerk).
- Both Town and Village have churches.
- The fire departments could work more closely together.
- The Town has the Board of Selectmen and the Village has Trustees.
- The Police Department has a Sheriff; Village and Town pay their share.
- Dates of Incorporation are 1803 for the Town and 1806 for the Village.
- Troy has excess sewer capacity but limited water.
- N. Troy has excess water capacity.
- Both Town and Village services are housed in the Village.

Challenges in this Issue Area

- One challenge would be to convince residents that a merger would be beneficial.
- A merger might mean less political wrangling over services and make economic development efforts more united.
- People would envision some loss of village identity--or it could be other way around.
- Townspeople would fear taxes could go up.
- The tax burden is a concern. The Village has more to gain financially since currently they pay more, due to Village taxes, and all new development (and therefore tax base) is going in the outskirts--which is the Town's.
- The Village has quite a list of non-taxable property.
- There has never before been a vote over a merger; there has not really been a thorough cost/benefit study.
- The two boards have not always been able to agree on goals.
- Currently there are two political boards which don't always see eye to eye.
- It can be very difficult to get people involved, as evidenced by the very few residents running for public office positions—there's little turnover.
- The School Board could serve as a model since it serves both Village and Town.
- One misperception today is that people in the Village cannot serve on the Town Selectboard—it is the other way around—Town people cannot serve as Village Trustees (who have to be from the Village).
- No one from the Village is currently on the Town board.
- There are no doctors or health services in Troy or North Troy.
- A real estate agent commented that, “you don't want to buy in North Troy”.
- The stigma of North Troy is major issue.
- It is the Town's responsibility to enforce zoning. If there was a merger maybe more emphasis would be put on this.
- Apathy is a lasting result of all the economic setbacks.
- There's a political division between North and South.
- There seems to be more apathy at Village of North Troy annual meeting than at the Town of Troy annual meeting since there is not much attendance at North Troy meeting.
- The Selectboard and Trustees are not currently co-located. It could be advantageous to co-locate.

Key Challenges Summary

1. A Troy Town and North Troy Village merger could have many benefits economically, in the community's sense of momentum, and potentially for the community's sense of being unified and working together in the best interests of all residents.
2. There has not been a full cost/benefit analysis of whether a merger would make good economic sense.
3. The issue of a merger has never been put before residents of the full Troy community.

Resource Team D – Diversified Agriculture Issue and Tourist Economy Issue

Jolinda LaClair – State Director, USDA Rural Development (Team Facilitator)

Bill Kurtz – Chief of Staff, Senator Jeffords Office

Fred Schmidt – Director, UVM Center for Rural Studies

Louise Calderwood, Deputy Commissioner, VT Department of Agriculture

Mary Paull, Economic Coordinator, Northeast VT Development Association, (Scribe)

I. Diversified Agriculture Issue Focus Group

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Jacques Couture

Gerard Croizet

Laini Fondiller

Harold Haynes

Bobby Judd

Dianne Laplante

Jack Lazor

Camilla Mead

Lois Proctor

Dexter Randall

Jeanne Rogers

Robert Starr

Points of Testimony

Community Strengths

- The area has a good land base.
- Diversified agricultural operations are assets.
- In general there are good soils.
- The area has good forest resources for the production of maple syrup, timber, and other forest products.
- We have a good draw of tourists who consume our products.
- We have sewer facilities built to handle milk processing.
- Area residents are hard working people who need an honest day's pay.
- There is good land that can be leased.

- We have people who are accustomed to the noise and smells of agriculture. They have good community spirit and support agriculture.
- Neighbors work hard and work together; you are not all alone as a farmer.
- Because of the diversity of the farmers, machine dealers are nearby.
- One of the last slaughterhouses in Vermont is close by.
- There is a proximity to the interstate for shipping.
- Fall foliage is a great asset. Keep the rural landscape as it is!
- The quality of the workforce for agriculture is good.
- The region has clean air and clean water.
- The proximity to Canada provides opportunities for agriculture and tourism to intersect.
- Transportation is generally good, and at reasonable rates.

Challenges in this Issue Area

- Access to markets is limited.
- We are a net exporting entity (buy retail, sell wholesale).
- We are losing places of employment; need industry, good pay.
- The region cannot compete with Canadian market prices.
- Labor: Because farms cannot generate enough products and enough profits, farmers cannot pay high wages.
- It is challenging to plan for diversity, to think out of the box.
- Education for young people in agriculture is being neglected; we have lost agriculture programs in the schools.
- Most people don't want to work.
- Workers compensation rates are difficult to deal with.
- If there isn't a true financial incentive and possibility of profit, farmers won't continue farming. It's a question for some today, for others in the future.
- The Interstate provides north/south transportation, but east/west is a problem.
- The consumer/customer should be educated to eat locally grown foods.
- TV marketing of foods is a problem.
- Image/competition issue (other syrups).
- The regulatory process is tilted toward large industry. There should be a two-tiered regulatory system that recognizes differences between small and large farms and makes it easier for small farms to market from the farm.
- We are losing young people who go to urban areas for higher paying jobs.
- The region should create/develop a market and the ability to have a processing plant so we can get our products into general stores, schools, hospitals, and other local food supply systems. This could start with a small dairy processing facility to process milk products. If successful, other farmers could be encouraged to participate. This would help sustain the agricultural base in this community.
- The region needs a fast freeze operation like the VT Food Venture Center.
- Set up so that farmers can process their own milk (*a feasibility study now in progress on this*).

