

Brighton Community Visit

Report and Action Plan ~ January 2017



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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Vermont Council on Rural Development

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Top, then left to right: Two of six focus forums on Community Visit Day; Community members came together for a community dinner on Community Visit Day; Community members read the opportunities list and then participated in a dot-voting exercise on Community Meeting Day to select their top priorities for action.

I. Introduction

On Community Visit Day, over 130 Brighton residents poured in to the American Legion. Long lines of community members formed to fill up plates with a delicious meal, prepared and served by legion volunteers with support from a long list of local businesses, organizations, and individuals. As people of all ages found their way to overflowing tables filled with laughter and animated conversation, students from Brighton Elementary School serenaded the crowd. That community dinner in October perfectly illustrates the Brighton Community. Brighton is a hardworking town with determination and dedication to do what it takes to succeed. This is also a community full of heart, pride, and a readiness to support each other, take care of one another, and celebrate together. VCRD and the Visiting Team were so impressed by Brighton residents' willingness, not only to show up on behalf of the town, but to sign on to take action on community initiatives in the work ahead.

Located along the shores of beautiful Island Pond and nestled among the rolling hills and rivers that define the region, the Village of Island Pond is a picturesque community and commercial hub. Recreation opportunities are endless; from the newly renovated municipal gym, to town beaches, and basketball courts to the plethora of opportunities for canoeing, kayaking, hunting, snowmobiling, hiking, biking and more. Popular community events such as the Fourth of July Parade, Friday Night Live, the Winter Carnival, Market Day, the Pondathon and more bring residents together to celebrate and highlight all that the community has to offer. Brighton has faced its share of challenges over the years, but the town's long list of assets, and its dedicated residents, contribute to quality of life and positions the town for success as they pursue their collective goals into the future.

Community Visits are designed to help communities come together, review major issues, develop priorities and line up for action, but the process also aims to engage more community members, build local leadership, and help to make connections to human, technical, and financial resources from lead agencies and organizations in the state. With over 160 local people participating in the process and over 70 volunteers now engaged in active Task Forces to advance priorities, it is clear that there is great energy in Brighton for forward momentum and progress.

* * * * *

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

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

- **Advance a Brighton Recreation Program**
- **Revitalize and Beautify the Downtown**
- **Make Brighton an ATV Destination**
- **Support Business Growth and Economic Development**

The Task Forces advancing these issues are already hard at work—please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report).

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. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Brighton as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to the Brighton Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Brighton projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

* * * * *

There are many people to thank for making this Community Visit effort possible.

We would like to thank the Brighton Select Board who initially invited this process. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process from the beginning including; Joel Cope, Tom Donnellan, Melinda Gervais-Lemoureaux, Melanie Halpern, Bill Hawkins, Bill Manning, Ephrayim Masse, Doug Niles, Tim O’Bar, Gina O’Keefe, Denise Russell, Mike Strait, Adam Sykes, and Magnolia Wolf. Thank you also to all of the community leaders, groups, and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the event and made sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

We are very thankful for the use of community spaces for the Community Visit meetings including the Island Pond Welcome Center, the Brighton Town Hall, Sunrise Manor, the Island Pond Library, and Brighton Elementary School. In particular, we would like to thank Tom Donnellan and the team at the American Legion for organizing a wonderful community dinner with financial support from the American Legion Post #80, the Town of Brighton, the Island Pond Chamber, Brighton Lake Senior Center, and Brighton Garage. Thank you also to the incredible staff and students at the Brighton Elementary school who organized and served a delicious community meal for the Community Meeting night.

Michael Moser and the UVM Center for Rural Studies are terrific allies in our efforts and we appreciate their help building a briefing profile for the VCRD Community Visit Team.

Thanks must also go to USDA Rural Development, the Community National Bank, and the Northeast Kingdom Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation who all contributed funding to make this process possible

VCRD calls state, federal and non-profit leaders to participate in Community Visit processes. We are proud of the partners we get to work with—and especially the Brighton Visiting Team—they are the best of Vermont’s public servants.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Brighton should be grateful to those who’ve stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Jane Jacobs: Economic Development; Brandy Goulet, Maggie Machinist, and Luke O’Brien: Recreation; Reno Gervais, Bob Dexter, and Stacey Roese: ATV Destination; and Mike Strait: Revitalize Downtown.

VCRD especially wants to thank Doug Niles for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Chair. Doug has been an incredible partner and ally throughout this process. He is a strong and dedicated leader that commits much of his time and energy to the Brighton community. We deeply appreciate Doug’s thoughtful contributions to the process as well as his willingness to take on any task

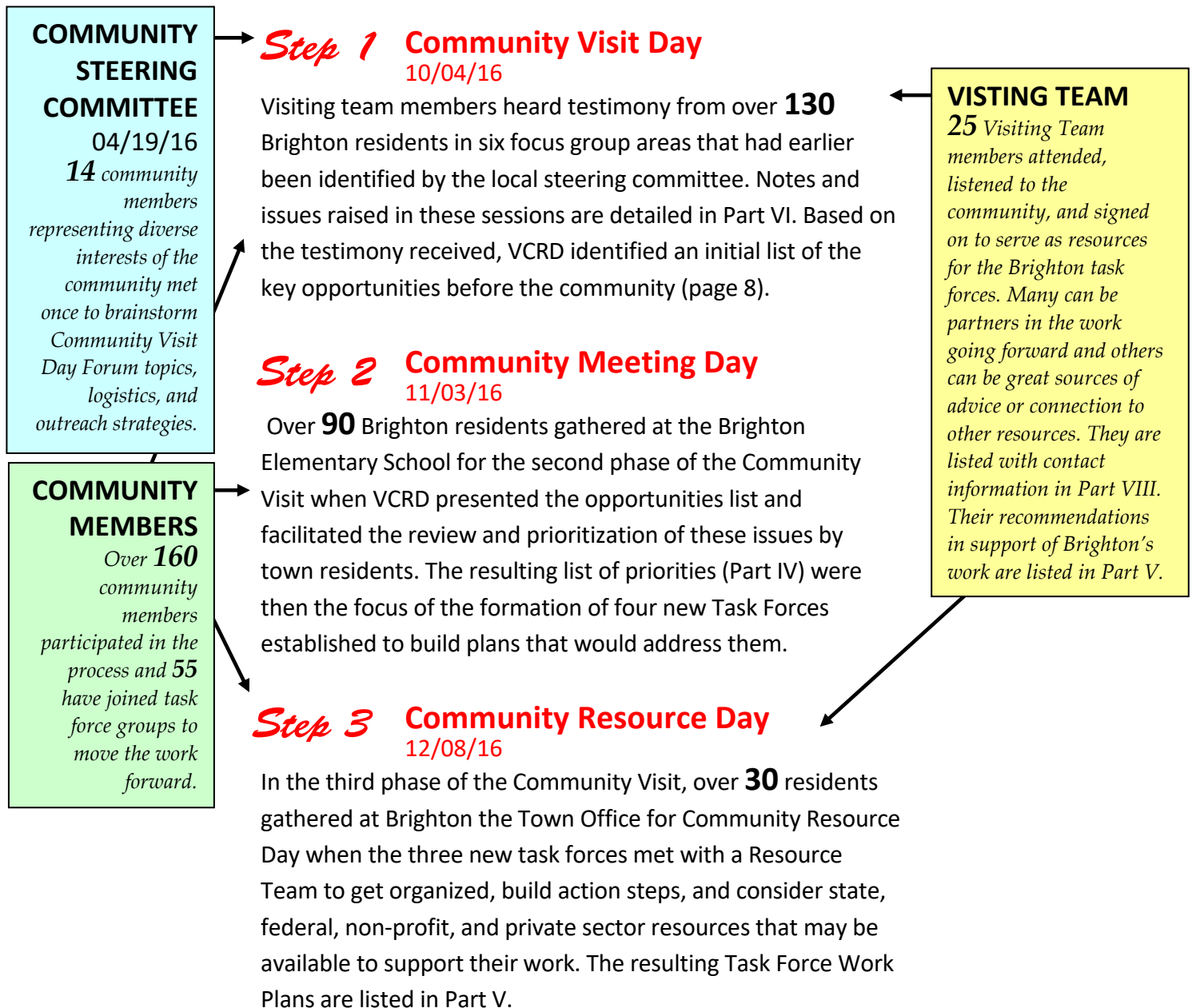
to ensure each event and meeting was a success, and everyone's voice was heard. It has been a pleasure to work with Doug and we are more than confident in his ability to lead and coordinate the work ahead.

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



II. The Brighton Community Visit Process

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



III. Vision for Brighton's Future

These points of vision were compiled from vision statements that were shared during the Community Meeting on November 3rd and supported by the majority of participants at the December 8th Resource Meeting and an online survey. The statements represent broad hopes that the majority of responding residents have for the long term good of the Brighton community.

Brighton residents look to a future for the community where:

- ❖ Brighton is economically and environmentally sustainable.
- ❖ Brighton is a vibrant and compact downtown community surrounded by a rural and working landscape.
- ❖ The lake and water quality are protected into the future.
- ❖ There are a variety of ways to participate in the natural beauty that surrounds Island Pond. Residents take part in physical activities, such as hiking, that connect them to its natural assets.
- ❖ Brighton is family-oriented with activities and events that bring people of all ages to town.
- ❖ Brighton is a community that is well-connected with active and engaged citizens and community volunteers. Residents communicate with and support one another, and actively reach out and welcome new folks to town.
- ❖ Brighton residents have access to fresh and local fruits and vegetables.
- ❖ Youth are connected to the community and the School is a center point of community connection and engagement.
- ❖ The children know the history of Island Pond, and their connection to place helps them appreciate and protect it for the future.
- ❖ Brighton's community of writers, crafters, singers, and other artists contribute to a thriving art culture.
- ❖ Island Pond is a place of natural beauty and simplicity; a place we come home to.

IV. Brighton Priorities

Determined by Brighton residents at the VCRD Community Meeting, November 3, 2016

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Brighton community members whittled down a list of 17 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with red and blue stickers, over 90 participants chose four action ideas that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the November 3rd meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Brighton residents selected four priorities for future action:

✓ Advance a Brighton Recreation Program

Brighton residents of all ages share a fondness for the natural beauty of the region and the plethora of hiking, skiing, biking, hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling opportunities. The town also has quality recreational infrastructure including several public beaches, two campgrounds, a playground, basketball courts, ice skating rink, and a community gym in the Town Hall. Given all of these assets, residents feel a coordinated recreation program would help to better engage residents, especially youth, in accessing these resources and providing more opportunities for community gathering, recreation, and fun! A Brighton Recreation Task Force could form to implement recreation programming for all ages including dances, community events, sports and games, laser tag, movie nights, music programs, outdoor programming and more. The group could also work to expand outdoor recreation including trails, bikeways, mountain biking, and paths. Some residents are also interested in exploring the possibility of a Brighton skate park. The group could work with the Town to identify funding sources to hire a recreation coordinator to develop and administer these programs.

✓ Revitalize and Beautify the Downtown

Brighton's walkable downtown at the edge of beautiful Island Pond is a tremendous asset. Several local businesses, banks, a grocery store, and dining options as well as a town green, a playground, a place for live music, and even a skating rink in the winter all contribute to a vibrant downtown. But some say these assets are underutilized and point to vacant storefronts that are looking run-down. Residents feel that a coordinated effort is needed to improve and revitalize the downtown to better leverage and market these assets. A Downtown Task Force could form to work with community members and outside experts to develop a strategic plan and identify funding sources to enhance and beautify Island Pond's downtown as well as build strategies in partnership with the municipal government toward the redevelopment of blighted properties. The group could focus on improvements in physical infrastructure such as sidewalks, water and sewer, as well as aesthetic features such as trees, flower plantings, or showcasing local artwork. The group could work to make the downtown vibrant and dynamic for residents, as well as branding and marketing efforts to attract visitors and new businesses.

✓ Make Brighton an ATV Destination

Many Brighton residents are interested in expanding their existing network of ATV trails to improve recreation for residents, attract visitors to town, and expand economic opportunities. The tri-county ATV Club is already hard at work to build connections with surrounding networks in Vermont and New

Hampshire, maintain existing trails, and explore opportunities for expansion. A task force of community members could lend support to, strengthen, and work with the ATV Club in developing and improving the ATV trail network, in an environmentally and community conscious way, to make Brighton a premier ATV destination and model for Vermont.

✓ **Support Business Growth and Economic Development**

Brighton is a town with several key economic assets including a scenic location, proximity to year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, a quality school, two campgrounds, Sweet Tree Maple, rail and air access, an active Chamber of Commerce, and a walkable downtown with a variety of local businesses. Residents would like to leverage those assets to grow their economy and find ways to enhance their downtown, boost commerce, and attract new residents and businesses. A new Task Force could develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to boost economic development in the town including identifying financing or tax credit opportunities for downtown businesses, attracting industry to the region to boost commerce and create jobs, and marketing to attract new and diverse businesses to town that will be attractive to both residents and visitors. It could also evaluate the opportunity to build a revolving loan fund to support building redevelopment, business start-ups, and growing enterprises in town. Some ideas residents shared for desirable new businesses include a kayak or outdoor retailer or rental businesses, industry or manufacturing, new and diverse dining options, a café, or a local brewery.



Brighton residents shared their enthusiasm for a suggestion from the floor at the Community Meeting on Nov 3rd.

Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

Along with the four chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action that community members shared on Community Visit Day. Though these opportunities weren't chosen as priority projects through this process, community members may find the list useful as they look to expand on current projects or take on new ones.

Improve Community Communications

Residents of Brighton recognize and celebrate the many community activities and services available in town. Many community members participate in Market Day, Pond Fest, Friday Night Live, and the Fourth of July parade and fireworks. The town has a thriving school community that frequently holds concerts, meals, and other events, while other groups such as the American Legion, the Library, the Historical Society or the Chamber often host community events and programming. Residents feel that if these activities and events were better advertised and shared, more would take part, and the community would be better able to connect and gather. Many also feel that residents should be made aware of resources and services that are available to individuals and families that may need help. A group could come together to improve community communications with a community calendar, Front Porch Forum, social media, a community newsletter and other ways to share information.

