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Introduction

For many Vermonters and visitors to Vermont, Woodstock is and has long been an archetypal postcard image of bucolic splendor and village charm. Woodstock's history and character give it a unique place in the state. Woodstock has a brand identity and tremendous strengths to draw visitors and attract residents. The Woodstock Community Visit provided a picture window on the strengths of the town, especially of the tremendous human capacity and engagement of its residents, but also looked at perplexing questions about the future identity, prosperity, and diversity of the community. The Vermont Council on Rural Development commends Woodstock residents for their courage in addressing these hard questions, and for their passion for the community and its future.

Is Woodstock a retreat from the world or a forward-looking, creative cultural and economic center? In an age challenged by escalating real estate values and global economic changes, how does the community define its future? Does Woodstock welcome diversity? Will it ensure opportunities and accommodation to people with a variety of lifestyles, employments, and economic means? How will the community attract, support, and retain youth and young adults? What is the appropriate balance between development and conservation that preserves heritage while successfully responding to economic opportunities? Where does the deep history of Woodstock lead, and what is Woodstock's role as a regional center in the future?

The priorities that were established through the Community Visit process rise from these questions. Many were surprised by these choices. We believe that they represent strong strategic thinking by participating residents who looked at gaps, at foundation questions, and at points for implementation in deciding the tasks immediately ahead. Instead of establishing committees to consider economic development or housing per se, two clear areas of deep concern and challenge, participants centered their decision on making this happen in the **East End**. Instead of setting a task force to evaluate leadership challenges in the community in the abstract, Woodstock established a **Merger Task Force**. Issues of **conservation** were matched with pro-active plans to develop **biking and walking trails** as a long-time priority that should move toward implementation. And overarching all issues of housing, economic development, tourism, youth, and the creative economy, residents chose to build a task force to work with the full community to develop a consensus **Woodstock identity** statement, or vision, that will serve as ground for the new Town Plan and, through a gap analysis, may go from planning to implementation to catalyze work in several of these other areas.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development, along with members of the Community Visit Resource Team, was tremendously impressed by the opportunities before Woodstock and the capacity and skill of Woodstock residents. We appreciate the deep regard the people of Woodstock have for their community, and the thoughtful, sometimes passionate, engagement of residents as they took a hard look at the future of their home.

The Community Visit Program

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

1. **Community Visit Day** - Open to all community members, participants meet in focus groups throughout the day, and provide testimony to Visiting Team Members with expertise in the areas of concern. The meetings result in an initial list of challenges and opportunities. (page 4)
2. **Community Meeting** – Participants review, discuss, and refine their initial list, and ultimately vote on the top four issues of concern. Community members sign up to work on a task force that will create a strategic action plan for the selected topics. (page 8)
3. **Community Resource Day** – Task Force members meet with a new Resource Team to design action steps, and identify state, federal, non-profit, and private resources that will allow them to advance toward solutions. (page 9)

Resource Team Members (listed on pages 44 & 45) agree to serve in an ongoing capacity as advisors, referral agents, and liaisons for the Woodstock Task Forces. Members of the Resource Team listened closely to resident’s concerns, and carefully considered opportunities for addressing each issue. Their suggestions are found on page 20.

Woodstock has set some ambitious goals and organized work to address challenges of historic importance. Now it is all about leadership. VCRD appreciates the participation and patience of municipal leadership—the Selectboard, Trustees, Planning Commission, and other elected and appointed leaders who worked through this process. VCRD is especially grateful to Municipal Manager Phil Swanson for his help and support, and for the leadership and vision of the Woodstock Innovations Group who first drew the interest of the Council to the community. This kind of effort cannot succeed without a strong public information system—we are grateful to Gerry Cronin at WCVT for community access coverage, and especially to Phil Camp and his staff at the Standard for embodying the best spirit of community journalism. Thanks are also due for the hospitality of the Woodstock Inn, the generosity of John Chester in printing the cover of this report, and the beautiful cover artwork by Gael Cantlin. Finally, VCRD deeply appreciates the key role that Tom Debevoise has agreed to play as Chairperson of this process—both through its initial stages and now in coordinating the work of the Task Forces as they build and implement plans. His statesmanship and diplomacy provide for optimism about the next steps.

VCRD is eager to support implementation and to rally others in support. Please contact us, and members of the Visiting Team (listed at the end of this report) when we can be of help.

Community Visit Day

On Community Visit Day, October 25, 2005 the streets of Woodstock, crisply transformed by early an season snowstorm, were filled with residents trekking from one town forum to the next, eager to give testimony, hear their neighbors perspectives, and begin the process of examining Woodstock in a new way. These important opening conversations allow a community to broadly explore potential directions, and provide a pool of ideas from which recurring themes, connected issues, and actionable concerns will emerge. Bolstered by a hearty community dinner and undeterred by the weather, the people of Woodstock produced the following initial list of challenges and opportunities.

Woodstock Challenges and Opportunities

Identified by town forums, October 25, 2005

- ❖ **Tourism:** There are tensions in the tourism economy between services focused on “bus” or day tourists, and those who spend a week at a time or live part time as second homeowners. A consolidated tourism plan for the community could identify service needs and implement strategies for each of these sectors and how they work together to support local businesses. Some problems could be resolved in the short term, such as the lack of public restrooms downtown.
- ❖ **Defining Community Identity:** Woodstock has character and history; but what is its vision of the future? Are development, affordable housing, and a more mixed socio-economic population desirable and compatible with how the town perceives itself? Is Woodstock a retreat from the world, or a vital and creative center? The issue of image often connects with community history and impacts development choices, relationships with youth, and all aspects of residential life. A public process of defining Woodstock’s vision of its future could be done in conjunction with or in support of the development of the new town plan. This vision could unite leadership and support work on a number of key community priorities.
- ❖ **Parking:** Parking has been a perpetual concern that has been studied for years without resolution through an implementation strategy. Village parking is a challenge both in terms of space and the image of meters and ‘policing’ parking that may produce an unfriendly impression on visitors, employees, and community members. A set of action steps should be developed and leadership should make implementation a priority.
- ❖ **Creative Economy:** Attracting businesses and young people are keys to the Woodstock’s future vitality. Woodstock has a tremendous opportunity through its creative economy to improve downtown branding, celebrate its cultural and artistic resources and its artisan economy, and build events for youth, families, tourists and residents that can help make the community attractive to businesses and young people. Gallery walks, competitions and youth events, signage improvements, and business incubation can be keys to a vibrant future.