- A regional dairy cooperative would provide better competition for where you can sell your milk (there are only 3 choices now).
- It is necessary to educate people on how to price their products, even with higher prices.
- Pasteurizing set up is needed for small operations. Get the Dept. of Agriculture to define pasteurization.
- Could there be a mobile processor for pasteurizing?
- FDA permanent water supply: Vegetable farmers are not treated the same as dairy.
- The Dairy Compact needs to be set back the way it was.
- Cooperation in support of agriculture should extend through home ► town ► county ► state ► federal.
- Resources are needed to explore new value-added possibilities, i.e. microbrewery, or new crops.

Key Challenges Summary

1. Market analysis is needed to determine realistic opportunities for the competitive production value-added agricultural products in the area.
2. A cooperative team of interested farmers with technical support studying this issue could help to build the leadership needed for success.

II. Tourist Economy Issue Focus Group

*Todd Alix
Dorothy Barlow
Bob Beerworth
Jane Boutin
Gerard Croizte
Sharon Dinet
George Douglas
Pat Ferguson*

*Francis D. Fischer
Emeline Harmon
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Jim McKimm
Camilla Mead
Mike Murphy
Zachary Pratt
Bill Stenger*

Points of Testimony

Community Strengths

- PEOPLE are the first strength! Residents are friendly, outgoing, interested/interesting, and can listen.
- There is great natural beauty in the Missisquoi valley.
- One strength is also a weakness: the lack of industry (industry spoils the beauty).
- The area has good accessibility to market (8 hours to 72 million people).

- Tourism and the agricultural industry have an opportunity to work together.
- Artists, arts, and crafts shows could grow.
- There are some year-long activities.
- The Canadian border is close.
- The quality of life is laid back, with a different kind of stress than urbanized areas.
- You get a good value for your dollar (restaurants, lodging, etc.).
- People like farm vacations for the peace and quiet.
- The type of people who come here is impressive. They don't need gift shops and night clubs.
- Jay Peak has increased skier-days from 150K to 300K in two years.
- This is an enormous turning point at Jay Peak. The golf course will be the summer anchor.
- JPAA's Summer Fest is a great resource.

Challenges in this Issue Area

- Environmental challenges are significant! If we lose what we have, we have lost what would attract people. Issues of air pollution, acid rain, over- and improper development are concerns.
- The weakness of the Canadian dollar limits the region's appeal to our northern neighbors.
- Inconsistencies of lodging calendars may limit year-round appeal.
- Canadians are organized and cohesive. When they have (arts and crafts) shows they are taking advantage of restaurants and boutiques for a two week period.
- We don't promote other seasons as well as winter.
- We don't promote organic farming or farm visits in any kind of systematic way.
- There are natural wonders, i.e. Big Falls, that only WE see.
- Energy. NEK imports from Canada.
- We do not know resources for information such as wind opportunities.
- There are not enough things to draw people for family stays, longer stays.
- We don't do enough common packaging of what we have so that all benefit.
- The inns and lodging are substandard.
- There's a lack of bed space.
- Small businesses need the same tax incentives as big business, but don't get them.
- The region's accessibility limits its draw.
- There's a danger of marketing something we do not yet have.
- The region shouldn't market in a transparent way like Smugglers.
- Communications (up and down) are inadequate.
- We should market what we have via the internet.
- The State of Vermont has restrictions on its tourism-related website.
- The landfill close to Newport State Airport in Coventry is a drawback.
- There could be a Bike Trail down the mountain that would stop at all businesses. It could be 20 miles long.
- We should market our area to the Montreal population.
- Downtown Bill?
- Tax credits are not accessed.

- The region needs an agro-tourism initiative.
- The Regional Marketing Organization is not serving the needs—it should be strengthened.
- The region should systematically promote music, arts, and culture.
- Signage is currently inadequate.
- The community should research money for tourism locally.
- The railroad should be developed.
- We need to package what exists.
- Targeted marketing should be attempted.
- Training for needs assessment surveys could help the area meet market needs.
- The area should seek a grant for training for businesses on setting up new website(s) for internet marketing.

Key Challenges Summary

1. The region doesn't currently take systematic advantage of agro-tourism opportunities; a local agro-tourism planning group should be formed for communications and cooperative marketing with Jay Peak's year-round resort campaign. As Jay Peak works towards successful year-round resort operations, the regional community should work systematically to integrate tourism-related businesses with the resort's planning and marketing.
2. Arts, music and cultural organizations should work together to develop, obtain funding, schedule, and market cultural activities for residents and tourists alike.

VI. Resource Team Members

1. Community Visit Day Focus Group Team

**This team met with community members in eight focus sessions on
April 1, 2002**

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Resource Day Visitors

This team met with Task Force Members to build action steps and review potential resources on May 15, 2002

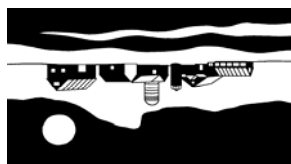
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