Start a Brighton Arts Committee

A Brighton Arts Committee could be formed to promote the arts community in town. Residents see an opportunity to boost recognition of local crafts and artists by building an organized group to plan and publicize events such as arts and crafts fairs or pop-up art showings.

Build a Brighton Community Center

Brighton residents would like to see a gathering place in town to come together as a community in a laid back, safe, and comfortable space. A Community Center could provide unstructured games and activities for youth as well as organized, drop-in programming for all ages. The space could also serve as an event venue for youth dances or movie nights as well as community educational or recreational programs. A task force could come together to build and implement a plan to create a community space for Brighton residents either through the renovation and repurposing of an existing building or space, or designing a new community space.

Improve Public Transportation

Brighton residents expressed frustration with the lack of public transportation and the challenges of getting around without a vehicle to points both in and outside of town. A Public Transportation Task Force could identify ways to increase public transportation options such as working with RCT and surrounding communities to expand routes and service. The group could also build a community-led ridesharing program and explore the potential of passenger rail.

Beautify the Downtown

A Downtown Beautification Task Force could form to improve the look and vibrancy of downtown Island Pond. The group could organize work events and volunteers to plant flowers and trees; build benches, a mini park or fountain; or showcase local artwork. The group could also coordinate with local landlords and business owners to support improvements of downtown buildings and storefronts.

Expand Mountain Biking Opportunities

With ample public land, proximity to the popular and growing Kingdom Trails, and the natural beauty of the region, Brighton could be well situated to become a mountain bike destination. A Brighton Bike Club or task force that includes community members of all ages could form to improve and expand mountain biking opportunities in Brighton, build trails and maps, make connections to other biking destinations in the region, and market the area to bikers. The group could coordinate with the Town as well as negotiate with state and federal land management entities to broaden areas of bike access and partner with them to share the unique assets the community has to offer.

Improve Paths, Walkways, and Trails

With a scenic and walkable downtown, a lakeside walking path, and stunning mountain and forest scenery, Brighton is truly a beautiful community. Residents would like to capitalize, protect, and promote the beauty of their town, enhance recreation opportunities, and build walkable connections by improving trails, paths, and walkways. A Boardwalk on South Street could offer residents and visitors spectacular views, while a trail connecting the downtown and the School could provide easier access for students walking to school or to the recreation fields. A task force could form to identify strategies and resources to improve and expand trails and walkways, map them, and expand access and use for residents and visitors alike.

Address Substance Abuse

Brighton residents of all ages expressed concern about the use of drugs and alcohol in the community. Some see their neighbors, family, and friends struggling and worry about the impact that could have on the wellbeing and safety of the community. Residents recognize that there are services available, but are concerned that access to and availability of these services are limited, and there is no coordinated and collaborative effort to unite and move forward around a common vision to address this challenge. A Substance Abuse Task Force could form to better coordinate and communicate existing efforts and serve as the focal group to unite the community to reduce substance abuse and addiction. Tasks may include connecting and partnering with service providers to increase access; implementing community education and training; creating a parent or family support group or counseling program; and building community openness, unity, and support.

Develop a Community Mentorship and Career Development Program

Recognizing the desire to expand education beyond the classroom and that Brighton is a community full of folks with diverse skills and occupations, residents see an opportunity to better connect the schools and youth with the community and improve career development through mentorship and a summer job program. The program could focus on career and skill-building matches, as well as work to build social connections through a big brother/big sister type program that pairs students with parents, grand-parents, older students and/or other community members. A Task Force could work closely with the Brighton School to build a mentorship network pairing students with skilled mentors in the community, internship opportunities in local businesses and organizations, and connections with other community members.

Expand Community Learning and Career Opportunities

Brighton residents expressed an interest in workshops, programs, and activities to learn new skills and provide educational and career-training opportunities for all ages. A Brighton Lifelong Learning Task

Force could come together to plan and implement community workshops and activities in collaboration with regional higher education institutions, especially trade school and vocational programs. The group could partner with regional education providers such as NEK Learning Services, trade schools, and other programs to offer local educational opportunities as well as connect with and enhance career development services.

Advance Natural Resource Conservation

The beauty of the landscape, forests, rivers, lakes, farmland and other natural resources are a critical component of Brighton's community identity. Many residents expressed the desire to ensure that these important natural resources are protected, maintained, and appropriately used for years to come. Some residents also expressed a desire to explore avenues to purchase and conserve the island in Island Pond, which is currently for sale. A Natural Resource Task Force could form to play a convening role, bringing together community, state, and federal stakeholders to develop and implement a strategic plan around the conservation and use of the land, water, and other resources. Additionally, the group could provide educational opportunities for residents and landowners as well as serve as the community touchstone for coordination with state and federal planning and processes.

Build a Formal School and Community Partnership

Brighton residents are proud of their school, care deeply about their youth, and want to provide students with every possible opportunity. Residents love the sense of community and personalized attention that a small school can offer as well as the outstanding teachers and staff that work hard each day to provide students with a quality education. Many residents, both those connected to the school and other community members, would like to build a stronger connection and partnership between the school and the community. Many see the school as a key touchstone of community life, and feel that connecting more to the diverse skills and assets of the community would enhance educational opportunities and develop more chances to learn outside of the classroom. A School and Community Partnership could form (perhaps building on and expanding the existing Home and School Association) to work to "bring the school into the community and the community into the school" by expanding ways to get students into learning and community service activities in town and get Brighton residents into the school to help enrich diverse student experiences. Some strategies may include developing a skill-sharing and mentorship program, increasing volunteerism in the school and in the community, and connecting with Sunrise Manor and other organizations to build multigenerational programming. The Partnership could also serve as a welcoming committee to reach out to new residents to share information about the school, the community, and opportunities to engage.

Advance the Tourism Economy

With its beautiful natural setting, lake, hills and forests, Brighton is situated to be a magnet to tourists seeking authentic natural experiences of the beauty of Vermont. A task force could engage to ensure that the town is on the tourist's map! It could develop projects including building a kiosk to share events, amenities and local attractions, a map of trails and businesses, and a walking tour to showcase the town's assets.

V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, December 8, 2016

Brighton Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. On Resource Day committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small visiting resource teams to develop step-by-step action plans and a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. This final phase of the program marks the time when residents truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.

✓ Task Force: Advance a Brighton Recreation Program

Chairperson: **Maggie Machinist, Brandy Goulet, and Luke O'Brien**

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

Resource Leaders: **Betsy Terry**, *Executive Director, VT Recreation and Parks Association*

Brighton residents of all ages share a fondness for the natural beauty of the region and the plethora of hiking, skiing, biking, hunting, fishing, and snowmobiling opportunities. The town also has quality recreational infrastructure including several public beaches, two campgrounds, a playground, basketball courts, ice skating rink, and a community gym in the Town Hall. Given all of these assets, residents feel a coordinated recreation program would help to better engage residents, especially youth, in accessing these resources and providing more opportunities for community gathering, recreation, and fun! A Brighton Recreation Task Force could form to implement recreation programming for all ages including dances, community events, sports and games, laser tag, movie nights, music programs, outdoor programming and more. The group could also work to expand outdoor recreation including trails, bikeways, mountain biking, and paths. Some residents are also interested in exploring the possibility of a Brighton skate park. The group could work with the Town to identify funding sources to hire a recreation coordinator to develop and administer these programs.

Priority Action Steps

1. Inventory and develop a list of all of the recreation assets in the community. The list will include the current efforts, leaders in each effort, and also gaps in programming that need to be filled.
2. Using the recreation inventory list, the committee can develop a plan to coordinate current efforts as well as build more programming opportunities that meet a diverse range of needs for a diverse audience including youth, families, adults, and seniors.
3. Develop a way to communicate programming opportunities to residents perhaps through a community calendar, website and/or brochure.
4. Create a Brighton Bike/Pedestrian committee to focus on potential mountain bike trail development, walking path development, and mapping of road cycling routes, and coordination with federal and state agencies to make Brighton a bicycle and pedestrian safe community. This committee could work to develop maps and brochures to showcase recreation opportunities.
5. Develop a strategy to “brand and sell” Brighton’s unique recreation opportunities and coordinate with local businesses and the welcome center to share recreation information with visitors.
6. Work with the Town to hire a recreation coordinator.

Other potential action steps:

- Build and promote Nordic skiing trails in collaboration with the State Park.
- Cultivate a list of community recreation volunteers – both to coordinate and lead programming, but also to share information in the welcome center.
- Raise funds to support programming and a recreation coordinator.
- Make Island Pond a bike/walk safe community.
- Build a path or signage to better link the downtown to the school via bicycle or on foot.
- Work with the Culture Of Health Initiative (through Julie Raboin) to acquire funding through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to engage in community focus groups and planning towards recreation and wellness programming.
- In the winter, turn a bike/walk path into an ice skating path for residents and to attract visitors to the community (modeled after Magog QC).
- Create a walking map of Island Pond.
- Build a walking path near/around the lake for bikes and pedestrians.
- Create an afterschool hangout for kids in the community.
- Foster/build a community gathering space for people of all ages. Perhaps a café, or internet access.
- Work with federal and state land agencies to explore the development of Mountain Bike trails in Brighton as well as explore road biking and dirt road biking opportunities. Rather than become the next Kingdom Trails, the community could market themselves as more of a family/community friendly biking destination.
- Connect to Kingdom Trails through a spur path.

Resources

1. The Vermont Recreation and Parks Association can be a resource to help connect to other recreation programs and learn from what other communities have done to grow their programs. The committee could join VRPA to access helpful resources and updates.
2. The National Recreation and Parks Association.
3. The Robert Wood Johnson foundation (through Julie Raboin and the Culture of Health initiative) could be a resource in next stage planning.
4. The Town and the Selectboard will be important partners.
5. The State Park.
6. The Sylvio Conte Wildlife Refuge.
7. Wenlock.
8. The Northwoods Stewardship Center can be a resource in recreation planning and program coordination.
9. The head of the Newport Recreation Program, Andy Capello, has agreed to be a resource and think together about next steps and potential collaboration.
10. Tim Tierney at Kingdom Trails is a great resource to think about mountain bike trail development.
11. The Welcome Center.
12. The Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.
13. The North Country Hospital and the Island Pond Health Center could be potential partners and/or funding sources.
14. Localmotion could be a potential technical assistance partner.
15. Potential Grant Opportunities:
16. The Land and Water Conservation Fund through Forest, Parks and Recreation

17. The Vermont Recreation Facilities Grant Program through Building and Grounds Services
18. The Vermont Community Foundation
19. VTrans (with the bike/walk safe community work).
20. Blue Cross Blue Shield

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Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Advance a Brighton Recreation Program” Task Force

After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs.

Community Recreation Programming:

- The Vermont Recreation and Parks Association could be a resource for learning from other recreation programs around the state and connecting with other volunteers and professionals. Contact Betsy Terry at 802-878-2077 or info@vrpa.org. The group could consider joining the VRPA to utilize helpful tools and connect with other recreation programs around the state.
- The group could start with an inventory of the indoor and outdoor recreation assets and available facilities in Brighton as well as in neighboring communities.
- Julie Raboin, of the VT Department of Health in the Brighton region, has offered to be the contact for the group to the Orleans/Northern Essex Culture of Health (ONECOH) to acquire funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support healthy communities in the Kingdom. Connect with Julie; if funding is secured, she is hoping to work closely with the Brighton community on recreation planning. Contact Julie at Julie.raboin@vermont.gov or at 802-334-4391 or June Goodband, Island Pond Health Center, juneg@nchcvt.org.
- A community survey of residents, second homeowners, and visitors could be a way to identify recreational interests. Once the survey is complete, an inventory could be conducted to identify whether and where the resources are available to meet preferred needs and develop programs and facilities.
- The group could look in to starting a local chapter of the Boys and Girls Club that could be based out of the town hall or the library for indoor and afterschool programming. Contact the Brattleboro Boys and Girls Club Director Beth Baldwin for ideas and inspiration at bcbgbrattleboro@gmail.com or 802-254-5990.
- Northwoods Stewardship Center and Siskin Ecological Adventures (Coutts Moriarty camp) could be great resources and partners for creative outdoor programming.
- The UVM Extension 4H program could provide funding and technical support for a range of activities for young people from agricultural programming to dance or martial arts.
- The group could visit with recreation centers and meet with recreation directors in other communities that have been successful. In Bradford about 8 years ago, a group successfully built a small scale recreation center and programming. Contact Bradford Parks and Recreation Director Bonna Wieler at recreation@bradfordvt.us or 802-222-4727 ext 310. The Vernon Recreation Department is also excellent and director Seth Deyo might be a good resource to help think about how to leverage the school’s resources, engage the community, and how to successfully build a committee and volunteers that can support the efforts of a director. Contact Seth at seth@vernonrec.com or 802-254-9251.
- Andrew Cappello, the Director of Newport Parks and Recreation, is also willing to be a resource to the group and think about potential ways to partner. Contact Andy at andrew.cappello@newportvermont.org or at 802-334-6345.

- Funding Sources for recreation programming or development could include:
 - Vermont Community Foundation Small and Inspiring Grants for community building and civic engagement projects (Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup 802-388-3355)
 - Building Communities Grant Program: Recreational Facilities Grant. Contact Judy Bruneau at 802-828-3519 or at judy.bruneau@vermont.gov.
 - The Northeast Kingdom Fund. Contact Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup at the Vermont Community Foundation at 802-388-3355 or cilstrup@vermontcf.org
 - A municipal planning grant, a Vermont Community Development Program grant from the Agency of Commerce, or a USDA Rural Business Development grant could provide funding for planning and feasibility work.
 - USDA Rural Development has grant programs that support community facilities improvements. Contact Ben Doyle, Community and Economic Development Specialist, to learn more about how that program might support the town's recreational needs. Contact Ben at Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov or at 802-828-6042.
 - Contact Jared Duval at ACCD to learn more about the Northern Border Regional Commission Grants and to see how they could support both planning and capital costs associated with recreation improvements. Contact Jared at jared.duval@vermont.gov or 802-272-2461.
 - Federally Qualified Health Centers have funds to invest in community wellness. Contact Sean Tester at Northern Counties Health Care at shawnt@nchcvt.org.