- ❖ **Leadership/ Leveraging Human Capital:** Woodstock has tremendous human capital, but many residents prefer to advise, not lead. Some residents believe there are plenty of good ideas in Woodstock, but a weak structure for implementation; they claim that Woodstock is managed, but not led; and that no one is thinking about what Woodstock will need 10 years out. Some people fear change; others are dissuaded by dissent. A mayoral position could be created to bridge the gap between existing leaders and community members and help get things done in line with a longer-term vision.
- ❖ **Sustainable & Expanded Downtown:** Business success is limited by location, as many visitors don't want to leave the core of the village to explore the outskirts. Downtown rents are costly, but second floor space is available and more affordable. Attractive signage could direct people off the beaten track and to the east and west ends of the Village. Downtown branding, a tax holiday for merchants, and a bike path or trolley could also be beneficial.
- ❖ **Housing:** There are tremendous demands on the housing market, and young adults, families, and working people cannot afford to live in the community. A number of residents affirm that it is highly desirable to have people live and work in the same town. They note that the community is aging, and that housing and diversified economic development are essential to its sustainability. Housing needs to be affordable to police, teachers, and retail workers. Woodstock should unite behind an effort to develop a range of housing, including affordable rental units, starter homes, and senior housing to meet the diverse needs of all community members.
- ❖ **Conservation:** Woodstock has incredible assets in its open and forested land, waters, and beautiful village; these assets should be protected by strong planning and conservation efforts and through investment by the Woodstock community.
- ❖ **Economic Development:** Can Woodstock develop a modern business mix without compromising its key assets? An economic development committee is needed to plan ways to diversify the Woodstock economy, expand year-round jobs, define the key characteristics of businesses that should be encouraged to startup or locate in town, and identify buildings and sites for entrepreneurial development. Universal high-speed broadband access should be developed to encourage telecommuting professionals. The town should consider building a position for an economic development ombudsman who could provide leadership, welcome and support entrepreneurs, and coordinate resources toward a diversified and viable economy.
- ❖ **Town/Village Merger:** Disconnections between town and village stall projects, weaken leadership, divide resources, and undermine community identity and unity. Village government sometimes bears a disproportionate responsibility to solve town-wide problems. The village is the center for town residents, but they have little voice in, or responsibility for, its direction, or for investment in projects that impact the full Woodstock Community. Woodstock should consider uniting town and village.

- ❖ **Education:** Residents are concerned that enrollment in schools is declining; for them progress connects to housing development. Others fear that students in the middle may be falling through the cracks. Improved technology, service learning opportunities, place-based learning, mentoring, and apprentice programs could help meet their diverse needs. Woodstock volunteers could target the tremendous human capital of the community to enrich curriculum both in and out of the school buildings.
- ❖ **Walking and Biking Trails:** The community should unite behind a renewed effort to build the Riverwalk along the Ottauquechee, and the bike trail to Killington. These assets could benefit residents, especially youth, and visitors alike.
- ❖ **East End Development:** The Gerrish property and other East End properties have significant potential for development that would benefit the entire east end of the Village. The contamination/pollution issue with the property needs to be addressed. This could be a catalyst for economic development and/or housing. Woodstock should invest the time, resources, and leadership needed to contract with a developer to plan and realize the assets of the east end.
- ❖ **Transportation:** All segments of the population, especially the elderly and youth, experience challenges in finding transportation to health and social services or community activities. The bus from Rutland no longer stops in town. Advance Transit could be a source of transportation but many residents don't know about options and don't avail themselves of existing services.
- ❖ **Town Communications:** The town has difficulty getting important information out to its citizens, and groups within the town do not share a common communication medium. Better use could be made of the town web site where resources could be posted, links could be set up to community organizations, and a live message board could be developed. A town-wide calendar of events for web and multi-media distribution could unite activities produced by a variety of organizations. Economic Development could also be enhanced by better use of web resources.
- ❖ **Roads and Highways:** The Town and State need to work together to solve some of the serious problems around highway conditions. Road deterioration has led to safety problems along Route 4 east. This state-maintained corridor needs work and people worry about access to services in an emergency. Woodstock should work with the Agency of Transportation to produce a plan to correct the situation.
- ❖ **Non-Profit Coordination and Communication:** Woodstock has a large and vibrant community of non-profit agencies. Better communication between these organizations would help avoid overlap in program and fundraising efforts. Coordination and consolidation of similar organizations might strengthen their mutual case for, and effective use of, donations. A common web site, common fund development efforts, shared activity schedule, directory of all social services,

and collaboration that could eliminate duplication and build cost effectiveness could provide significant benefits.

- ❖ **Developing Woodstock's Philanthropic Resources:** With the passing of Lawrence Rockefeller, new leadership will need to emerge and step up. An organized collaboration in the Woodstock philanthropic community could help coordinate resources and guide them to meet key community needs and goals.
- ❖ **Woodstock Community Center:** Woodstock does not have a community center for people of different age groups to interact. Calls for day care, an elder service site, and teen center could be answered with a common facility
- ❖ **Police Coverage:** There is a lack of police presence in town and response time is a serious concern. State police will come only in an emergency, and the town and village have distinct services that are mutually exclusive. The sheriff's department is not trained to deal with domestic violence; domestic violence organizations could provide training. Appointing a constable, rather than using the services of the County Sheriff, would allow the town to set qualifications. State police coverage could be hired for certain hours or a town-wide police force should be developed.
- ❖ **Youth Engagement:** Youth hanging out on the green can challenge the image some residents and visitors have Woodstock. Some youth don't feel welcome downtown and complain about police treatment and a negative or controlling atmosphere. Woodstock demographics document that the community does not retain youth after high school and is challenged to attract young adults. Woodstock should work to build bridges to deliberately and systematically engage youth. This could be done by connecting the high school with downtown through a new sidewalk; building apprenticeships and mentorships; clarifying police policies and ensuring that they welcome youth; developing leadership positions for youth on all public and non-profit boards; and advancing a youth recreational center.
- ❖ **Emergency Services:** The fire department needs a new system for the distribution of water. Water distribution is a bigger problem than just emergency service; the existing Village system is old and inadequate. New water mains need to be laid, however, this is a costly and disruptive project. A plan needs to be developed to determine how this will be done. This not only affects a hydrant system but also the ability of buildings to add their own sprinkler systems. Indirectly, this affects water supply to all town buildings on the system. Woodstock also used to have an emergency walk in clinic in the community for health care emergencies at Ottawaquechee Health Center. Today, without this access, residents who are not regular Health Center patients must travel a long way for stitches or small emergencies.
- ❖ **Adult Day Care Services:** Some residents believe that Woodstock needs a central Village location for elder services that could include an adult day care facility and transportation coordination for seniors.

Community Meeting

The Community Meeting is a democratic process that allows residents to consider, refine, consolidate, and prioritize issues from the list of initial challenges and opportunities. At the Woodstock Community Meeting on November 30 participants considered existing committees, and opportunities, while weighing issues such as economic development, identity, government structure, and natural resources. The evening culminated in a vote on four priority issues to become the focus of Task Forces, that will move the town from idea to action. The four priority issues selected by the people of Woodstock are:

Woodstock Priorities

Selected by Community Meeting—November 30, 2005

- ❖ **Defining Community Identity:** Woodstock has character and history; but what is its vision of the future? Are development, affordable housing, and a more mixed socio-economic population desirable and compatible with how the town perceives itself? Is Woodstock a retreat from the world, or a vital and creative center? The issue of image often connects with community history and impacts development choices, relationships with youth, and all aspects of residential life. A public process of defining Woodstock's vision of its future could be done in conjunction with or in support of the development of the new town plan. This vision could unite leadership and support work on a number of key community priorities.
- ❖ **Woodstock Conservation and Developing Walking and Biking Trails:** Woodstock has incredible assets in its open and forested land, waters, and beautiful village; these assets should be protected by strong planning and conservation efforts and through investment by the Woodstock community. The community should unite behind a renewed effort to build the Riverwalk along the Ottauquechee, and the bike trail to Killington. These assets could benefit residents, especially youth, and visitors alike.
- ❖ **East End Development:** The Gerrish property and other East End properties have significant potential for development that would benefit the entire east end of the Village. The contamination/pollution issue with the property needs to be addressed. This could be a catalyst for economic development and/or housing. Woodstock should invest the time, resources, and leadership needed to contract with a developer to plan and realize the assets of the East End.
- ❖ **Town/Village Merger:** Disconnections between town and village stall projects, weaken leadership, divide resources, and undermine community identity and unity. Village government sometimes bears a disproportionate responsibility to solve town-wide problems. The village is the center for town residents, but they have little voice in, or responsibility for, its direction, or for investment in projects that impact the full Woodstock Community. Woodstock should consider uniting town and village.

Task Forces

Developed in response to the four Woodstock priorities on January 5, 2006

The Woodstock Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. At the first meeting held on January 5, 2006, committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small resource teams to determine goals, devise a clear plan of action, and identify the resources required for implementation of their plans. Future meetings will be held under each chairperson's leadership. VCRD and its allies will serve as ongoing resources and referral agents as the work of the Task Forces moves into implementation. VCRD will also come back to Woodstock in six months and at the end of the year, to check in with participants and consider next steps with the community.

Defining Community Identity

Chairperson: Sally Miller

- ❖ **Defining Community Identity:** Woodstock has character and history; but what is its vision of the future? Are development, affordable housing, and a more mixed socio-economic population desirable and compatible with how the town perceives itself? Is Woodstock a retreat from the world, or a vital and creative center? The issue of image often connects with community history and impacts development choices, relationships with youth, and all aspects of residential life. A public process of defining Woodstock's vision of its future could be done in conjunction with or in support of the development of the new town plan. This vision could unite leadership and support work on a number of key community priorities.

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Action Steps:

1. Obtain a demographic profile of Woodstock from the town plan and UVM's Center for Rural Studies.
2. Connect with other groups working on defining community identity and using a community identity document.
3. Identify local organizations with mission or vision statements, and collect those statements.
4. Involve a broad constituency in the discussion, including other Community Visit groups, focus groups with diverse participants, and by introducing community identity research as a project for students or other community groups, such as senior centers.
5. Create an action plan that includes both a vision statement and strategies for understanding the potential positive contributions a well-defined community identity could have throughout Woodstock.
6. Circulate and provide input into a revised town plan.

Resources

1. Communications, including a coordinator to manage newspaper, website and advertising needs.
2. Create an internal list serve for the working group
3. Obtain town demographic profile
4. Outside facilitation
5. Financial support for space, focus groups, printing.
6. Two Rivers Ottauquechee Commission can provide grant-writing support
7. Explore examples of past processes in other towns.

Conservation & Developing Walking and Biking Trails

Chairpersons: Preston Bristow and Christina Marts

- ❖ **Conservation/Walking & Biking Trails:** Woodstock has incredible assets in its open and forested land, waters, and beautiful village. These assets should be protected by strong planning and conservation efforts and through investment by the Woodstock community. The community should unite behind a renewed effort to build the Riverwalk along the Ottauquechee, and the bike trail to Killington. These assets could benefit residents, especially youth, and visitors alike.

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Action Steps:

1. Restart discussions on barriers around village to high school path.
2. Return to discussions about East End Riverwalk.
3. Fully develop a feasibility analysis for village to Bridgewater bike trail.
4. Fully compile and integrate all resource inventories into the town plan process.
 - a. biological
 - b. riverine
 - c. viewshed
 - d. farm land
5. Develop a community engagement process including:
 - a. identification of land conservation priorities
 - b. youth component, including NPS internship opportunities
 - c. public meetings
 - d. trail days
 - e. school involvement
6. Create a map of existing walking/biking trails.
7. Complete mapping of class IV roads
8. Inventory ancient, or unmapped, roads.

Resources

1. Woodstock Town Planner, Recreation Department, Conservation Commission
2. Regional Planning Commissioner
3. NPS Rivers and Trails Program
4. Marsh Billings
5. VINS
6. Woodstock Inn/Bike Vermont/Biscuit Hill
7. Sue Morse, Keeping Track
8. Michael Brands/John Dutton/Gordon Tuthill/Charlotte Clevelands

- 9. Teachers/Road Commissioner/Outdoorsmen
- 10. John Bruno/MPG/EPA/Conservation Fund

East End Development

Chairperson: Tom Hayes

- ❖ **East End Development:** The Gerrish property and other East End properties have significant potential for development that would benefit the entire east end of the Village. The contamination/pollution issue with the property needs to be addressed. This could be a catalyst for economic development and/or housing. Woodstock should invest the time, resources, and leadership needed to contract with a developer to plan and realize the assets of the East End.

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Action Steps:

1. The dialogue with AHF will continue, in addition to coordination with the Trustees.
2. The committee will host an AHF/Trustee meeting soon with Tom serving as Chair.
3. Gather all existing studies into one place.
4. Talk to East End owners about market status. The town may assist with a parcel map.
5. Existing study and planning groups will continue.
6. Write a letter to IBEX inviting them to join the committee.
7. Contact the Orton Foundation to explore opportunities.
8. Coordinate with Conservation/Trails committee to incorporate conservation issues into development.
9. A committee member and the Woodstock Chamber will pursue an entrance sign on the East End.

Resources

1. Steps largely use local resources at this time.

Town/Village Merger

Chairperson: Candace Coburn

- ❖ **Town/Village Merger:** Disconnections between town and village stall projects, weaken leadership, divide resources, and undermine community identity and unity. Village government sometimes bears a disproportionate responsibility to solve town-wide problems. The village is the center for town residents, but they have little voice in, or responsibility for, its direction, or for investment in projects that impact the full Woodstock Community. Woodstock should consider uniting town and village.

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Action Steps:

1. Organize committee and sub-committees.
2. Conduct committee planning and research, including development of a timeline targeting March 2007.
3. Conduct an outreach and education campaign.
4. Warn articles.

Resources

1. Vermont league of cities and towns or legislators compendium of merger plans.
2. Town/Village attorney.
3. Secretary of State/history of town-village mergers.
4. Other towns/villages that have recently merged.
5. Woodstock study committee (Tom Hayes)

Woodstock Community Visit Resource Team

Resource Team members serve as partners and advisors to the Woodstock Task Forces. Their recommendations are not designed to be followed as prescriptions for success. Rather, they are offered based on experience, past success, and consideration of each community's unique assets and needs. Members of the Resource Team recognize that genuine leadership and implementation of ideas will come from local efforts as the Task Forces undertake their work.

General Recommendations

The Woodstock Task Forces should continue to invite individuals on all sides of the issues to participate as they tackle next steps. They will need to communicate their ideas, direction, and recommendations to the full community through the town web site and the Vermont Standard. WCVT is also an excellent resource for the Task Forces to communicate with the public and build momentum to implement projects. One underlying priority of the community is building bridges; this can be facilitated by keeping Woodstock residents apprised of happenings through consistent and positive communications.

As projects proceed, and when and if start up support is needed, the Vermont Community Foundation provides \$1,000 to \$10,000 grants to projects that address clear community needs in the areas of environment, public affairs, community development, social services, education or the arts. VCF, PO Box 30, Middlebury, VT 05753, 802-388-3355, www.vermontcf.org.

Many Woodstock residents have pointed out that the loss of Laurence Rockefeller leaves an immense gap in philanthropic leadership to address the needs of the Woodstock region. Woodstock residents have both tremendous human capital and potential philanthropic resources; new leadership needs to step up, and those with the potential for leadership should consider how they, in collaboration, can help the community address the needs of the future. One way to do this would be to create a town endowment fund to support/build affordable housing, encourage entrepreneurs, and promote non-profit activities to benefit the community. The VT Community Foundation or Woodstock Foundation could serve as convener or fiscal agent to a community fund.