Outdoor Recreation and Trails:

- It could be helpful to visit with other communities that have built various models of outdoor recreational programs, facilities, and trails to learn what has worked well. Some examples of communities that might be helpful include Hinesburg (Town Forest development), Swanton (Outdoor Recreation Task Force), East Burke (development of a network of mountain bike trails), and Waterbury (Waterbury Area Trails Alliance).
- It may be useful to connect with other organizations and groups leading on outdoor recreation in the region such as the Northwoods Stewardship Center (723-6551), the NEK chapter of the Green Mountain Club (www.nekgmc.org) and the Northern Forest Canoe Trail (contact Walter Opuszynski at 496-2285).
- It could be useful to connect with folks from VAST, VASA, and Kingdom Trails to get input and recommendations as well as look for opportunities for connection or collaboration.
- The Trust for Public Land could provide technical assistance and help to connect with grant funding to make public land more accessible. The group could invite them to a meeting to see if there are ways to partner or if they have advice on next steps. Contact them at 802-223-1373.
- One way to proceed could be to create a map of all of the existing outdoor recreational opportunities to share with residents and visitors. The map could be used to do a quick assessment of both the trails that are currently available and where there might be needs for trail building, rebuilding, or maintenance. This could also help identify priority trails to maintain and promote for public access.
- The community could promote recreation opportunities online. The group could connect with the Brighton website to see if there could be a space for recreation opportunities and to build this as a key feature of the town brand.

- Community events that visit and celebrate the natural resources in the community and Brighton's recreation assets could be a great way to engage residents in the effort. The group could consider organizing fun outings like the Halloween Bike Ride that Local Motion organizes each year in Burlington. Events could be educational-- or just for fun--and feature activities, music, and food.
- This would be a great project to connect with local schools and students. Local students could take on pieces of this work (trail development, signage, and others) as a community service project. Vermont Youth Conservation Corp and Northwoods Leadership Center both run youth development trail maintenance programs and could perhaps be tapped to provide crews to help get the trails and the boat launch back into shape. High schools around the state with alternative education programs take on trail and water restoration projects with some success.
- A survey of residents could be a helpful way to determine how the community wants to use the trails and to determine trail use conflicts early on. A survey of landowners in the region could also be conducted to determine willingness to allow public use and possible available land.
- The Vermont Trail Finder project, run by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, is a statewide promotional tool for Vermont trails and all the Brighton trails could be mapped and promoted through the Trail Finder. <https://www.trailfinder.info/>
- A Task Force in Swanton has been successful in working with the regional planning commission to map trails and develop signage to highlight outdoor recreation assets in town. To learn more about their efforts contact co-chairs Betsy Fournier (betsy.fournier16@gmail.com) and Ron Kilburn (swanza@swantonvermont.org).
- The University of New Hampshire Extension office is doing some exciting work around trail development and usage (including phone apps that allow community members to map trails comprehensively online). Connect Extension Specialist Molly Donovan to find out more at 603-862-5046 or molly.donovan@unh.edu.
- Tim Tierney from Burke's Kingdom Trails is the go to person in Vermont when it comes to trails and associated economic development. He can be reached at 802-626-0737 or tim@kingdomtrails.org. The VT Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation is a great resource to contact with questions or technical support, and oversees grant programs that could be useful. They administer grant opportunities including the National Parks Service Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance. Contact Jessica Savage, Recreation Coordinator, at 802-828-1399 or Jessica.savage@vermont.gov or Craig Whipple, Director of State Parks at 802-828-1399 or craig.whipple@vermont.gov.
- The Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program provides technical assistance for towns that are protecting, maintaining, or acquiring community forests. Danielle Fitzko is the contact at 802-598-9992 or Danielle.fitzko@vermont.gov.
- The Vermont Mountain Bike Association could be a great resource and partner in bike trail development. They can be reached at 802-342-7568.
- Funding Sources for outdoor recreation, biking and walkability could include:
 - New England Grassroots Environment Fund grants for environmental or community organizing (603-905-9915)
 - Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Public Outdoor Recreation Grants (802-828-3250)
 - Recreation Trail Program grants administered by the VT Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation could be used to assess trail conditions, maintenance and for capital improvements. Contact Jessica Savage at jessica.savage@vermont.gov or 802-249-1230.

- The Agency of Natural Resources Land and Water Conservation Fund has grants administered by ANR and Forest, Parks and Recreation. Jessica Savage (802-249-1230) can assist in working towards grants that could help in acquiring land as well as planning and development of new and renovated recreation facilities.
- The USDA Community Forest Program
<http://www.fs.fed.us/cooperativeforestry/programs/loa/cfp.shtml>
- [Healthy Places for Healthy People](https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/healthy-places-healthy-people) is a new program to help communities partner with community health centers (including Federally Qualified Health Centers), nonprofit hospitals, and other health care facilities to create walkable, healthy, economically vibrant places. Learn how to apply for the Healthy Places for Healthy People Program:
<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/healthy-places-healthy-people>.



←
 Brighton Elementary
 School students
 performed while
 community members
 gathered for the
 Community Visit dinner.



→
 Activities offered by the
 Northwoods Stewardship
 Center kept the kids
 engaged during
 community meetings.

✓ Task Force: Revitalize and Beautify the Downtown

Chairperson: **Michael Straite**

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

Resource Leaders: **Richard Amore**, *Planning & Project Manager*, VT Dept. of Housing and Community Dev.

Brighton's walkable downtown at the edge of beautiful Island Pond is a tremendous asset. Several local businesses, banks, a grocery store, and dining options as well as a town green, a playground, a place for live music, and even a skating rink in the winter all contribute to a vibrant downtown. But some say these assets are underutilized and point to vacant storefronts that are looking run-down. Residents feel that a coordinated effort is needed to improve and revitalize the downtown to better leverage and market these assets. A Downtown Task Force could form to work with community members and outside experts to develop a strategic plan and identify funding sources to enhance and beautify Island Pond's downtown as well as build strategies in partnership with the municipal government toward the redevelopment of blighted properties. The group could focus on improvements in physical infrastructure such as sidewalks, water and sewer, as well as aesthetic features such as trees, flower plantings, or showcasing local artwork. The group could work to make the downtown vibrant and dynamic for residents, as well as branding and marketing efforts to attract visitors and new businesses.

Priority Action Steps

1. Explore funding opportunities that can support planning/revitalization efforts (specifically the Better Connections Grant from VTRANS and the RBDG grant from USDA RD).
2. Conduct an inventory of vacant buildings (including square footage, rental availability, code concerns).
3. Develop a proposal for a public/private canoe and/or bike rental kiosk, potentially connected to the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.
4. Promote revitalization efforts through local newspapers and communication channels. Let people know that this work is underway.
5. Identify Brighton's beautification "thing" or signature branding image (Moose, Bikes, Boats, Trains, etc.)

Other potential action steps:

- Adopt tighter building codes—explore and connect with Town Manager in St. Johnsbury to learn what they are doing there.
- Engage property owners to activate vacant storefronts.
- Investigate pop-up storefronts (review/connect with the Better Bethel Block Project).
- Connect with NVDA, NCIC, SBA to help develop inventory of available business property in downtown.
- Promote chamber activities widely on social media.
- Leverage/capitalize on Friday Night Live success.
- Conduct feasibility study for laundromat.
- Examine water rates to see how competitive they are and if the rate structure should be changed.
- Conduct a sidewalk inventory of needs/explore funding options.
- Work with local business to stay open longer on Friday nights (if everyone does it then collectively customer traffic could increase).

- Leverage Northern Forest Canoe Trail. Reach out to NFCT to see what opportunities are available for model communities.
- Develop historic district promotion program with local schools.

Resources

1. VTRANS Transportation Grants
2. Northern Vermont Development Association (for grant writing expertise and technical assistance)
3. VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development (Better Connections Grant)
4. Local Motion (walk/bike advocacy group)
5. USDA Rural Development
6. Bethel Better Block Project
7. Preservation Trust of Vermont/Vermont Department of Historic Preservation
8. Northern Community Investment Corporation (help with business technical assistance and feasibility studies)
9. Caitlin Corkins from ACCD can come and educate local property owners on State/Federal Tax Credit Benefits.
10. Engage School/Kids in community revitalization project
11. Buildings and General Services Grants from the State
12. Forest Parks Reforestation Grants for trees
13. Vermont Arts Council Arts Impact Grants can help fund Friday Night Live.

Task Force Contacts

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Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Revitalize and Beautify the Downtown” Task Force

After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs.

- Brighton has so much potential in its small village core. Working with the Vermont Downtown and Village Center program may be a good first step towards understanding the elements of a successful village core and lining up strategies and resources to move forward. Consider connecting with Richard Amore, the coordinator of the Village Center designation program who knows communities around the state focused on village center enhancement. Contact Richard Amore at 802-828-5229 or Richard.amore@vermont.gov.
- Caitlin Corkins at the Department of Historic Preservation could also provide information on both the state and federal tax credit programs which can be used to improve the appearance of historic buildings in the downtown. Contact Caitlin Corkins, Tax Credits and Grants Coordinator, Caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov or 802-828-3047
- The group could develop a Downtown Master Plan to include conceptual designs to upgrade the roads, streetscape, parks, lake access, parking, gateways, and other public spaces in a downtown, in a manner that can be implemented in a phased approach. The plan could also examine downtown market conditions, provide economic development recommendations, develop community branding efforts to help market the downtown/lake to local and visitors, and create an opportunity for downtown events, promotions and wayfinding to highlight assets, businesses and amenities. A Downtown Master Plan will allow for application for state and federal transportation grants.
- Island Pond is a “Gateway Community” for the National Wildlife Refuge and other conserved natural resources. There may be some federal and NGO funding opportunities available to enhance the Gateway appearance and impact. The group could work with the Conte National Wildlife Refuge (with the assistance of the Vermont Congressional Delegation) to get some resources to have a welcome/gateway feature made part of the village streetscape. Contact Tom Berry of Senator Leahy’s office for assistance at tom_berry@leahy.senate.gov.
- Paul Bruhn at Preservation Trust of Vermont is a state leader in strategizing and lining up resources to revitalize and redevelop buildings in downtown centers. Paul can be reached at 802-343-0595 or at paul@ptvermont.org.
- Members of the task force could visit similarly sized communities in Vermont who have undergone community and economic revitalization efforts over the past 10-15 years, and meet with the key people in those communities who could explain how they accomplished what they have. Some good places to visit as excellent examples include Bristol, Guilford, and Brandon.
- Doug Morton at NVDA can help to identify VTrans funding opportunities to plan and develop streetscape. Contact Doug at 802-748-1224 or dmorton@nvda.net.

- The Town could consider a Design Improvement or “Junky yard Ordinance” to improve downtown aesthetics. NVDA can assist with an evaluation of whether or not ordinances would be useful for Brighton. Contact Dave Snedeker at dsnedeker@nvda.net or 748-5181 ext. 15.
- It may be a great first step to establish or strengthen existing beautification efforts to beautify the downtown with flowers, banners, signs, and other landscaping. The UVM Extension Master Gardner Program requires volunteer hours from its participants and graduates. Consider enlisting volunteer help for landscaping, planting, and streetscape in the downtown. Danielle Fitzko of the Urban Community Forestry Program could help to gain access to technical assistance for street trees, perhaps conducting a street tree inventory, identifying maintenance needs, and obtaining funding for more street trees. Contact Danielle at danielle.fitzko@vermont.gov or 802-828-1339.
- Island Pond could consider some creative community events and festivals to showcase their downtown that offer temporary improvements, pop-up businesses (in vacant storefronts), food vendors and other improvements that show what downtown could be. One example is the Bethel Better Block program <http://bethelrevitalizationinitiative.org/better-block>. Energetic community consultants like Jeff Bercuvitz (<http://thesparkscenter.org/about/about-jeff-bercuvitz>) could help spark some creative energy to get the downtown jumping. Waterbury’s River of Light Lantern Parade is another example of a great community-building event that uses the arts to bring people into the downtown and foster economic activity. You can contact the event organizer Gowri Savor here: info@gowrisavoor.com
- The Task Force could hold a panel discussion open to the public with local experts on downtown revitalization and what makes a great village center. Bring in design and landscape architect experts, but also leaders from other communities that have successfully revitalized their villages and downtowns.
- A speaker could be brought in to talk about what makes a great village center. One speaker that discusses “tactical place-making” is Ward Joyce who can be reached at wardjoyce1@hotmail.com or 802-522-0150. He has led place-making efforts including the “pocket park” and Langdon Street Alive in downtown Montpelier.
- Consider gateways, “placemaking,” streetscape enhancements, and wayfinding (directional signage) to enhance the Village Center and draw attention to the town as folks pass through.
- The group’s action plan could include both short-term and relatively low-cost improvements as well as longer term enhancements that may require more substantial investment funding to show immediate improvement, action, and momentum as you work towards larger goals.
- A hired consultant or planner could help to find the best, most efficient, and most effective methods for both aesthetic and practical improvement of the Island Pond Village Center.
- Developing ways for the entire community to contribute to town transformation could be powerful. Some ideas include volunteer workdays to clean up the lake front or small community fundraisers to restore or improve the downtown with new plantings, benches, or picnic tables.
- Private sector consultants could be invaluable in sharing design ideas or even producing charrettes. Bob Stevens of Stevens Associates of Brattleboro has led community redesign efforts in several places in New England (257-9329) and David Raphael of Landworks has led important redesign efforts with Danville, Middlebury and other communities (388-3011).
- AARP has a “complete streets” program that helps communities make neighborhoods and village centers more accessible and pedestrian friendly. Contact Kelly Stoddard Poor at 802-951-1313 or at kstoddardpoor@aarp.org.