As Woodstock tackles new projects, it may need to consider what it needs in terms of staff capacity to do so. In some towns the town manager hires a "projects" person part time to write grants, support economic development, and help see community development projects to completion. One key to Woodstock's success might be to add organizational capacity, which probably means municipal capacity. Johnson did this in the wake of their Community Visit with tremendous success. Talk to Duncan Hastings, Municipal Manager, at 635-2611.

East End Development

As efforts progress, the community should work with the Curt Carter, the brownfields specialist in the Agency of Commerce (828-3211). There is and will be more brownfield funds in the pipeline to clean up former industrial or tainted sites. Curt can council the committee through a Community Development Block Grant process as planning comes to the point of implementation, and he can lend support to the search for other resources from EPA Region 1. Woodstock may need some public funds to support assessment and cleanup of the Gerrish site, and then will need to do lots of marketing to recruit a private developer.

The VT Forum on Sprawl may be able to offer advisory services in support of the project (864-6310).

The Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission can be an invaluable partner in this effort. Kevin Geiger may be able to provide on-going facilitation and the RPC might be able to provide planning leg-work (457-4728). The RPC has aerial photos of the area and past studies include diagrams and maps that should be consolidated.

Neal Fox, from Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (295-3710) can also be an invaluable resource, especially with development planning and working with potential developers of the site. The committee should call on these organizations for their expertise, and for their ability to help staff this and other efforts in the community.

Working with these partners, Woodstock needs to build a relationship with a developer to really make things happen.

Leadership is the crucial ingredient to solving the challenge of the East End. The Trustees and Selectboard need to provide support to the new Task Force and consider with them the municipal investment required to move discussions around the East End to conclusions that will address long-term housing and economic development challenges to the community. Moving projects to completion in the East End will require municipal leadership, time, staff work, and the leveraging of public dollars.

As a starting point, the municipality should appropriate several thousand dollars to do a sign at the East End of the village, both to welcome visitors and to signify their investment in East End redevelopment. Visiting Team Members reflect that the town and East End committees have spent an inordinate amount of time talking about such a sign, discussing designs, and considering funding sources. The community should make decisions, make the investment, and move on to next steps.

Town Village Merger

In many towns in Vermont, the history of town and village functions, government, and taxes can paralyze projects, especially those that require common investment. The current structure of town/village government in Woodstock produces a systematic

challenge; it sets every question of capital project development up as a village **or** a town issue, with built in questions of fairness that can lead to “us against them,” “who is going to pay?” or “who does this serve?” confrontations. The structural division of leadership can lead to a climate of disunity that interferes with the progress of the community as a whole and divides Woodstock residents much more than they need to be. Merger signifies common purpose.

As the Merger Task Force gets underway, it may want to consider the following advice:

- Place efforts in the context of making the town and village the best that it can be; both town and village voters have a vested interest in the village remaining a "crown jewel" for the community. The proposed merger should further advance this goal.
- Honor the history of the village; educate people why the village became its own governmental entity in the first place; detail the changes of today and how the separate structure no longer serves the original purpose. (Indeed, most of the town and village services have already been merged.)
- As part of the transition, build a “Village Improvement Committee” where village leadership can converge to work pro-actively to address critical needs of the village center.
- The Merger Task Force should consider establishing a number of subcommittees (or assign leadership in certain areas to key individuals) for:
 - PR (seek extensive press coverage to keep citizens informed about on-going progress, brochures, special reports),
 - police options (service district, full town coverage, etc -- this seems to be one of the biggest sticking points),
 - liaisons with trustees and selectmen.
- The Merger Task Force should discuss how best to honor the work and foster a positive relationship to the joint trustee/selectmen study committee recently disbanded. Additional details will most likely need to be added to that group’s report. Additions may take the form of Merger Task Force "white papers".
- Reaching out to the citizens through a number of different venues will be critically important; and quiet sessions with naysayers to understand their points of contention can be very helpful.
- The Task Force may want to gather facts and statistics on merger efforts throughout VT (the VT League of Cities and Towns and Secretary of State's office can be helpful here). They may want to host a panel discussion with three or so recent successful mergers being represented (Bradford, Stowe, Richford). Members may also want to discuss the value of merger with another community currently wrestling with this challenge: Waterbury is just one step ahead of Woodstock (Municipal Manager Bill Shepeluk, 244-7033).

Greg Federspel, who led the successful Stowe merger process, is glad to serve as a reference on merger questions for Woodstock. He can be reached at (413) 637-5500. Steve Jeffrey, Director of the VT League of Cities and Towns, can also be an invaluable resource (229-9111).

Conservation and Developing Walking and Biking Trails

For Identity and Conservation priorities, the Orton Foundation could be a resource to assist in revising/updating the town plans and local land use regulations in conjunction with the municipality and Two Rivers. (Bill Shutkin, Director, 773-6336)

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) has key resources and expertise to support conservation planning and project development and paths and bikeways. While collaborating with the Municipal Planning Office and Woodstock Planning Commission, the Task Force should call upon TRORC for assistance, both in the technical aspects of planning, in facilitating planning processes, and in consideration of potential resources for implementation.

Woodstock might be able to use municipal planning funds from the Agency of Commerce to build a plan for trails; TRORC may be able to help put such a grant together.

The Trust for Public Lands has a "greenprinting" program in which it helps plan for open spaces that might be useful to Woodstock. See www.tpl.org.

The Vermont Forum on Sprawl recently published a useful resource on farm/forest work in Vermont.... "Communities and the Land...Strengthening the State we Love." See <http://www.vtsprawl.org/Resources/publications/publicationsmain.htm>. Also there's an interesting site on local harvests at: <http://www.localharvest.org/search.jsp?scale> This site helps link farmers with folks who want to get into farming: <http://www.vlt.org/landlink.html>

Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF) are possible through the Agency of Natural Resources (241-3600).

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) has a lot of experience with trails and Right of Ways; if snowmobiles are part of the equation in any part of the trail system, VAST could help.

The Town of Springfield found significant funding for construction of their very nice walking path that may be similar to what Woodstock would do. They could be contacted for advice, a field trip, and recommendations for resources.

There are some significant resources for the construction of trails once Woodstock has a plan in place:

- VT Conservation Youth Corp. Call Tom Hark @241-3699 info@vycc.org, or Brian Cotterill, the program manager in the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation at 241-4452. Communities can either hire a trail crew through the Fee-for-Service program or apply for a Greenways Crew funded by AOT and

FHWA. The committee may also want to involve local students in the community service activities of the trail-building process.