- State of Vermont Tourism and Marketing could be a partner in discussing ways to market Brighton as a destination. Their online itineraries could be an opportunity to look into. Contact Steven Cook at steven.cook@vermont.gov or 802-522-2896.
- Potential funding sources may include:
 - The Citizen Institute for Rural Design offers annual technical assistance grants for a three-day design workshop meant to involve/engage the whole community.
 - The Vermont Arts Council Animating Infrastructure supports community projects that integrate art with infrastructure improvements. Contact Michele Bailey at 802-828-3294 or mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org.
 - Contact Richard Amore to learn about the Vermont's Village Greens Initiative funding opportunities at Richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802-828-5229.
 - CDBG Planning Grants are available through the Vermont Community Development Program. Contact Cindy Blondin, Grants Specialist, at 802-828-5219 or cindy.blondin@vermont.gov.
 - Arts Impact Grant from Vermont Arts Council. These grants support organizations, municipalities, and schools in their efforts to create a more vibrant quality of life by providing equal and abundant access to the arts. The lead contact there is Sarah Mutrux, Artist and Community Programs Manager. Contact her at 802-828-5425 or smutrux@vermontartscouncil.org.
 - The ACCD Funding Directory offers information on funding options including grant timelines, funding specifics, and general eligibility: www.accd.vermont.gov. ACCD can help to navigate grant options and develop a planning needs list.
 - Municipal Planning Grants are available for a Downtown Master Plan or other implementation plan to help support town capital improvement plans and other future planning goals. Contact Annina Seiler for more information at annina.seiler@vermont.gov or 802-828-1848.
 - Potential investment sources could include: Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) or the Vermont Community Loan Fund.
 - Vermont Community Foundation's Small and Inspiring Program. Contact Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup at 802-388-3355 or cilstrup@vermontcf.org.
 - The Strong Communities Better Connections Program could fund transportation investments that build community resilience. Contact Jacki Cassino at VTrans at Jackie.cassino@vermont.gov or at 802-272-2368.
 - VTrans offers a Transportation Alternative Program to help fund scoping studies and design and implementation for bicycle and pedestrian construction projects. Contact Scott Robertson at scott.robertson@vermont.gov or 802-828-5799.
 - VTrans also offers a Bicycle and Pedestrian Program that can help support scoping studies and design and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian construction projects. Contact Jon Kaplan at jon.kaplan@vermont.gov or 802-828-0059.
 - The Vermont State Infrastructure Bank program, operated by the VT Economic Development Authority in conjunction with the VT Agency of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, is available to assist in the construction or reconstruction of highways, roads, and bridges. Contact VEDA at 802-828-5627.
 - Efficiency Vermont Municipal Street Lighting Program.

- The Forest, Parks and Recreation/ANR Community and Urban Forestry Program has Caring for Canopy Grants to support street trees and urban forestry improvements in the downtown.
- Contact Jared Duval at ACCD to learn more about the Northern Border Regional Commission Grants that could support a variety of projects that improve the downtown, business development, and infrastructure. Contact Jared at jared.duval@vermont.gov or 802-272-2461.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) invites communities to apply for technical assistance through three programs that create economic opportunities, make neighborhoods more walkable, help people live healthier lives, and revitalize downtowns and neighborhoods.
- [Local Foods, Local Places](#) helps communities create walkable, healthy, economically vibrant neighborhoods through the development of local food systems.
Learn how to apply for the Local Foods, Local Places Program:
<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/local-foods-local-places-2016-2017-application>
- [Cool & Connected](#) helps small towns use broadband service to revitalize small-town main streets and promote economic development. Learn how to apply for the Cool & Connected Program:
<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/cool-connected-fall-2016-application>
- [Healthy Places for Healthy People](#) is a new program to help communities partner with community health centers (including Federally Qualified Health Centers), nonprofit hospitals, and other health care facilities to create walkable, healthy, economically vibrant places. Learn how to apply for the Healthy Places for Healthy People Program:
<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/healthy-places-healthy-people>



✓ Task Force: Make Brighton an ATV Destination

Chairperson: **Bob Dexter, Stacey Roese, and Reno Gervais**

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

Resource Leaders: **Tom Berry**, *Senator Leahy's Office*

Danny Hale, *Executive Director, VASA*

Many Brighton residents are interested in expanding their existing network of ATV trails to improve recreation for residents, attract visitors to town, and expand economic opportunities. The tri-county ATV Club is already hard at work to build connections with surrounding networks in Vermont and New Hampshire, maintain existing trails, and explore opportunities for expansion. A task force of community members could lend support to, strengthen, and work with the ATV Club in developing and improving the ATV trail network, in an environmentally and community conscious way, to make Brighton a premier ATV destination and model for Vermont.

Introduction: Current Status/Efforts:

- Currently some 20 people serve in the local ATV club; most of them out-of-town folks. The club would like to increase its membership and be more active.
- There are about 26 miles of trails available in Brighton now, but because of state and federal lands, the community is currently “landlocked to the east.” There are more opportunities to the west for trail development and connections.
- There is a process underway for a town ordinance that could support the expansion of corridors and make it easier for ATVs to come into town to access services.
- There is a map of current trails, with some projected additions that the club envisions being built over time.
- Everyone agrees that any expansion needs to be appropriately managed to protect the environment and to police designated and managed trails for appropriate use. Everyone also agrees that ATVs need to fit with the community and that expansion should work in a way that benefits the community, not that produces an “us against them.”

Priority Action Steps:

1. Complete efforts to get permissions from all landowners in the existing network.
2. There is a map of proposed trail expansions and access to the village; the club/task force needs to talk to people—especially in advance of a town meeting vote on road access and connection points.
3. The task force and club can put on a “Club Picnic” for all Brighton residents to share plans and celebrate opportunities.
4. The club and task force can lead a membership drive to involve the community much more and to bring more ATV users into the partnership.
5. The club and task force will work to advance a northwest corridor and evaluate all reasonable potentials build an eastern corridor.
6. The club and task force will work as one group and the club chair will lead in setting up future meetings.

Resources

1. VASA—Vermont ATV Sportsmans Association. Led by Danny Hall, this group has access to state funding and has expertise for all aspects of trail planning, land easements, regulatory assistance, trail management and policing.
2. Senator Leahy's Office. Tom Berry, the Leahy Office staff leader on natural resources, is willing to consult and connect the group with state and federal leaders on issues around the east corridor.
3. The Agency of Transportation has resources for multi-use trails.
4. The Essex County Conservation District is located at the Sylvio Conti refuge; they have map-building skills and could help map trails and proposals.
5. The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) is willing to facilitate a community meeting if the club/task force determines that it could be useful.

Task Force Contacts

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Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Make Brighton an ATV Destination” Task Force

After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.

- The group could consider closely connecting with VAST to identify opportunities for collaboration around the trail network.
- NVDA and NCIC may be resources to connect with around infrastructure development. The contact at NVDA is Dave Snedeker at 748-5181 x15 or dsnedeker@nvda.net. At NCIC contact Jon Freeman at 748-5101 or jfreeman@ncic.org. Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC) has worked with a number of communities in northern New Hampshire around marketing the region as an ATV destination.

- Consider contacting Jared Duval to explore the idea of a Northern Borders Regional Commission grant to support ATV trail development. Contact Jared at jared.duval@vermont.gov or 802-272-2461.
- A really important starting point could be to engage landowners. Private and public landowners will be critical partners in this work. Community engagement will also be important, even engaging with folks who may not support ATV development. It may be easier to build bridges in an exploratory phase than it is to mend fences when development moves forward. It will be helpful moving forward to understand the concerns of the local community in working to mitigate them.
- The group could benefit from a survey of the market to investigate how big an opportunity ATVs will be. Does NH already have this market covered? If so, how can Brighton differentiate themselves?
- Jessica Savage and Craig Whipple at Vermont Forest Parks & Recreation are willing to be resources to help support the task force and work towards next steps. Contact them at jessica.savage@vermont.gov or craig.whipple@vermont.gov or call 802-522-0730.
- North Country Council (northern New Hampshire's version of NVDA) is currently using a USDA Rural Business Development Grant to conduct a regional planning process to better coordinate ATV usage regulations and mitigate potential conflicts. Their team can help share best practices for engaging the community around this issue. Contact Tara Bamford, Senior Community Planner, tbamford@nccouncil.org, 603-444-6303
- The Task Force could examine Brighton's location within a larger network. Perhaps there are opportunities to build connection and link to key destinations. Additionally, VASA and successful ATV Club operators from other areas could come to Island Pond to answer questions from local users and organizers as well as engage with landowners and the community.
- The group could research the challenges and opportunities for becoming a "Trail Town" by learning more about other towns that have worked towards that status such as the Spearhead Trails (<http://www.spearheadtrails.com/trail/mountain-view/>) or the NH Trail Systems. The group could work with these communities to find out what kinds of state and federal resources have been used to support coordination of ATV trail networks and to identify the challenges and opportunities these communities faced.
- The group may need to connect with the Nulhegan unit of the National Wildlife Refuge if they have a desire to have access to federal land. That unit is currently without a manager due to a job transition. In the meantime, there could be a request to the Conte National Wildlife Refuge headquarters to designate a point of contact. Tom Berry at Senator Leahy's office is happy to help with that if needed. He can be reached at tom_berry@leahy.senate.gov.
- The City of Berlin NH has extensive experience as an ATV destination. Berlin's Director of Community and Economic Development, Pam LaFlamme, is an excellent resource for navigating both the opportunities and challenges ATV usage can pose. Contact: Pam LaFlamme, Community Development Director, plaflamme@berlinnh.gov, 603-752-8587.

✓ Task Force: Support Business Growth and Economic Development

Chairperson: **Jane Jacobs**

Facilitator: **Ted Brady**, *State Director, USDA Rural Development*

Resource Leaders: **Jared Duval**, *Economic Development Director, VT Dept. of Economic Development*

Karen Geraghty, *Economic Development Specialist, NVDA*

Chris Saunders, *Field Representative, Office of Senator Leahy*

Brighton is a town with several key economic assets including a scenic location, proximity to year-round outdoor recreation opportunities, a quality school, two campgrounds, Sweet Tree Maple, rail and air access, an active Chamber of Commerce, and a walkable downtown with a variety of local businesses. Residents would like to leverage those assets to grow their economy and find ways to enhance their downtown, boost commerce, and attract new residents and businesses. A new Task Force could develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to boost economic development in the town including identifying financing or tax credit opportunities for downtown businesses, attracting industry to the region to boost commerce and create jobs, and marketing to attract new and diverse businesses to town that will be attractive to both residents and visitors. It could also evaluate the opportunity to build a revolving loan fund to support building redevelopment, business start-ups, and growing enterprises in town. Some ideas residents shared for desirable new businesses include a kayak or outdoor retailer or rental businesses, industry or manufacturing, new and diverse dining options, a café, or a local brewery.

Current Status/Efforts:

- There are good existing businesses in the downtown as well as some new businesses coming in/starting up.
- The Island Pond Chamber is an asset.
- Friday Night Live event is popular and well attended as well as Winter Carnival and Market Day.
- There are some core “actors” and leaders in the business community.
- We lack a town loan fund.
- We have Village Center designation.
- We have strong regional resources in NVDA and NCIC.
- The town plan references economic development in a general way.
- We have a new town plan.
- Schools were offering entrepreneurship classes.
- There is organic business growth, but we need to bring in new blood as well.
- There is a lack of lending to purchase real estate.

Priority Action Steps

1. Set goals and vision for economic development in Brighton.
2. Educate and engage the Selectboard by getting on the agenda at regular meetings.
3. Conduct marketing analysis of strengths and weaknesses and natural opportunities.
4. Address real estate road blocks. Engage property owners in this work.
5. Create ordinances and incentives to encourage and/or require owners to create business opportunities.

6. Create a pitch to attract businesses and develop a marketing and communications plan and pitch packet to engage new businesses.
7. Connect with other chambers in the region to learn best practices and how to engage active and new members.
8. Evaluate potential industrial sites.
9. Build business growth and economic development into the Town Plan as a higher priority/focus area.

Other potential action steps:

- Market and fix up existing store fronts.
- Change ownership of downtown “white elephants”
- Create an entity to purchase, repair and lease space for new businesses.
- Engage small business owners. Educate, engage, and empower.
- Host a community gathering of potential local enterprises.

Resources

1. Richard Amore at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development is a key resource around Village Designation and downtown development. He can help determine how to best utilize the benefits of Island Pond’s designation.
2. Karen Geraghty at NVDA can be a partner in technical assistance and making connection with potential grant opportunities.
3. Nathan Cleveland is the contact for the regional for the Vermont Community Development Program and Community Development Block Grant program.
4. The USDA Rural Business Development Grant program could help to fund economic development efforts. Contact Susan Poland at USDA RD.
5. The Northern Borders Regional Commission could be a potential funding source. The lead contact for that program is Jared Duval.
6. Paul Bruhn at Preservation Trust of Vermont is a state leader in working with communities to preserve and restore historic buildings in downtowns across the state.
7. Joe Kasprzak in St. Johnsbury has been leading an effort in that town to revitalize downtown buildings and encourage economic development. He could share some strategies and best practices around next steps.
8. John Freeman and Mike Welch at NCIC could be key partners in economic development planning and strategy.
9. Other chambers that could be helpful in strategizing around next steps could be Burke, Morrisville, and Craftsbury.
10. Mary Peabody is a community economic development specialist at University of Vermont Extension.

Task Force Contacts

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Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Support Business Growth and Economic Development” Task Force

After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs.