- Agency of Transportation VTrans Enhancement Grants and Local Facilities program. Funding is available for transportation enhancements including provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, or acquisition of scenic easements. The website is www.aot.state.vt.us/progdev/sections/LFT. Dick Hosking at 656-1580, is the Regional Director. Curtis Brown is the Grants Administrator at 828-0583.
- The Bicycle/Pedestrian Program at VTrans may also be able to help; Amy Bell is their coordinator: 828-5799.
- VT Scenic Byways Program might be able to help. Call Warren Vail, Coordinator@ 828-0457.
- There's a Downtown Transportation Fund through the VT Department of Housing and Community Development; call Joss Besse of the Downtown Program for information at 828-5212.
- The Vermont Recreation Trails Grant Program of the Agency of Natural Resources may have funding; Sherry Smecker is the grants administrator, 241-3690. She could also let you know about the Vermont Land & Water Conservation Fund and Vermont Recreation Trails Grants. The Recreation Trails Grant Program provides matching grants for (1) maintenance on existing trails; (2) restoration of areas damaged by use of trails; (3) development of trail-side and trail-head facilities; (4) provision of features which facilitate access to and use of trails by persons with disabilities; (5) construction of new trails on state, municipal or private lands where a recreational need for such construction is shown; (6) preparation of and printing of trail-related maps and other educational information and materials; (7) trail protection including fee simple or easement acquisition; and (8) purchase of hand tools for trail work.
- There could be Public Lands Highways Funding for projects that are on, adjacent to, or provide access to federal public lands (e.g. Green Mountain National Forest). Warren Vail at VT Agency of Transportation, 828-0451. Warren.Vail@state.vt.us.

Other potential grant sources include:

- The Bikes Belong Coalition (BBC) is sponsored by members of the American Bicycle Industry. They assist local organizations, agencies and citizens in developing bicycle facility projects. Grants of up to \$10,000. Bikes Belong Coalition, 1368 Beacon St., Suite 102, Brookline, MA 02446-2800, 617-734-2800, <http://bikesbelong.org>, tim@bikesbelong.org.
- Conservation Alliance Grants come from a group of 62 outdoor businesses that donate 100% of their membership dues to support grants to grassroots groups protecting wild and natural areas where outdoor enthusiasts recreate. Recent grants ranged \$15,000 - \$50,000. You'd need to get in touch with, and be sponsored by, a member company (such as Eastern Mountain Sports, Patagonia, Timberland, Northface). Grant questions should be directed to John

Sterling, Patagonia, 259 W. Santa Clara St., Ventura, CA 93001, 805-667-47412, www.conservationalliance.com.

- D.I.R.T. (Direct Impact on Rivers and Trails) Grant Program is supported by PowerBar. This program supports projects that protect threatened lands and rivers, preserve access to the outdoors, or restore damage to lands and waterways. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Early June deadline. DIRT Program, PowerBar, Inc., 2150 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704, www.powerbar.com/howeare/dirt.
- National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program helps plan and implement local trail, greenway and river protection projects—and they are right in town. The program provides NPS staff assistance. Project assistance can range from a short-term consultation to a three-year involvement. Contact Jennifer Waite, VT Projects Director, NPS Rivers & Trails, PO Box 178, Woodstock, VT 05091, 457-3368 ext 21, www.ncrc.nps.gov/programs/rtca, jennifer_waite@nps.gov.
- The New England Grassroots Environment Fund gives small grants of \$500 to \$2,500 to increase engagement and participation in grassroots environmental initiatives and to build and connect healthy sustainable communities in New England. NEGEF, PO Box 1057, Montpelier, VT 05601, Cheryl Fisher, 223-4622, www.grassrootsfund.org, info@grassrootsfund.org
- Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program; "Trees for Local Communities" (TLC) are competitive grants for developing and implementing local urban and community forestry programs. Grants from \$500 - \$4000 are available. Steve Sinclair, VT FPR, Waterbury, 241-3673.

Defining Community Identity

There is no one, off the shelf, quick and dirty way to build a vision. The Task Force will need to confront head on issues surrounding the affordability of Woodstock for the next generation - this is one big reason for the decline in school enrollments and why young adults can't come back after college/early working years. This is an issue all over the state, but it is particularly acute in Woodstock.

- The Task Force should intentionally, through a variety of means (one-on-one verbal interview, surveys, focus groups, participating in other organizations' meetings, website, etc) reach out to ALL sectors and ages of the Woodstock community to understand what they would like to see as elements of the community identity.
- The Task Force should start putting ideas on paper right off, then have an evolving draft that incorporates new input and balances ideas and interests from all parts of the community.
- Once the Task Force has taken input, it could identify and invite representatives from all facets of the community to a facilitated process of "sugaring off" the results of the outreach effort to a consolidated list of key attributes of Woodstock.

- The Task Force should set a timeline for when this part of the effort is finished and schedule a public presentation of a its document for ‘adoption’ by the community.
- Having developed the consensus platform of Woodstock’s community identity, the Task Force can do a gap analysis of its elements: What components currently are well established and supported? What elements exist but are not supported? What need to be developed? This analysis could serve as a set of recommendation to Woodstock’s elected officials and a guideline for the Task Force. The Task Force could then choose a new direction to implement strategies that will address crucial needs identified.

Manchester produced a vision document a few years ago, and it has been quite helpful at several critical points in town planning/permitting (call Lee Krohn, Manchester Municipal Planner, at 362-4824). Poultney also produced a unifying town vision and could be contacted to review their document (Tim Kononan, Poultney Community Visit Chair, 773-3206).

VCRD could provide facilitation at particular junctions in this process if called on by the Task Force: 828-6024, vcrd@sover.net.

If needed, money to support costs for facilitation in building a vision might come from the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) Program, assuming that the "Defining Community Identity" will provide a vision statement to be used up front in the town plan. There probably should be such an explicit connection, given that the town plan is the formal document that addresses all the infrastructure, business, housing, natural resources, pathway and other issues. MPG is an annual grant process, applications usually due in September; contact Peg Elmer, Planning Division Director, DHCA, National Life Building Montpelier 05620, 828-5220, peg.elmer@state.vt.us.

Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with Woodstock Residents and Community Visit Team on October 5, 2005

Although the Community Visit program necessitates narrowing a town's scope from a wide pallet of observations and ideas to several actionable issues, nothing is lost. Some areas of concern, although not chosen directly as a priority topic, are closely related to Task Force work, and will be incorporated into eventual work plans. Many excellent and diverse thoughts surfaced during the initial Community Visit conversations, and that dialogue has been preserved here to serve as a reminder of issues explored, a repository of ideas, and a possible foundation for future projects.

Resource Team A

Peter Gregory, Executive Director, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Planning Commission

Gus Seelig, Executive Director, Vt. Housing and Conservation Board

Joss Besse, Director, Vt. Downtown Program

Andy Broderick, President, Housing Vermont

Neal Fox, Executive Director, Green Mountain Economic Development Corp.

William Shutkin, Director, Orton Family Foundation

Tom Murray, Deputy Commissioner, Vt. Department of Economic Development

Paul Costello, Executive Director, VCRD (Facilitator)

Emily Stebbins, University of Vermont (Scribe)

I. Viable Downtown

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- The business community has identified the lack of public restrooms as a top priority.
- It is important to find a balance between a downtown serving both tourists and residents. A viable downtown can't survive on tourists alone.
- Busloads of tourists downtown make it difficult for locals to get anything done.
- It is important to target the "right kind" of tourist. Bus tourists stay for a short while, bring their own lunches, and do not patronize shops.
- Second homeowners own 60% of the homes in Woodstock. They stay for a long time, and spend a substantial amount of money.
- One resident expressed concern about tourism, not because of economic impact, but from a community perspective.
- Some people may go to Lebanon, NH to get what they need, rather than patronize downtown.