- NVDA and NCIC could be critical partners for this task force moving forward. The contact at NVDA is Dave Snedeker at 748-5181 x15 or dsnedeker@nvda.net. At NCIC contact Jon Freeman at 748-5101 or jfreeman@ncic.org.
- Small business development organizations such as Community Capital of Vermont, NCIC, NVDA or the Vermont Small Business Development Association could be resources in thinking about strategies to cultivate and develop small businesses in Brighton. They could be invited to the community to help strengthen existing businesses and possibly new start-ups.
- The group could coordinate with the Downtown Revitalization Task Force to develop a Downtown Economic Development and Marketing plan. NVDA may be able to provide assistance with this planning effort.
- It could be a good first step to work to form consensus about the community’s identify. What is the story Brighton wants to tell about itself? Is it a tourism destination? A light manufacturing hub? A center for the maple syrup industry? While the identity doesn’t need to be exclusive, there should be some consensus so that all the players can begin to pull in the same direction and leverage opportunities.
- The committee could examine revolving loan fund opportunities available through NVDA (748-5181), Community Capital of Vermont (479-0167), NCIC (738-5101), and Vermont Community Loan

Fund (223-1448). Utilizing existing funds may be easier administratively than establishing a loan fund for the town.

- Consider developing local incentives to attract and retain businesses such as tax stabilization or offering free or subsidized space.
- A representative from Brighton could join the NEK Collaborative to network with neighboring communities and leverage opportunities for regional funding. For more information visit: <http://www.nekcollaborative.org/>.
- Several towns in the Kingdom have hired downtown coordinators or economic development specialists. Consider discussing best practices with Joel Schwartz formerly of St. Johnsbury and now of the Barre Area Development, Inc. at 802-476-0660 or Patricia Sears of NEKTI Consulting and former economic development director of Newport (802) 258-0873 or trish@kingdomcommons.com.
- Potential Sources of Funding for Economic Development Work:
 - VCF's Small and Inspiring grants might be able to jump start some social capital building. Contact Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup at the Vermont Community Foundation at 802-388-3355 or cilstrup@vermontcf.org
 - Richard Amore could discuss the financial benefits (grants and tax credits) of the Village Center Designation program. Contact his at Richard.amore@vermont.gov.
 - Lending resources could be NVDA, Community Capital of Vermont, the VT Community Loan Fund, or Opportunities Credit Union.
 - Reach out to Jared Duval, with ACCD, to see how the Department of Economic Development could help and learn more about the Northern Borders Grant Program and how they might support business and work force development. Contact Jared at jared.duval@vermont.gov or 802-272-2461.
 - Reach out to Ben Doyle with USDA RD to learn more about their Rural Economic Development Grants to support economic development efforts and planning. Ben can help to develop a strong grant to fund the formation of a downtown association or to support the existing Chamber of Commerce. Contact Ben at Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov or at 802-828-6042.



VIII. The Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 120 Brighton residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on October 4 2016

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

Transportation & Infrastructure

Visiting Team: Richard Amore, Tom Berry, Ted Brady, Paul Costello (facilitator), Emily Erwin (scribe), Christine Hallquist, Jenny Nelson, Joe Segale, Dave Snedeker

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Our school in good shape and we have a nice town hall that has recently undergone massive renovations using grant funding.
- We have excellent roads such as Derby Street, roads into and out of town. We have a lot of truck traffic that is handled by good road width and turning radius. This encourages commerce from the interstate.
- Roads in Vermont generally are well kept and well maintained in the winter and summer, despite tough winters.
- Brighton has a good road crew that takes good care of the roads in all seasons.
- The water and wastewater is in fairly good shape. We have 12.5 miles of pipe that is mostly in fairly good shape; some is almost 100 years old, but vast majority will need replacing in 30-40 years. The water source is very stable.
- A little more wastewater capacity exists, but mostly on the residential side. It is difficult to deal with industrial wastewater
- The Town has a health center right in downtown with great providers, a few specialists, and a dispensary for medications. They do their best to work with patients for transportation to appointments.
- We have some new businesses on Cross Street. We have a general store and Kingdom Market. The old Essex House is being renovated. It is encouraging to see that kind of activity in town.
- There is a really great fiber infrastructure that runs through town. With the latest upgrade to electrical, the fiber line is very stable. We have high speed internet capacity, but has so far it has not been activated.
- The AT&T network does work here. There is a tower on a nearby mountain.
- We have a huge snowmobile trail network. We're the center of the VAST universe.
- Large rail system.
- Beautiful lake with several public access points.
- The Town owns 1000 acres that could be recreational lands. We have; the Bluff Mountain trail (big mountain you can see from town), woods that are town property; 1000s acres national wildlife refuge; and the lakeshore walking path.
- The Friday Night Live event, started by the Chamber of Commerce, is popular. The influx to town is enormous.
- There are other small town events during the rest of the year such as the Winter Carnival. This has been especially true in the last couple of years.
- We have a tremendous fire department as well as a contracted rescue department.

What are the Challenges?

- The built infrastructure is very old. There have been some updates made in the buildings, but we need to upgrade infrastructure to look decent. It would help to attract business.
- The road going around the lake could use some work; the culverts are there, but there are frost heaves.
- Broadband fiber exists that could provide really high speed internet.
- There is a lot of truck traffic coming through town; much of it comes from the lumber yard outside of town, and we may see an increase in traffic through here in the future as there is new construction at the customs compound and oversized trucks are being routed through here.
- Significant updates are needed for stormwater infrastructure. The state is working on it, but it is an enormous project.
- The pollution and stormwater will eventually impact the lake. The Town needs to think about how to protect that in the future.
- Water and sewer isn't business friendly.
- The metering system is not business friendly. Businesses end up paying the residential rate on a per item basis. The rate structure needs updating.
- Limited access to fresh food and vegetables. Kingdom Market has increased their variety, but that's the only place in town. There isn't really a local food movement. The VT Dept of Health called Island Pond a "food desert."

- Transportation in is very challenging. Not everyone has a car, so they can't leave town. RCT (rural community transit) comes through here, but it doesn't work for everyone, and is limited (have to be on Medicaid to get a ride for a medical appointment). There is a bus that goes to Newport, but only once a week.
- If you live out of town it is very difficult to get into town without a car.
- The Town office needs interior access to the second floor. It is not in compliance with ADA.
- The Ethan Allen building approached the town about getting water to them. It would be up to ½ mile of new main to do that and would be very challenging.
- The private infrastructure is in bad shape. There is no business in town to generate money for upkeep.
- Land settling near town office needs to be addressed, may avoid a lot of future problems.
- There are a lot of old homes and old people that live in those homes. We need programs to help people upkeep their property to improve the aesthetics of town.
- So many of buildings in downtown need so much fixing that they are not worth buying to fix up.
- There are only 4 volunteer firemen during the day.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Financing programs to help older folks upkeep their homes.
- Use local contractors for small jobs.
- Build bike paths or more accessible hiking paths that go into town so that all can access. There is a potential connection between Burke and Newport which both have mountain biking.
- Work together to expand 4-wheel opportunities, perhaps using the example of VAST. We could work more closely with other town ATV organizations to create connecting trails and investigate how to access conserved, state, and federal land.
- We should develop a bike plan for the wildlife refuge and other woodlands surrounding the town. We could build corridors to connect biking areas in other conserved lands. Then, we could market and map the trails.
- More financing for small businesses, build local and tourist capacity to support those small businesses.
- Seek out grants for sidewalks to school and through town.
- Work on public transportation. Partner with RCT. The community health center has some money for patients not on Medicaid to access transportation to care, and many people leave Island Pond every day for work.
- Develop volunteer transportation systems.
- Work with other towns in the region that have the same need.
- Improve town-sponsored communications and use media more effectively such as Front Porch Forum, updating the town's website and, perhaps the Chamber.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- With tired public infrastructure, it may be worth investing in downtown areas. Could be positive to improve streetscapes and develop more green infrastructure. This sends a message to landowners that the town and state are willing to make investment in downtown. Then, maybe landowners will invest more in their building.
- It could be interesting to explore the idea of volunteer drivers for public transportation and other local solutions to transportation.
- Adjusting the water and sewer rate structure can be more affordable for families and businesses.
- Public funding opportunities exist to extend water infrastructure to outlying businesses.
- The Small Business Development Center has business planning services, financing programs available, and revolving loan funds – perhaps the community could connect with them as a resource.
- Fiber access hasn't been activated. This sounds like it may be worth exploring as an asset that is underutilized.
- It seems like the town has a great deal of natural infrastructure – the Lake, the state park, town beach, etc. That could be looked at as an area for improvement.
- It is a great idea to look beyond town boundaries in improving infrastructure and connect with the region.
- It may be helpful to work together to identify the Town's unique brand. What is the one unique thing that it does that will make it stick out from other rural towns?
- It sounds like a key action in this community to improve both communication within the town and marketing positive aspects of the town to the outside.

Addressing Substance Abuse & Mental Health

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle, Lauren Greco (scribe), Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup, Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Michael Moser, Julie Raboin, Jessica Savage

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Island Pond Health Center has programs for drug abuse and mental health, including a licensed drug and alcohol counselor.
- The Town Hall hosts: AA meetings Fridays at 8PM, Yoga and other exercises programs.
- There is a great guidance counselor at the school.
- The pastor at the Green Mountain Bible Church is a licensed counselor.
- We have a skilled Rescue Squad in town.
- We are covered by a dedicated part time law enforcement officer.
- Northeast Kingdom Community Action Agency has an office in the Town Hall that is open every Thursday. This resource is used by some, but the hours are limited. There used to be an office open 5 days a week.
- Northeast Kingdom Learning Center is available by appointment in the Town Hall.
- The State Park is an asset.
- We have strong family networks. Many people here have family close by and engage in family oriented activities.
- There are Headstart and Early Headstart programs in Island Pond. It is family oriented with two play groups a month.
- The Physical Therapist in Island Pond allows people to use their exercise equipment when it's not in use for therapy.
- There is a pharmacy attached to the health center (for patients only), and a pharmacy downtown for the public.
- There is a Food Shelf at the Congregational Church open by phone call appointment. It is coordinated by the pastor's wife.
- We have Meals on Wheels from Sunrise Manner.
- There is a Food Bank at the school once a month, which includes education about healthy eating from EFNEP.
- There is a delivery of fresh vegetables once a week to residents of Sunrise Manner in the summertime.
- There is an Agency on Aging which is open a couple times a week.
- The Health Center is also a Dental Center, and the dental hygienist goes into the school to teach dental health to the children. The dentist does a tremendous amount of Medicaid, the care is very good, and they treat young children.
- The Lunchbox provides free meals for children under 8 every Friday all summer long.
- There is a Summer Rec program for students at the Town Hall.
- The library is very active and is conducive to children. It has computers and story hours.
- We have a community garden.
- The Community closet at the school is open every Thursday. It provides free clothes and necessities.
- Kid's club youth group meets Wednesday evenings at the church.
- Siskin & Northwoods have school programs, babysitting and community family based programs.
- The SASH program is an important resource.

What are the Challenges?

- We have poor access to fresh and healthy foods.
- We need to improve community communication. What are the resources out there, what is available, and are people aware of them? Do people know about the help that is available for drug problems?
- Services are available in the town office, but they are only on Thursdays (they used to be open 5 days a week).
- There are problems with a variety of drugs, including alcohol.
- A lot of people in town don't have cars or a license, particularly people with substance abuse problems. Lack of transportation makes it difficult to travel to surrounding towns, making access to AA and other treatment programs difficult.
- The nearest IOP (intensive outpatient program) is in St. Johnsbury, which is too far for many seeking help.
- Residents of Island Pond don't have access to the full range of care: outpatient, intensive outpatient, and inpatient. For example, if someone goes to inpatient for detox, they need the appropriate amount of support during their next phase of treatment, which is often impossible in Island Pond.
- NEK human services has drug and alcohol treatment and mental health services, but it is often booked solid and people are treated "like a number". It is not the highest quality of services provided, especially given the great need.
- The problem with limited treatment availability has been going on for a long time. Every time state and fed budgets get cut, they cut social services.
- Sometimes you have to wait months to get care.
- Alcohol use at Friday Night Live provides a poor example and easy access to alcohol for children.
- It's difficult to find a social gathering that doesn't involve drinking. Drinking is part of the culture in Island Pond. Everyone does it, and it's generational. There is a culture of drinking which alienates those who don't drink, and there are not a lot of other opportunities for gathering.
- Not everybody drinks – "you don't have to drink".
- The average resident isn't aware of all of the resources in town, and it's unclear how they find out.
- There is also a privacy issue. Many people want help but refuse to because they know everybody. There is nowhere to get help in a private way. In a small town everyone knows

- everyone, even just walking in the door to a treatment facility, people know what you're doing.
- Residents don't know how to approach one another to offer help.
 - Children need something to do that is centrally located and accessible. Transportation is also a problem for children.
 - What are the available services for children? How do we help children transition from the safety of elementary school into high school?
 - Many children grow up in addicted homes or homes with a lot of stress.