- Rents are high downtown, making it difficult for people to take a chance on a new business. Absentee landlords add to the cost. Second floor spaces are more economical.
- It is difficult for a business to be successful if it is located outside of the core village area.
- Vital businesses are transitioning from retail to entrepreneurial, due to the Internet.
- Parking is a problem, both in terms of finding space, and related issues such as meters, paid parking and enforcement. The image of Woodstock 'parking police' is troubling to some people.
- Traffic on Route 4 is problematic, increasing congestion, and affecting the 'feeling' of Woodstock.
- A disconnect exists between town and village governance.
- Are there existing institutions to fill the void left by the death of Lawrence Rockefeller?
- Woodstock is dark at 5:30 pm, unlike other tourist towns.
- With more handicapped people coming to town, access to stores and restaurants is becoming increasingly problematic.
- Many people raised the issue of leadership, and generally agreed that people in Woodstock like to discuss issues at length, but rarely move forward.
- There are many good ideas, but not enough action.
- There is a fear of change. Some residents live in Woodstock because it has not changed, and this may be why leaders have not stepped forward to make change.
- The town and village plan is about to be revised and would benefit from citizen input.
- Disconnections between town and village stall projects, weaken leadership, and divide resources.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Foster resident-business connections, perhaps by implementing a parking moratorium during the slow season.
- Changing the railroad tunnel in Bellows Falls might alleviate the truck issue.
- Advance Transit could pick up commuters.
- One resident stated that the business area of the village needs to expand and offer more services.
- Conversely, another cautioned that Woodstock is geographically constrained and that too much expansion would dilute what already exists.
- The East End is available for development. A committee has been working on pollution and other issues for seven years. The town or village needs to hire a developer and get it done.
- One resident declared that the East End is not a 'viable downtown' issue, and another said that residents were resisting expansion to the East End.
- Tasteful signs, like those in Swiss villages, could be put up to indicate business locations, and directing flow for walking tours.

- Second floor spaces are more economical for new businesses to rent.
- The East End represents an opportunity to integrate bus parking and the visitors' center with an open-air trolley system that could be motorized in winter and horse-drawn in summer.
- Woodstock needs a bike path to connect Woodstock with Killington.
- Downtown branding, perhaps through lightpost flags could visually indicate the downtown area, and remind people about special events.
- A regular event, such as 'First Friday' when all art galleries will be open on the same night would be beneficial. This has been done in Brattleboro with great success.
- Leveraging human capital, based on the Rockefeller model, could encourage partnerships, and increase collaboration on vision and resources.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Communities that have combined leadership, partnership, and collaboration have been the most successful.
- Woodstock has a strong appreciation for its downtown. Most of the challenges presented do not seem insurmountable, with the town/village issues appearing to be the most difficult.
- Woodstock is experiencing creative tensions and some dichotomy, between change/no change, elitist/populist, native/tourist, village/town, independent/corporate.
- The core questions are: Is there a future for Woodstock without change, and who are the agents of change?
- The real estate market has caused tension in the community.
- Leadership, collaboration and partnership are at the heart of the issues.
- Keep in mind that you are a key regional player and an economic driver for creating jobs.

II. Housing/Land Use and Conservation

Points of Testimony (Housing)

Challenges in this Area

- Housing ties directly to a community's identity – to what it is and what kind of community it becomes. We will be a community of one economic level.
- The community's needs and wants are unclear.
- Woodstock has primarily high-income housing. Young, working families can't afford to move to town and buy property. Woodstock needs workforce housing for employees of inns and restaurants, artists, and young families.
- Consider the pharmacy employees. There is no way they can afford to live here on the money they make. Is that the employer's fault?

- Is it desirable to have low-income housing in Woodstock? Building in Bethel would be better and a benefit to Bethel.
- It is desirable to have people live and work in the same town, but it is unrealistic to say there will be affordable housing in Woodstock.
- Land is less expensive in Sharon, for example. Look at that area and use those resources.
- The cost of a car and gasoline is increasing. How do you get people from there to here? What good is it to live in Sharon if people can't get here?
- Making housing affordable vs. affordable housing is an important distinction. "Affordable" housing is synonymous with low-income housing. We want a place where people can afford to live and raise a family. "Affordable housing" does not address our actual needs.
- Affordable housing can include apartments, houses or both. The working-class people of Woodstock interpret affordable housing as meaning home ownership.
- People often start in an apartment and then move up. That's not possible in Woodstock.
- If the economic climate improved, perhaps people's income would go up, which would help make property more affordable.
- Affordable housing needs to be close to town sewer and water to keep costs down.
- For affordable housing, clustered development that is denser than we are used to makes sense. The planning commission has changed zoning to allow for this kind of development, but no one has come forward to do it.
- Developers don't think it's worth putting money or energy into low or middle-level housing.
- There are properties on the East End of town that have pollution problems. We need a solution to the environmental problems to allow for development of either housing or retail.
- Tourism Ottaquechee funded a study of affordable housing and discovered it was hard to find a site that fit Woodstock's criteria for availability, topography and price. The survey identified a need for workforce housing, with 5 – 1 preferring homes to apartments.
- There is a stigma in this town where we define people by their income. There is a perception that low-income people are problem people.

Points of Testimony (Land Use/Conservation)

- Woodstock has extraordinary natural capital: a gem of a location, narrow valleys, mapped and protected wetlands, and drinkable water.
- A tremendous amount of land is protected, and there is no great need to conserve more land.
- Development must be reviewed aesthetically. An area so reliant on tourism must protect its ridgelines.
- Housing does not require that much land. If we want to control our destiny as a community, we need to create housing for people to live in. Housing and conservation don't have to clash.

- Look at the Lower White River Valley where the slope is covered with 1 – 5 acre plots with a house on each one.
- Roughly 8% of the land area is conserved, but the mix of what is conserved does not answer the question of biodiversity needs.
- The town needs to address energy conservation and housing. Okemo houses are being heated, although they sit empty.
- Should there be some sort of criteria or requirements for energy use?
- All resources need to be conserved. Not just land, but also electricity, gasoline, water. Building something ten miles outside of town means more gasoline.
- We have made concessions to outsiders coming in, and the outsiders have bought up all the places where people use to live for speculation or recreation.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Someone needs to buy a big piece of property and donate part of it for affordable housing. Or get a group of people to chip in, as there are a lot of wealthy people in Woodstock.
- Woodstock has raised millions for hockey rinks, libraries – why not for property to build homes on? It's hard to sell politically.
- Donors will want to make sure that the property is kept affordable. But the whole point of owning property is to see it increase in value and build equity.
- Developable land is at a premium. To make it affordable requires high-density units, but that doesn't seem to be what the community wants.
- Look beyond the village, for example to West Woodstock. Other communities could absorb some of the pressure.
- People living and working in different communities may not be the model Woodstock wants, but it may be more realistic than making this a self-sufficient community.
- Use of land and placement of housing need to be done as part of the town planning process.
- Take a portion of the property transfer tax and apply it to make existing housing perpetually affordable. Buy down the purchase price by using public money.
- Intermingle affordable and less affordable housing.
- There are existing models for home ownership, where the seller realizes only a 25% gain, and 75% goes back to the property to make it affordable. But why does the seller have to bear the burden? If the town wants economic diversity, why doesn't the town bear the burden?
- Light industry doesn't seem to be welcome, but there have been successes such as the water buffalo project in South Woodstock. This would spread out the tax burden and take it off the homeowner.
- A Riverwalk along the Ottauquechee and a bike trail to Killington would benefit residents, especially youth, and visitors alike.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The town has a clear picture of plans for conservation and land use with consensus for the future. The picture for housing, though, is very unclear.
- There are opportunities to see what other communities have done, with plenty of examples to draw from. It is important to look at density in a serious way.
- Housing of any type doesn't happen without a push from the community. Many resources do exist, however, the current real estate market is challenging.
- Fear of density is the signal fear of our time: people are afraid of living next to each other. But clustered, modular, efficient housing can look nice. What we are really talking about is a transition stage in public discourse, and inventing new ways to live together.
- There is a lack of consensus, and no strongly expressed need for rental housing. It is important to any housing mix to have a range of options available for people at different stages.
- It is a concern to have a community become one income level, as that impacts the vitality and complexity of a town. Housing is regional, yes, but we all have to do our part locally.

III. Economic Development

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- The State should push development of universal high-speed access, which would facilitate telecommuting.
- There is a tension between development and preservation. Some people want the town to be like it was in the '50's.
- The Gerrish property is prime real estate that must have the contamination cleaned up in order to be viable.
- Housing affects economic development; workers have to be able to afford to live here.
- Health care is a huge problem for workers and employers.
- Woodstock has a seasonal economy. To be viable, businesses must have a plan to be sustainable through down times.
- There is limited public transportation to Woodstock.
- Not enough people, especially people under 35, participate in town planning.
- There are limited social and cultural activities for both visitors and young residents.
- In order to discuss economic development, Woodstock needs to have a clear sense of identity and an understanding of what type of village we want to be.
- Woodstock could seek to attract clean industries, computer software companies and young, professional workers.

- One resident felt that the community does not support the town plan, which derived from an inclusive process 20 years ago.
- A tourist-driven economy that results in second home ownership erodes infrastructure by impacting schools and government positions with part time residents.
- It is important to retain the remaining agricultural aspect of the economy, even if it is small scale.
- Woodstock residents are not on the same page in terms of doing the work to make the town something else.
- It is a challenge to develop without compromising what exists. Zoning has helped to protect the area from strip malls.
- The town is lacking strong leadership and village/town collaboration. We need focused leadership, rather than scattered committees.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- The creative economy should be fostered.
- Take the West End model to the East End of the village, and focus the town's future economic viability there.
- Commercial rents could be controlled, as empty storefronts make the business district look bad.
- An economic 'point person' in town government could coordinate resources for economic development.
- A Department of Economic Development within the town could yield a grid of properties set aside for light and clean industries, and expedite permits and financing.
- Start small, for example with bathrooms or a parking lot.
- Connections could be made with Killington.
- Building more craft and artisan businesses would attract "better" high-end tourists with money to spend.
- An economic development study would help provide focus.
- It may be a disservice to rely on tourism, as Woodstock's historical roots are in self-employment and local industry.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Differentiate between things in your control, such as lack of leadership, not being proactive, and identifying market strengths, and things beyond your control, such as health care costs.
- It is not clear what the town is looking for. Why do you want economic development if you have no labor force, and a housing crunch? Identify who is responsible for leadership.
- Tourists are a given. Consider your local of entrepreneurs who are an indigenous learning network.

- The East End can be considered a frontier, with the Garish property a catalytic project that says to the community, “We can do it.”
- The State wants to tap into Fortune 500 executives to find out what lessons they have learned, and how they would encourage the growth of low-impact businesses.
- The real estate market is a challenge to everything you want to do, including housing, storefronts, and land access.
- The upcoming planning effort must be viewed as having some genuine consequence, with something at risk, in order to engage people.
- There is a perception that Woodstock doesn’t really want economic development. It is important to do some work, and find out what you want.

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I. Community Identity/ Economic & Social Diversity

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- Many residents believe that there is a vacuum of leadership that needs to be filled with new voices, energy and ideas.
- Woodstock needs to envision where it wants to be 10 year from now, and then determine the steps needed to achieve those goals.
- So much economic and social homogeneity is not healthy.
- There is a lack of young people because they cannot afford to live in the town.
- The division between town and village creates an “us vs. them” atmosphere.
- The village carries the burden of public safety and police coverage.
- The government should get involved to avoid duplicating efforts and to prevent divisiveness between town and village.
- Non-resident homeowners create vacant homes for much of the year, but they also pay taxes and place little demand on public services.
- Some residents disagreed with the basis of real estate law, where land use is determined by how much money it will generate.
- Housing is not affordable for teachers, police and retail workers.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Training for current elected and appointed community leaders could be beneficial, and could stimulate increased citizen involvement.
- Some churches in the community are working to develop leadership-training sessions on social issues.
- Incentives and community involvement could lead to more innovative leadership.
- A democratically elected mayoral position could serve to bridge the leadership gap.
- It is necessary to establish affordable housing to bring in young, socially diverse families and to increase the school population and volunteer base.

- A change in zoning would allow large, old houses to be converted to apartments.
- Small business incubator space can be utilized to nurture young entrepreneurs.
- Woodstock should create a high-value property tax and transfer some of the revenue generated to fund affordable housing.
- Merging the town and village would create a stronger sense of community.
- One participant suggested reading Phil Coffin's book to learn what Woodstock was like throughout history.
- The town and village could draft a joint master plan in 2006 and a joint zoning rewrite in 2007.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Woodstock appears to be defined by outsiders – tourists and second homeowners. The community cannot continue to let outside economic factors influence its vision for the future.
- What are the core values, according to the people of Woodstock when thinking about the future?
- Lack of affordable housing affects the community in many ways – a lack of young families, declining school enrollment, fewer new and innovative small businesses.
- Many people expressed concern about the lack of leadership, yet there is ambivalence about whether or not someone is ready to take on the role of leader.
- Philanthropy can be a powerful tool, helping to bring resources together.
- The town has many strengths, including skilled professionals and craftspeople, good schools, philanthropy and energy.
- Woodstock has a creative economy with a wealth of non-profit support. What are some of the issues that non-profits can collaborate more on?

II. Education

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- School enrollment is declining, however administration and infrastructure costs remain level.
- The affordable housing being proposed is one and two bedroom, rather than housing for families with children.
- Funding special education through the town places too much stress on local budgets. It should be federally funded.
- Many residents expressed a desire to have more children in the schools.
- At the same time, some people were concerned that affordable housing would bring in an undesirable type of student.

- Some residents believe that national laws, such as No Child Left Behind, undermine local public education.
- Schools should be used more effectively as a meeting and event space for the whole community.
- There are a significant number of students who are attending private school.
- The public schools work effectively for students who are motivated, but may not meet the needs of students in the middle, who could fall through the cracks.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Woodstock attracts a good number of tuition students, but even more could be done.
- Improved technology would help to better prepare students for the future.
- Service learning opportunities, place-based learning, mentoring, and apprentice programs could help meet diverse needs.
- Woodstock has tremendous human capital, and increased participation of volunteers could enrich curriculum both inside and outside of the school buildings.
- Residents need to model their actions to reflect a belief in socioeconomic diversity.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Act 68 is an opportunity for the community to look at the present conditions in the school, and become proactive, rather than reactive, concerning education issues.
- There appears to be fundamental differences between people's desires and their actual behavior regarding social and economic diversity, affordable housing, and the school population.
- Special education funding has increased from 7% to 16 % in the last decade.
- The overall quality of the school system, as well as the level of community interest is very good. This presents the opportunity for more real-life opportunities such as internships or apprenticeships.
- Expanded opportunities such as distance learning and access to resources are available through technology.
- Woodstock has a chance to become a catalyst for original approaches regarding early education and childcare.
- Parents have high levels of civic engagement, but can increase their voices through participation in a Governance Committee.