- There is no NA group.
- The high school kids are far away at North Country Union.
- Transportation is a barrier to involvement in high school sports and other activities.
- Many homes might not be safe or comfortable for children living there.
- We need something to help the families and children together.
- Parents need to learn control and society needs to help them have that control.
- Many resources and activities are summer focused. The hardest part of the year is in the winter.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We could have a team to conduct an alcohol sweep at Friday Night Live to reduce half empty bottles left around and improve safety for children.
- We could provide education on how community members can better approach or address someone who may have a need (substance abuse, lack of food, etc.) – some approach or way of speaking so that people don't feel like you feel sorry for them. Guidance for how the community can interact with people that need assistance.
- Consolidate the services in one location.
- We could increase law enforcement.
- Develop a teen center and a place to hang out with responsible adults – just to guide them, not to “tell them what to do”.
- Build a Recreation Center; a substance free community gathering place with activities for different age levels. It could provide support for people in recovery, for those uninterested in drinking or drugs, and would provide a community for children as well. People in recovery need somewhere to go, they are used to an active social life and it is easy to feel very isolated.
- We need a safe and comfortable place to go with responsible safe people. You don't have to be perfect or afraid, a place you can “plop” and just hang out. There are activities, but it doesn't have to be structured every second.
- We should start a parent support group.
- We could develop a program of counseling for parents or educational seminars that could help guide parents through family challenges. We could bring in experts to talk about family life, recommending real practices to help “put family back into the home.”
- We need connect with parents at the beginning of the school year and part way through with information and support.
- We could put together a symposium of people from Island Pond. People here will listen to advice from people they know from town more so than from “outside experts.”
- We could build a peer support group or a mentorship program with local residents.
- Convert the building across from Irving that Dexter has purchased into a community center.
- Create a Big Brother & Big Sister program to offer local mentorship opportunities and better connect youth with the community.
- We need to improve communication. We could use social media or a website to combine resources. We have five churches and a town hall and a lot of town land. If each group hosted things and there was one source for information, maybe we don't need a new community building.
- Start a Front Porch Forum page as a communication tool.
- Restart teen dances at the Legion (these used to occur monthly).
- Use creative solutions like music to help families deal with trauma. Create a kids' music program that coincides with a family/parent support group. Connect community musicians with kids.
- Focus on activities specifically connected with brain changes associated with recovering from trauma.
- Partner with the Vermont Family Network to offer services in town.
- Create a local family group.
- NAMY (national alliance on mental illness family support group) provides helpful information about mental illness. This could be useful in increasing our capacity to help other another and approach one another.
- Bring more resources & services to Island Pond to improve access and reduce the need to travel to services.
- Expand the RCT service from Sunrise Manor to offer more buses for all members of the community both within the community and to services outside of town.
- Develop a network of ride sharing. A lot of us travel frequently but don't know who needs a ride.
- Improve in-town transportation. Some people just need to get to the grocery store, medical center, after school programs, home.
- Create Drop-In Centers for children to go after school where they can stay until their parents are out of work (the current system is done too early for parent work schedules).
- We have the answers here among us, we just have to put them into action.
- Create a grandmother and grandfather program in the schools. “Sometimes all the kids need is a grandma with a hug and a sugar cookie to make themselves feel good about

themselves, so that they are validated". Grandparents have so much to give.

- Improve local transportation by creating a bus system or formalized ride sharing and carpooling.
- Re-establish grocery store delivery services. This could be a volunteer effort or led by the Kingdom Market.
- Use posters and signup sheets in addition to the internet. Not everyone is on the internet.

- Inspire more volunteers into action. A small group of residents can't do everything.
- Learn how to engage new volunteers.
- A lot of people would like to do something, but if they're not asked, they won't do it. Don't wait to be asked, and also, ask people. Take charge! Some people don't have the confidence, so unless they are pushed, they might not step up. Extend the confidence and ask people for their help.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This is incredibly high energy and a great turnout for this topic. There appear to be coordination issues, but also great resources available already.
- Part of being a good volunteer is ensuring that volunteering becomes sustainable. It's not just about "you" volunteering all the time, but also about reaching out to other people to encourage a culture of volunteerism.
- The more public you can be about what you're trying to do, and the more open, transparent communication you put out, and the more you ask openly for help -- you'll find resources that you didn't know existed.
- Transportation is a key; people are so spread apart. Ride sharing and organized volunteer solutions are probably a great opportunity that is feasible to take on.
- With regards to the stigma around asking for help -- it is so important to work intentionally to create a welcoming

environment where it's okay to ask for help and where your supported when you do.

- Addiction is a disease, not a personal moral failing. Emphasizing the health aspect will help in reducing stigma.
- The stressors that families face are a huge driver of many of these issues. There is a lot of potential for matching families with resources and families with each other.
- Harness your passion to find out what's important and what you want to do about it. Having a backbone organization to provide support is important -- nobody has the time energy and resources to head up the entire volunteer department. When it comes down to organizing, it's very tough for any individual. It also is important to demand that the service providers do things differently -- advocate for the community.
- Information sharing is important. There is always a need for a community calendar to share events and information.
- Peer support sounds really important.

Growing Our Economy

Visiting Team: Richard Amore, Tom Berry, Ted Brady (facilitator), Paul Costello, Emily Erwin (scribe), Christine Hallquist, Jenny Nelson, Joe Segale, Dave Snedeker

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Lake and its proximity to town. There are not very many towns in the state with a pond right next to downtown.
- Recreational opportunities are year-round, not just seasonal.
- The community is a great asset. People know each other, and there is real community here.
- Many people have a strong work ethic. There are people who are traveling very far to work but who would love to work here in town.
- This town is full of creative and artistic people.
- Access to trails.
- Sweet Tree is hiring 70 now. There is a lot of work to do. The turnover is low because people can work in town without traveling very far. A new packaging line going in soon with a lot of potential.
- We have entrepreneurs who are willing to start businesses.
- Many bordering communities have assets to take advantage of.
- Young middle-class families are coming back.
- There is a Health Center in town.
- Empty storefronts are already existing structures for new businesses.
- Location is an asset. We are far enough from other big towns so there is an opportunity to develop the town center as a place for nearby residents to do local shopping.
- Friday Night Live, started by strong Chamber of Commerce, is a great event.
- We have gas stations, a few places to eat, a few places to stay.
- There is a lot of surrounding lands with public recreation easements.
- We have extensive snowmobiling infrastructure.
- Infrastructure for businesses already exists (Broadband infrastructure, T1 lines, etc.).
- This could be a retirement destination; families will visit them and bring business to the town. Maybe we should promote Sunrise Manor more?
- We are fairly large geographically and lots of potential space.
- There is a large cross-section of available real estate at fairly reasonable prices. Residential water and sewer are available.
- We have a great school and a good Headstart program.
- We have the railroad to ship things for business as well as an airport.

- There are a handful of vibrant businesses in the downtown sector.
- Our age structure could be an asset. Those nearing retirement are often excellent workers.
- We have an enormous timber resource and potential for furniture making.
- Beautiful birding along a migratory flyway.
- There are already two existing industrial zones.
- There is a lot of grant potential here.
- Beautiful river that comes into and leaves town.
- The town has a public non-profit - the Brighton Community Forum (owns welcome center) that can accept grant funding.

What are the Challenges?

- Lack of capital in private and municipal spheres.
- Land base is underutilized.
- The challenge with bringing bigger businesses into town is location and the distance from the interstate. Many big businesses aren't suited for this area.
- The physical location a challenge. We have a small population so a business may not be able to hire 200-300 people.
- Skill building for potential employees is difficult to acquire.
- We need a more creative vision for a diversified economy that capitalizes on already existing assets, rather than being dependent on one big business. We need to be building a resilient economy.
- We need an economic development committee that isn't the Town Administrator or Chamber.
- The age structure of the population is a challenge. The majority of the population is at retirement age.
- Zoning is a challenge. There are not enough industrially zoned lands to attract business.
- Sweet Tree would like to expand, but has restrictions on lands, and scale of their business. There are Act 250 challenges with hosting a large business.
- This is not an aesthetically pleasing town.
- It is difficult to finance downtown buildings for new businesses.
- Paperwork currently associated with community loans is challenging.
- There is no industrial park.
- The Snowmobile population is dwindling.
- No ATV trail system.
- It is difficult to staff the welcome center with volunteers.
- We have low volunteer capacity.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We need to develop something to bring people into the community that is not business-based. We could create a garden walk with a map. Businesses can do flower/veggie boxes, community gardens, private gardens. This would draw people into to other businesses.
- Develop a community-wide plant and perennial swap to beautify the town.
- Work to attract and market to the birding community.
- Explore creative financing for buildings in town.
- We should work to brand the town. We already have boats in the town common area with flowers planted in them; are there other art pieces that would indicate our unique identity?
- Develop a micro-brewery.
- Adjust zoning to increase industrial capacity.
- Market community to the outside.
- Improve built infrastructure.
- Work to attract ATV industry and tourism.
- Grow the mountain bike industry and infrastructure. Connect with Burke. There is potential in the wildlife refuge and surrounding lands on mostly old roads.
- Attract/advocate for passenger rail and market and build up existing infrastructure.
- Attract a medium-sized, online buy-and-sell business that doesn't necessarily need to be right next to the interstate.
- Develop a technical program to teach basic computer skills to build skills of people who live in town. Work with Northeast Kingdom Learning Service in town office to expand what they offer.
- A Vocational Education program from surrounding schools (such as the tech center in Canaan) could volunteer carpentry and other work.
- Grow high-bush cranberries.
- Create a revolving loan fund for small business financing.
- Build a committee to identify potential aesthetic improvements and prioritize action steps.
- Capitalize on our strong arts culture. Develop a program with the welcome center to engage the arts community.
- Seek out grants for community businesses.
- Establish a kayaking business like in West Charleston; would first need to conduct a river clean-up.
- Connect businesses with each other so that they can work together and collaborate.
- Offer wildlife tours.
- Market Champion Lands to people with horses. Start a horse trail-riding business.
- Start an economic development committee and empower the Chamber to do more economic development.
- Encourage community participation in Selectboard meetings.
- Improve walking trails and sidewalks.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Island Pond has a lot of existing infrastructure that is a huge asset. You have many fantastic natural resources, water and sewer, electric, rail, and roads.
- Year-round recreation is a huge opportunity (ATV, mountain biking, lake).
- There is existing public financing for building upkeep, small business planning, and working lands financing. This might be something to explore.
- Tax stabilization policies could be a strategy to look into.
- The Rock Art in Morrisville is a great example of local branding that capitalizes on the unique region and local artists.
- Marketing natural resources and recreation could be a good starting point to attract visitors to the town.
- I am really hearing the importance of town beautification. First impressions are important, and there is some low-hanging fruit for funding such as village center tax credits, incentives, or other grants.
- Using the resource of youth to help the community to bring in the next generation is a great idea to expand reach and expand the volunteer base of the chamber and other community groups.
- Communication within the community is critical. It opens up all kinds of new avenues.
- Realize power of collective, proactive action, unity, and collective will. It is important to include everyone and take advantage of fresh voices and vision.
- Find the one thing that will make a big difference, and bring to bear collective action.
- People in surrounding areas with less natural assets are making money on recreation; there is an enormous opportunity here.
- An economic development committee with a concrete vision sounds like a great idea that could help to move these ideas forward.
- One big business will not save a town; a diverse group of small businesses is a more stable and resilient economic base.
- Economic development does not equal one business for life; the way we work now is totally different. There is potential to attract remote workers of the next generation who are attracted to the amenities here.

Recreation and Natural Resources

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle, Lauren Greco (scribe), Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup, Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Michael Moser, Julie Raboin, Jessica Savage

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Island Pond is one of the most beautiful places you could hope to live.
- Island Pond is known as the “Snowmobile capital of the Northeast”, and has a fantastic 26-mile trail system.
- The tri-county ATV club, which is affiliated with VASA, manages the snow mobile trails. They are working to connect the existing trails to New Hampshire and Morgan, and are working with many landowners and collaborators, but may also require the cooperation of the state and federal land.
- There are two state beaches, one town beach, and one private beach for swimming.
- There is a beautiful gym, with three active exercise groups, a school basketball team, a men’s basketball team, and other programs.
- The island in the lake is for sale. It has a beautiful beach that is currently private but experiences a lot of public use.
- There are beautiful hiking trails.
- The Northwood Stewardship Center does forestry work, hires local kids to maintain trails, and hosts environmental camps and school programs.
- Island Pond is on the Forest Canoe Trail which extends from New York to Maine.
- Fantastic outdoor recreation opportunities include: hunting, fishing, leafing, birding, ice fishing, sledding, cross country skiing, snow shoeing, fly fishing, and more!
- Island Pond has a small public skating rink, a town ball field, tennis courts, a basketball court, and a small playground.
- There are privately owned and State owned campgrounds. The Brighton campground is known as one of the nicest places to camp in the state.
- Friday Night Live has been a popular venue to bring the community together.
- The Champion lands refuge and state lands present tremendous potential.
- Maple sugaring.
- There is huge potential for biking, but much of the state & fed land has policies that don’t allow it.
- There is a state owned airport 3 miles outside of town.
- There is a big wild game dinner every year in town.
- There are horse trails on the former Champion lands which provide a model for biking or ATV potential.
- The remoteness is an asset that creates the context for recreation activities that is different from much of the state.
- The railroad comes through town.
- The legion holds a lot of activities including community suppers, corn hole tournaments, dances, horseshoe tournaments, and private events such as baby showers and weddings.

- The Island Pond Chamber of Commerce hosts a lot of activities, including Winter Weekend, Friday night live, and market day.
- There is a welcome center.
- There are many canoeing and kayaking opportunities.
- There is a camp culture. Many rentals and seasonal residents.
- There is a recreation and resource map which was published and sold, and contains great data (though may be outdated).
- Northwood Stewardship Center has cross country skiing trails.
- There is a culture of openness to land sharing and access. However, as land ownership is changing the openness may be changing too.
- The Essex County Conservation District and Silvio Conte are assets. They have helped Brighton with a green storm water infrastructure project and host conservation field days for 4th – 6th graders. They could collaborate with the town to access grant opportunities. Their mission is to protect the resources of Essex County.

What are the Challenges?

- The Thousand Mile Ride the Wilds in New Hampshire causes concern regarding its effect on communities and potential for environmental damage. People at first liked the snow mobiles, but there is noise, constant traffic, etc. ATVs are a double edged sword.
- ATV and Snowmobile use brings some benefits to the community, but at the risk of losing the lake and mountains, animals, pollution, noise pollution. There is a need to keep the lake clean for our grandchildren to swim in.
- People may not all agree on the best approach towards snowmobiles and ATVs. There is some tension there, how do we address it as a community and move forward in a unified way?
- It is a priority to protect water quality in the lake. Current lake water quality is average, but may be under threat.
- Many kids are stuck playing video games instead of taking part in more active recreational activities.
- It is hard to find people locally who can lead exercise programs.
- There is no organizing body for exercise and recreation. The health center and town helps, but there is a need for greater leadership.
- Money is a challenge.
- Conservation groups were willing to help conserve the island, but they could not afford the very expensive asking price. The island is vulnerable.
- Fish and Wildlife Service's comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) inhibits development on the Federal Land. The plan may be released soon, but it has been a long time coming.
- There are 200,000 acres of conserved land where ATVs are prohibited. There may be some potential for connectivity, but this isn't necessarily a great destination. There may be safety problems, and maintenance problems that are under estimated.
- The businesses in this town struggle to get people in.
- Snow mobiles and ATVs are dangerous and Island Pond is not well equipped to rescue those people. The state is unable to help. Insurance companies don't pay. There are only three people who take care of ambulance service, and there aren't people willing to take the class, which costs \$300.
- We suffer from a lack of volunteers and availability of folks that can be on the rescue squad.
- How can we find ways to help landowners keep their working lands open at a time of economic constriction?
- There needs to be cooperation and a system so people can't ride just anywhere. Regulation is necessary to keep it safe and beneficial.
- It is difficult to get through state and federal lands with ATVs.
- New out of state landowners want to put up posted signs and close their land. They don't realize the historical precedence of open lands. The community depends on the seasons, recreation, and being able to share the land.
- Funding & logistics are a challenge.
- We need activities that include teens. Parents need to help out other peoples' kids as well as their own. Some parents don't have the capacity.
- The Island is the 5 Million \$ elephant in the room (appraisal ~\$600,000, Price \$1.5 mil).

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We should build a boardwalk on South Street with binoculars looking towards the lake and mountains to help bring more tourists in and offer views.
- Establish trails so that they don't threaten the watershed, cause erosion, etc. Develop in a more environmentally conscious way.
- Expand the select board budget to allow us to hire a recreation director who provides a daily opportunity for kids to take part in a recreation activity after school.
- Find the happy medium between pro and anti ATV residents. Find how can the community come together to be inclusive.
- Create an ATV trail on the edges of roadsides in the state's right of way, to allow people to connect to the NH trail system.
- This is a "worst case scenario solution" that would allow us to enter the world of ATVs.
- Pollution emissions are regulated by the Federal Government and are all approved by the EPA. Pollution may not be an issue as it is highly regulated.
- Trail design will be important to mitigate the water quality and erosion problems.
- Include people who are knowledgeable about conservation and the effects of ATV use (or any use) on the land. Everyone needs to work together, talking about the difficulties and the goals. An inclusive conversation including experts and those who question the process.

- Island Pond could set the standard and come up with a planning process that includes the economic perspective, natural resource perspective, trail design perspective, and others.
- Let's build a bike trail! We could connect into the Burke bike trail system. That might be a greater potential. Burke bikers might be more interested in coming to Island Pond than ATVers from NH would be (given that NH already has 1000 miles of trail).
- Island Pond offers something that Burke cannot offer and Burke has to turn away business, so this may represent an opportunity. All it will take is to have a corridor manager to open up people to biking here. The infrastructure is already here.
- Establish more places in town to eat. People aren't going to come here if there is nothing to do. We need restaurants and places to stay.
- Hold one on one conversations with new landowners conveying the importance of open land sharing
- If everyone was enrolled in current use and wasn't allowed to post their land, that would be a good step forward. Create local incentives and an educational forum to maintain public land access.
- Petition the Fed and State to allow access to their lands, which are "cutting island pond off."
- Create a coordinated and facilitated conversation with different land owning stakeholders and land use stakeholders.
- Reach out to Burke to find out what their model is to deal with private land owners regarding land bike access.
- The state is very willing to talk about bike trails. They need someone to step forward as a corridor manager.
- There are two ecological groups who do a lot of after school outdoor activities with kids, the groups exist, we should expand this.
- Develop outdoor teen programming.
- Survey the town about their opinion about what should become of the island.
- Buy the pond.
- Regarding the island, we should ensure all of the conservation avenues been thoroughly researched and assess whether or not all resources have been exhausted.
- We should survey tourists to find out what they want/need.
- People are coming to Conte in for birding, hiking, biking, etc.
- Create a conservation commission or a recreation commission.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- I was very impressed with the respectful conversation. You should work to keep that going. More respectful communication up front may alleviate difficulties down the road.
- Kingdom trails has 55 individual landowners who agreed to mountain biking on the land – they celebrate their landowners, recognize their neighbors, value their opinions and their land, and maintain open dialogue.
- Take all the ideas and translate them into a cohesive plan. Think big picture about how all the parts fit together, where should you focus efforts, look at the broad recreation plan for the community or region to provide broader context.
- Clearly, the greatest natural resource here is the people.
- There was a brief mention of maple, no mention of timber and no mention of agriculture. However, it does sound like folks see the conserved land here as an asset. It is a patchwork now – perhaps a map could be created or improved to pull it together. There is a lot of potential here for great partnerships and cooperation.
- Island Pond is a classic gateway community. How can the community draw people in to stop here on their way to birding or other activities? Perhaps there are opportunities in branding, mapping, inventorying – these could be great first steps.
- The state is currently working on how to deal with posting, and publishing a pamphlet to inform landowners of their liability. There is also huge demand and interest at the state level mountain biking. Think about it carefully and comprehensively. Destination mountain biking and overnight mountain biking are growing. There's all kinds of things you could do here that you couldn't do anywhere else – a mountain bike trail around the pond!
- It is a delicate balance - how do you have an economically viable community but still keep your "out of reach privacy?" Great to be proactive about how to protect the land and conservation in parallel with economic development.
- It will be important to emphasize the uniqueness of Island Pond – I urge you to reflect on your unique qualities, and rather than try to imitate what's happening across the river in the north country, learn how to emphasize what makes you special and unique. Maybe you can't recreate what NH has done, but maybe you can make something better.
- The youth are a big asset – recreation is also about what the towns people and the youth do, not just the tourists. So let's not forget that piece as well.

Revitalizing the Downtown

Visiting Team: Richard Amore, Tom Berry, Ted Brady, Paul Costello (facilitator), Emily Erwin (scribe), Christine Hallquist, Jenny Nelson, Joe Segale, Dave Snedeker

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Lake is an asset. Could the downtown open itself more to the lake?
- The town is walkable. You can get a coffee, go to the hardware store, go to the bank.
- We have a Lakeshore trail that connects the town beach to town green, playground, tennis courts, and basketball court which becomes an ice skating rink in the winter!
- We are strong in summer and winter recreation.
- There are great community events such as Friday Night Live, Market days, and 4th of July which are put on by the Chamber.
- The Park and pavilion.
- We are a beautiful location near public land.
- The town is compact; smart growth.
- Brighton has many any historical buildings, not just downtown.
- The town is at the Intersection of two state highways with nonstop traffic.
- Brighton State Park is nearby.
- We are a major snowmobiling crossroads.
- Wide streets, space, open downtown.
- There is a softball field walkable to downtown.
- Key downtown buildings like the train station, and town office have been renovated.
- There is a hiking trail that goes right from downtown.
- Accessibility of school.
- Great emergency services facility central to the town; well-equipped.
- Bluff Mountain is beautiful - you can see it from everywhere.
- Affordable housing.
- Snowmobiling is waning, but Island Pond has the best trails in Vermont.

What are the Challenges?

- We need more trained volunteers to work emergency services.
- We have empty storefronts and lost vitality. Building owners who do not want to use buildings undermines the quality of downtown streets. How do you start a business when you're not sure if you're going to get the traffic with the rest of the empty storefronts?
- We have an aging population, loss of youth, lack of young adults to volunteer, buy land, and re-vitalize the town.
- It is difficult to finance small businesses because banks aren't interested in helping.
- Enormous seasonality of motels and gas stations. If a \$15 minimum wage goes through, it will be difficult to stay in business.
- Snowmobiling is waning and is very weather-dependent. People will cancel if there is no snow.
- Not enough people are coming into town to visit all of the businesses that want to operate here. There is competition among already existing businesses, so it is difficult to think about expanding or creating new businesses.
- The Chamber doesn't have enough expertise and capacity to think about small business development holistically. The town plan doesn't go into that strategic planning.
- We are aesthetically challenged and not architecturally cohesive (historic buildings, Family Dollar).
- It is a challenge to facilitate development while keeping in mind everyone's needs as well as infrastructure limits.
- There are no sidewalks, or they are difficult to navigate with gaps in the network. The town has never been able to agree on responsibility for sidewalks, on what to do in the future.
- There is too much red tape. The Brighton Community Forum did exist, but lost steam after spending so much time on one project (The Welcome Center). We need new people engaged.
- Not enough parking.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Put lights on the softball field.
- Identify complimentary businesses, rather than thinking about competition. Think about the downtown holistically and create a practical plan to move forward. Build a strategic planning process with UVM extension service or other contracting support.
- Build a technical school or outpost of a school. We have the land base, people who want to learn, and housing already exists.
- Develop an Arts center or cooperative to embrace artists that already live there without putting a lot of money out there (example of Swanton Arts Collective doing murals).
- Branding of town, marketing of town in the media, let people know that we're here.
- Create a walking tour around town to loop around the lake. Draft a tourist map, prints on the sidewalk, etc. to let people know what to do in Island Pond.
- Build a kiosk near Northern Forest Canoe Trail in town, or in town office parking lot.

- Make a brochure with hiking trails. Or create a bike or tourist map.
- Continue to promote Friday Night Live.
- Establish a revolving loan fund, like they have in other NEK towns, to help finance small businesses downtown. Use USDA rural development funds and VT Community Development Block Grant Program as initial sources of capital. We need to have a group marketing the loan fund.
- Are there other forms of financing available besides revolving loan funds? Are there micro-loan funds available? We should connect the community to sources of small business financing.
- Build bicycle trails to bring people to town. You need an attraction before you open up businesses, need both local and outside business.
- Muddy Gras event in mud season!
- Need businesses open on weekdays.
- Create Arts and crafts event in the Spring or perhaps a craft fair at the school.
- Team up with other towns to create regional brand as the gateway to Essex County.
- Host a Farmer's market.
- Launch a kayaking business for Clyde River based on the beach.
- Establish a place to rent/buy items for outdoor economy such as kayaks, bikes, SUPs, canoes.
- Sterling College or CCV could offer courses here. Organize to attract educational opportunities.
- Create a new policy to take legal action against landlords who aren't doing anything with their buildings. Are there tools selectboards can use to push for appropriate decisions by landlords? Perhaps an ordinance for building maintenance? Proposals need to come from the town for selectboard to take action.
- Improve the streetscape with more trees lining downtown. Draft a strategic plan get town set up to get grants for downtown beautification.
- Create a downtown master plan.
- Improve the aging sewer and water infrastructure and at the same time put in sidewalks. Johnson did it all together, used USDA, congressional offices, and transportation funding.
- Create interest in volunteers for downtown beautification committee. Volunteers could paint buildings and plant trees.
- Invest in a downtown waterfront playground so more families come hang out.
- Build a local brewery.
- Start a Flea market on the green.
- Start an enormous cornhole tournament and other recreational events. We need a coordinator to create reasons for people to want to come to town.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There are a lot of assets here, especially people. It will be important to define a specific goal, and then create projects to work towards them.
- There is a lot of consistency among these sessions and financing came up in each.
- Mapping is a great strategy. Cycling in the Kingdom map; business market study, UVM extension provides those on request.
- Gateway or "front porch" community to fantastic set of natural resources; what public amenities do you have control over, and what private property owners do you have less control over? Public boat launch, parks, beach, ways to enhance those resources you have the most immediate control over.
- Need for built infrastructure improvement, lots of pavement in downtown, connection to lake, sidewalks, connection to trails; are coordinated grant programs so you can do all improvements at once; master plan would put the town in a position to do that
- Need to intentionally program public spaces; it will not all happen organically. A recreational coordinator can also think about downtown and create activity on an ongoing basis.
- A committed group of citizens can accomplish a lot (example of Johnson).
- Beautification and aesthetics are a great strategy. Work doesn't have to be huge to make a difference. Perhaps a speed bump in town could help slow down traffic?
- Maps! Marketing of the town – there is a lot of activity to tap into in the state park.
- Many improvements have already been made in town – Could you enhance already existing improvements and mobilize with more unique downtown events?
- Choose a few things to do well that mark progress, and the atmosphere changes.

Future of Our School

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle (facilitator), Lauren Greco (scribe), Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup, Jenna Koloski, Michael Moser, Julie Raboin, Jessica Savage

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The small school size (105 kids) allows for closer relationships between the kids and better learning.
- We want to see the small school stay here, it's an anchor for the town, and provides a good education.
- The school has basketball and soccer that play against other schools.
- The whole community is involved in the small school, even parents who don't have kids in the school come to the

basketball games and programs. People feel comfortable bringing problems to the staff and board at the school.

- It provides a good background and base for student education.
- The school lends itself to community cohesion.
- There is an accessible staff and school board.
- All of the kids are tremendous.
- One on one work with the teachers is helpful, the connection students can form with the students across the grades is unique.
- The school is a fun environment, kids are educated, but they enjoy themselves too.
- There is an excellent food program at the school. All children are offered breakfast and lunch, the food is good and the kids are eating it and enjoying it. If a child comes in late, they still have access to food. Snack at 10, and afterschool snacks, and teachers give out food during the day. Free and open to all.
- There is a great afterschool program Monday – Thursday, garden club, sports, canoeing, the kids love it and parents love it. It is administered through the Encore program, some funding is through the school, some is external. They have

about 20% participation on any given day. Last year about 70 different students participated at any given time, out of 90 students total.

- Winter programming is offered at Burke Mountain and Northwoods. Siskin comes and takes K-2 snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.
- There is a very up to date library. The average copyright date is 10-12 years old, there are about 5,000 volumes, in addition to online resources.
- Phenomenal staff care deeply about the kids. Teachers receive professional development on a regular basis, and are very well educated and dedicated.
- We have a committed and positive school board.
- We have a wonderful and well liked music teacher.
- There is a band in school, and there are affordable private lessons.
- There is a good PE program and PE teacher is well liked.
- There is an art teacher who comes 2 days per week.
- There is a full time licensed nurse practitioner at the school.