III. Youth

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- Youth hanging out on the green can challenge the image some residents and visitors have about Woodstock.
- Some youth don't feel welcome downtown, and complain about police treatment and a negative and controlling atmosphere.
- The technical center could be a real asset, but some residents believe its use is discouraged.
- Youth leadership opportunities are limited.
- Young people do not feel connected to the community, making it difficult to retain youth after high school, and to attract young adults to the community.
- Some youth expressed a desire for a space of their own.
- Some teenagers feel disenfranchised, with wealth, rather than race or religion, being the most divisive factor.
- Young people's lives are over structured and heavily scheduled.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- A restorative justice panel would be beneficial to both youth and adults.
- Clarify police policies toward youth to ensure that they feel welcome and respected.
- Create leadership positions for youth on public and non-profit boards.
- Advance the idea of a youth or multi-generational recreation center.
- Successful programs such as student-to-student mentoring could be further developed and expanded.
- A sidewalk connecting the high school with downtown would help make downtown more inclusive of youth.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The Hartford Technology Center could provide important opportunities for some students.
- An assessment of students on a vocational track would provide the opportunity to link them with appropriate apprenticeships and internships.
- A sidewalk will create a link between the school and town.
- Woodstock is a town with a high level of civic engagement. There is an opportunity to identify and recruit youth leadership.
- A community center, Skateboard Park, or other recreation center would provide a needed place for youth to gather.

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I. Public Safety

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- The ambulance service lacks trained staff, and is challenged by the need to cover a large rural area.
- The ambulance station is not managed 24 hours a day, and relies on on-call staff after regular hours.
- Residents need to travel to Ascutney, Rutland or Lebanon for emergency care.
- Year round residents and visitors have different expectations for emergency services.
- The sheriff's department is not adequately trained to deal with domestic violence or burglaries.
- State police will respond only to emergencies, and some residents believe the response time is too slow.
- The town and village have distinct police services that are mutually exclusive.
- Emergency communication is difficult because of dead spots for cellular phones.
- The fire department does not have an adequate supply of water, prohibiting the installation of water sprinklers in commercial buildings.
- The water supply is privately owned, and expensive to fix.
- Traffic is a serious public safety issue, with some commercial vehicles carrying chemical waste.
- Route 4 is a concern on many levels, including composition of the road, and the lack of access for rescue vehicles in an emergency.
- One resident expressed concern about the number of illegal immigrants on the road.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- It is important for the public to be informed about emergency care options before an emergency occurs.
- Collaboration with emergency services in Rutland or Ascutney is possible.

- Appointing a Constable, rather than electing members of the sheriff's department, would allow the town to require specific qualifications and training.
- State police could be contracted to provide coverage for certain hours.
- It is possible to have a town-wide police force, and include collaboration with the state police as necessary.
- An opportunity exists for a dialogue between the town and village to create a contract with the village for emergency response.
- A private company could be hired to implement a new water system for the fire department.
- The town could raise money for the water system, and seek matching funds.
- The village is responsible for only a small portion of Route 4, and the rest is a state highway. Residents need to address the legislature on this issue.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Better collaboration between social services and public safety could meet some of the community's needs.
- Local networks against domestic violence could work in partnership with local police to provide training and coordination of services.
- The separation between town and village contributes to difficult issues.
- Route 4 is a huge public safety issue, although the solution to it lies outside of Woodstock. It is important to draw political attention to the issue.
- A mock disaster response could be staged to draw attention to safety concerns on Route 4.
- Participants have identified several options to address concerns about police protection.

II. Health, Social & Elder Services

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- A directory of social services is needed to help people find appropriate assistance.
- One resident expressed concern about understanding complicated programs for elders, and identified a need for service providers to explain them.
- There is no convenient living facility designed to meet the changing needs of the elderly.
- Woodstock needs to organize emergency health care services in town.
- Transportation is a challenge for the elderly, and also for young people who need to get to treatment programs.
- There is a shortage of volunteers.
- Programs such as Community Christmas have had a difficult time identifying people who need their services. Improved communication would improve delivery of many social services.

- Working parents are unable to find affordable day care for their children.
- There is a need for adult day care as well, as many elderly do not have family able to care for them.
- There is a need for a community center that will encourage people of different ages to interact.
- Distribution of services such as WIC is sometimes interrupted by bad weather and difficulty reaching rural locations.
- The problem of substance abuse among young people is no different in Woodstock than anywhere else.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Property owned by Vermont Community Trust could be used for a multi-generational space.
- Advance Transit could be a source of transportation for seniors as well as people who work outside of town.
- Stage Coach is another non-profit transportation agency that is doing innovative work.
- Staff at the senior center can provide information about Medicare programs for the elderly. Additionally, promotion of 211 service will help people to understand the options available to them.
- The Ottauquechee Health Center is creating a directory of resources that will help to further develop a network of information. This could be put on the town website.
- Combining elder care and day care for children in the same space is more cost efficient, and promotes interaction between generations.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Communication between churches, social service agencies and the public will improve the delivery of services.
- Woodstock has a large number of non-profits, and there is some overlap of services. Rather than duplicating efforts, look for ways to collaborate.
- Utilize the Internet. Many people now respond more effectively to community news found on a website rather than in print.
- 211 is a wonderful resource, and it is important to get the word out about it.
- A community center could respond to many of the needs people have expressed; elder care, childcare, and teen activities.
- There needs to be a critical mass for some services, such as public transportation, to be effective.

III. Non-profit Coordination and Sustainability

Points of Testimony

Challenges in this Area

- Woodstock has 41 non-profits, many of whom compete for the same funds.
- There is a duplication of services, particularly among small non-profits.
- Woodstock's demographics – many second homeowners and an aging population – make finding volunteers difficult.
- It is challenging to find people to take leadership roles on a board, and to make a full level of commitment.
- There are so many non-profit activities that it is difficult to focus energy on a particular topic.
- Fund-raising is hard because there is a limited donor pool, and the same core of givers is repeatedly approached for donations.
- Recipients also tend to be the same people. There is a need to identify new beneficiaries.
- There is some competition with private organizations that create a moneymaking enterprise based on a non-profit service.
- A major challenge is understanding how to market non-profits.
- Technology is not fully utilized, and technical services are difficult to access.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- All non-profits and volunteers can be listed on the town website.
- Woodstock could use the 'umbrella' model, where all nonprofits with a similar mission send out one newsletter and unify in their marketing efforts.
- Non-profits have already improved communication regarding their calendar of events in order to avoid conflicts and overlap.
- Non-profits could organize a unified event, such as an auction, and share the proceeds.
- Organizations could partner with the local grocery store and have a percentage of sales donated to a non-profit selected by each customer.
- Donation boxes placed in local stores could raise money and promote name recognition of non-profits.
- A directory of resources would help to support a strong, collaborative network.
- Have a one-minute 'elevator speech' that will clearly explain an organization's mission.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- VANPO (Vermont Association of Nonprofit Organizations) can provide an excellent support system.

- Consider working with businesses that have storefront windows available to advertise services.
- Although finances are tight, it is important to invest in marketing and promotion.
- Be innovative in identifying funding sources. Approach businesses or government agencies and let them know how your organization is invaluable in supporting their mission.
- Sharing information and collaboration can yield a greater return for organizations that have similar missions.
- Appeal to funders at the state and regional level.

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