What are the Challenges?

- There may not be enough opportunities. We struggle to afford up to date technology; we can afford chrome books but don't have the bandwidth to keep them connected. We have to keep up with technology, it's essential.
- The bus ride is very long (1 hour and 20 minutes each way).
- We can't afford a foreign language program, home economics, or wood shop.
- There is a perception among certain realtors that the school system isn't strong. One realtor said "you don't want to buy in this town, because the school is horrible". This threatens the future of the town and the future of the school.
- High property taxes.
- The sports are located in Derby and Newport. People want their kids to go to the school where everything is happening.
- We need more people in town and in the school.
- There is no day care in Island Pond, so people have to travel to take their kids to daycare until they are of school age. They take kids to Charleston and Morgan.
- The funding for the school is difficult for seniors and non-parents to afford.
- Community integration is difficult for people who don't have kids in the school – not having kids makes it hard to get involved.
- It can be difficult to get the local kids involved. Building relationships between community organizations and the school is essential.
- Transportation can be a big issue inhibiting kids' involvement in activities.
- The school doesn't always communicate well with the community.
- There is significant concern about Act 46 – A program through the state that is encouraging school districts to consolidate. There is a feeling of loss of local control, loss of local schools, and incentives are becoming less and less attractive.
- There is fear that we will be bullied into consolidating.
- There is concern in the community about the implications of Act 46 and losing local control of the school. The Derby school is very far, and the real estate values in Morgan dropped after they consolidated.
- The bus is very expensive. We need something other than the Brighton School Bus – teachers can't use the school bus for field trips because it's too expensive.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Develop a system of shadowing / buddying up with people out in the community. Students could learn something applied for maybe an hour or two a day.
- Build community partnerships between the school and community. We have all the resources we need, we just need to build the relationships and learn how to access them.
- Develop community built and community sustained education. The future of education is not in a classroom, the future of education is hands on, outside the class room. Life doesn't happen in a class room – and we can be a model for that. Your greatest assets are your relationships; we need to build on those. We have to look at the future and that is the future.
- Bring back the Foxfire program – a skill sharing program between students and professionals that brought kids and community members together, and brought community members into the school. This instilled passion in the students, was low cost, and provided students with many real life skills

like interviewing, writing, and creating. Foxfire meets the new standards of education and should be re-instated.

- Bring the kids into the senior home to read with the elderly.
- The school used to host a community dinner once a month, and the students ran the dinner and then interacted with the community. Bring back these dinners.
- Create opportunities to foster a culture of volunteerism in the young people.
- Look for more opportunities to integrate the younger grades.
- Get more people involved in the Home and School Association (PTA). There are currently six members.
- Change the name from Parent Association to School Community Group to include non-parents.
- Spread awareness about the existence of this organization (Home and School Association) and make it clear that its inclusive to all parents as well as non-parents.
- Create a forum or bulletin board for ride sharing. Increase communication around transportation need and transportation opportunities for ride sharing.
- The school could attempt communication with RCT.
- Study transportation opportunities and challenges.
- Pair 4th graders and kindergarteners as “buddies” who remain together until the older student graduates, and the young student can be paired with their own kindergartener.
- Create a welcome package for new homeowners that explains school resources, town resources, and garbage systems.
- Create a welcoming committee for new residents to town.
- Create opportunities for parents and community members to volunteer in the classroom.
- Inform parents about the legal requirements that enable school volunteerism (background checks, classes, fingerprints).
- Look for strategies to increase communication with the community. Tell the story of the wonderful school community.
- Create a Facebook page and keep the web page up to date.
- Link the town website and the school website.
- Vote! Come to town meetings and attend school board meetings.
- Encourage everyone to come to the board meetings – whether you have kids or not.
- Strengthen the relationship between the senior center and the school, and extend it to the younger kids (it is currently only 7th and 8th graders integrating in the community).
- Bring the seniors to events at the school.
- Look for opportunities to engage different groups in the community – i.e. the veterans
- Research supplemental funding resources that could help support additional activities and transportation costs.
- The school concerts are now held at the Town Hall which is great – maybe there could be more events at the town hall.
- Put more articles in the newspaper announcing school events. This creates a positive image for the school and increases communication.
- Make access into the school easier. Get community into the school, and kids into the community – and then broadcast it. This is an opportunity to show that good things are happening.
- Establish a list of pre-approved people who may be available for a variety of needs – volunteerism, transportation, etc.
- Coordinate free publicity through the newspaper on a monthly or weekly basis highlighting teachers, students, and events in the community.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There is a great opportunity to engage with the greater community. If you can't pay for extra “opportunities” find the people in town who are willing to volunteer to provide those resources.
- The school is an incredible asset in this community, the principal is devoted to connecting to the community, there is an amazing staff and school board. There is positive energy in the school, the student forum was great. Pride and ownership in the fantastic school, there is some work to do to get that out to the broader community and outside of the community.
- The pluses and minuses of being in a small community – a sense of caring, valuing staff and school boards, and caring of other peoples' kids. Downsides include not being able to have a full time art teacher, foreign language – funding cuts make it difficult on a small community such as yours. Lack of child care is a real problem – people moving to a new area won't consider moving in without any child care providers. Availability of child care spans every sector that we consider in development.
- Communication is a major theme. Where's the bulletin board? The Brighton Bulletin – how come no one had brought this up before? There are many sources of information, but getting them connected is a real challenge.
- Volunteerism. There are many qualified people and resources, but there needs to be some kind of organizing factor behind it to make it happen.
- This was an amazing conversation, but where are the men? How do we engage fathers, brothers, uncles, grandfathers? That is a really important piece in moving your school forward.
- You have a great school, and that's a reflection of the community and the kids.

Youth Forum Notes

Compiled from a youth forum held with Brighton Middle School students and VCRD staff on September 27th, 2016.

What is successful about the Brighton community? What's working?

- Being able to go down to the lake – swimming, fishing, rope swing.
- 4-wheeling on trails.
- Snowmobiling.
- Sliding in the winter.
- Mudding with a 4-wheeler or truck.
- Maple sugaring is fun.
- Hunting, fishing, ice fishing.
- Basketball court at the park.
- Ice rink on the basketball court in the winter.
- Tennis and volleyball courts.
- Easy to bike around town on the sidewalks.
- Walking path along the shore by Ponds Edge, made in 2013. It goes through the park and ends at the lumber yard.
- Friday Night Live in the summer.
- Making money at Friday Night Live by selling stuff.
- Fireworks at the park and parades on July 4th and Memorial Day.
- Can have your own fireworks.
- Living on dead-end road and the independence of that.
- Playing sports: football, soccer, hockey.
- Watching train go past at night.
- Knowing everyone in the community.
- Feeling safe walking downtown.
- Nice to have the Dollar General in town.
- The Brighton Garage, owned by Craig Goulet.
- The Legion.
- Halloween costume party every year at the Legion, but it's just for adults.
- The Brighton State Park.
- Lakeside Campground. There is a little park there.

What are the Challenges? What would you wish to improve?

- Not a lot of jobs for people in town. There should be more variety of jobs. Only have Kingdom Market, Dollar General, Irving, Pond's Edge. Everything shut down when Dollar General came in, like the restaurants.
- Trails for snowmobiling and 4-wheeling need improving – need bridges, better grooming.
- Need more people to join the snowmobiling and 4-wheeling club.
- There isn't a 4-wheeler or snowmobile trail connecting different parts of town. Having a trail to the school so we can ride our 4-wheelers or bikes to school.
- Should have bike trail through the woods.
- Rivers and lakes have beaver dams and could be improved for recreation, kayaking, etc.
- Like to have more kids in our school. No one will come here if there aren't any jobs.
- People in town might move or not come here because no jobs or transportation to towns that have jobs.
- Need more stores. Should be a MacDonald's and a Dunkin Donuts in town. Should open the restaurant Hobo's again.
- Need an outfitters shop in town. The other one closed down.
- A restaurant serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner is opening in Guy Daniels old building – a hotel, restaurant, pub.
- Sidewalks are in bad shape. Some parts of the sidewalk are nice, other parts are all cracked.
- The roads have potholes, cracks, big dips, need improvement.
- Not a lot to do for kids. Gets pretty boring after a while. Don't know what to do.
- Transportation is a challenge for sports teams.
- We're so far away from everything that it limits opportunities.

What can you and Brighton residents do to make sure the town is a dynamic place to live and learn?

- Some sort of recreation hall, an arcade, place that has stuff for kids to do. The town hall is open in the winter for basketball, but maybe a more organized rec center.
- We should get laser tag facility with an arcade, roller-skating. It could help the economy.
- Trail from school around town so kids can get to school by 4-wheeler, snowmobile, bikes, etc.
- Create a Paintball course.
- Chocolate fountain in the middle of town. A decorative water fountain in the middle of town.
- Build a Skate park. There's one in Newport, but kids here would love it.
- Build a place with a hot tub and swimming pool.
- A protected piece of property that people can use for hunting, hiking, skiing, stocked with game birds.
- Open a movie theater or drive-in.
- Could have a pop-up theater with big screen that shows movies every so often.
- Town curfew because too many people are tearing up the roads.
- Bowling alley.

- Arcade could also have dances for different ages or other activities.
- Community venue (like the Legion) could have kids nights like dances and stuff.
- Put in a building for snowmobile and ATV clubs. They have their meetings at the welcome center. It would be good to have their own designated spot.
- A building for all types of activities shared by 4-wheeler, snowmobiling, and other clubs. Could have Halloween parties, Christmas parties, etc. The Legion has parties for adults but not kids.
- Make a bridge to the island. The beach can be used publically, but the island is private property. The island is in a trust and it's for sale. The owner died.
- Hold community fundraisers to raise money for some of these good ideas.
- Should have more opportunities school-wise. This school should be a choice school so kids have more options and opportunities with transportation to other schools.
- Bus service in town. Don't have any bus stops. Could have busses going to Newport, Orleans.
- A state-wide program that pays for teenagers to work for the summer. For example, at the Welcome Center. Businesses don't have to pay out of their pocket, but the state would pay for the kids working at local businesses.
- A career center to help find jobs.
- Have more places where people can go relax. Like a café or a mini-park somewhere quiet.





VIII. Brighton Community Visit Participants

Deborah Ahrens	J.P. Gervais	Sherry Marsha	Denise Russell
Ruth Aldrich	Jeanne Gervais	Ephrayim Masse	Joe Russo
Francis Allard	Jocelyne Gervais	Tor Masse	Bryan and Teisha
Sue Allard	Michael Gervais	Nancy Maxwell	Schaeffer
Sonya Ashman	Phillippe Gervais	Sharlene McCornell	Scott Shepardson
Edward Barber	Reno Gervais	Heather McElroy	Kathy Somoroff
Joshlynn Barlow	Walter Ges at	Katie Mientka	Eric Stebenne
Virginia Bergh	Jodi Gonyaw-Worth	Amber Moore	Misty Stebenne
Alicia Beth	June Goodband	Elisabeth Moore	Ross Stevens
Anneke Beth	Brandy Goulet	Matt Moore	Mike Strait
Bradley Beth	Jamie Goulet	Colleen Moore de Ortiz	Adam Sykes
Cliff Biron	Scott Gowdy	Amy Morris	Amy Tardif
Mark Biron	Lois Grout	Gabe Muraca	Ouida Testout
Emily Blake	Ted Grout	Peg Muraca	Vincent Vanluvender
Terry Blake	Carmen Gunn	Stephanie Nagle	Susan Vera
Kathleen Blindow	Emma Gunn	Doug Niles	Pete Walbridge
Doris Boisvert	Pat Hadlock	Tiffany Niles	Barbara Walking
Michelle Bonneau	Melanie Halpern	Tim O'Bar	Harry Weatherstone
Anne Budrewicz	Jennifer Harlon	Luke O'Brien	Sonny Weatherstone
Molly Burger	Bill Hawkins	Marcel O'Gorman	Brenda Whitehill
Patricia Charbonneau	Jennifer Houlon	Gina O'Keefe	Richard Whitehill
Jan Clarke	Mary Hunt	Jon O'Keefe	Thomas Widmer
Michael Clarke	Ashley Jacobs	Janet Osbourne	Nate Wilcox
Joel Cope	Dana Jacobs	Alicia Ovitt	Lisa Wilkins
Lo Coult	Jane Jacobs	Nancy Parker	Ralph Wilkins
James Cross	Dan Keenan	Pete Pedersen	Alan Wing
Shelley D'Amato	Ellen Kelton	Susan Pedersen	Ginny Wing
Linda Damiani	Mike Kelton	Adelaro Pelletier	Magnolia Siana Wolf
Rita Daniels	Daniel Kilborn	Claudine Pellitier	Jim Worth
Robert Dexter	Jillian Kilborn	David Pepin	Jodi Worth
Jeff Dezotell	Cathy Kinney	Jean Percy	David Yasharian
Nancy Dezotell	Jake Kocis	Pastor Neal Perry	Melanie Yasharian
Tom Donellan	David Lamoureux	Rebekah Perry	
Gemma Dreher	Melinda Gervais	Kylie Phillips	
Morgan Driscoll	Lamoureux	Ned Pinkerton	
Walt Driscoll	Gordan Lefebvre	Tammi Poulin	
Ann Marie Duggan	Rebecca Lefebvre	Chuck Purdell	
Jane Edwards	Cass Lyons	Julie Raboin	
Nancy Engels	Melissa Lyons	Clint Rancourt	
Ray Fontaine	Maggie Machinist	Rachel Reeve	
Marshall C. Frizzell	Scott Machinist	Heather Robinson	
Marty Frizzell	Bill Manning	Peter Rodin	
Anita Gervais	Paula Manzi	Beth Rodondi	
Cindy Gervais	Rosare Marcoux	Stacey Roesse	



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