

# Grand Isle County

## WAVES (WAKing Vibrant Economic Strategies) FINAL REPORT AND ACTION PLAN



NOVEMBER, 2006

Vermont Council on Rural Development

# Grand Isle County Creative Communities Program

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Overview of the Creative Communities Program .....	4
Background to Grand Isle’s Participation .....	6
First Public Forum on the Creative Economy .....	8
Initial List of Project Possibilities .....	12
Priority Topics .....	15
Action Plans .....	17
Resource Team Recommendations .....	27
Participants .....	33
Resource Team Contact Information .....	34

### For Further Information

Paul Costello, Executive Director  
Helen Labun Jordan, Director, Creative Communities Program  
Vermont Council on Rural Development  
PO Box 1384  
Montpelier, VT 05601  
(802) 828-6024 or (802) 828-6022  
[vcrd@sover.net](mailto:vcrd@sover.net)  
[ccp@sover.net](mailto:ccp@sover.net)  
[www.vtrural.org](http://www.vtrural.org)

## Introduction

Grand Isle County consists of the five towns in the Lake Champlain Islands: Alburgh, Isle La Motte, North Hero, Grand Isle, and South Hero. Grand Isle has a clear claim to being unique in Vermont – it is our only island-based county, situated in the middle of Lake Champlain. As the Creative Communities Program took place in the summer and fall of 2006, Vermont's Lake Champlain heritage was finding recognition in at least two new ways: plans for the Quadricentennial celebration of Samuel de Champlain's arrival in the region (2009) and passage of a bill in the U.S. Senate to designate the Champlain Valley as a National Heritage Area. With its location in Lake Champlain, Grand Isle County sits in the center of one of Vermont's major assets for cultural, natural, and historical heritage.

While the Islands' geography makes this county highly unique in Vermont, they also share many of the key issues facing other communities. Two prominent concerns that emerged in the preparations for the Creative Communities Program were (1) balancing an economy that has a clear, significant divide between its busy and slow seasons and (2) increasing inter-town cooperation.

In summer, second homeowners and visitors increase the Islands' population by several thousand. Local businesses that serve this population see a wave of activity. Around the Islands are many events and entertainment, often in outdoor performance venues or structured around outdoor recreation. Wintertime and colder months, however, slow down considerably. This lull appears in both the business climate and in activities available for full-time residents; it has economic, community, and cultural impacts on life in Grand Isle County.



In addition to concerns about the slow times of year, Islands residents have concerns about how to manage the busy times. One question is how to handle the logistics of so many people participating in summertime activities. Another question is appropriate mechanisms for spreading the activity beyond already-popular places.

An important component of managing the summer season is finding ways to encourage activities that reflect the Islands' local culture and history. One example is the agricultural economy. In one sense residents perceive the Islands as transitioning away from a farm-based economy. In another sense, the evolution of the agricultural economy makes it possible for agriculture to be a vital part of any economic foundation, including the prominent tourist economy. For example, two local farmers' markets are finding success, attractions like the Snow Farm Winery draw large crowds (especially for the summer concert series) and the South Hero Land Trust published a new 2006 agricultural guide to forty-four farms with products available for direct sale to visiting customers.

Many towns struggle with how much of a role tourism should play in their economy and whether appealing to visitors ultimately undermines the local culture. Many of the visitors during the tourist season in the Islands are part-time residents who are a regular part of Island life, not one-time visitors. Discussion in the forums also recognized that projects related to a tourist economy

do not have to only appeal to non-residents; the initiatives developed by project teams through the Creative Communities Program clearly benefit a local audience and visitors at the same time.

The Lake Champlain Islands looked closely at how to increase cooperation between the five towns in the county as part of the creative economy process. More details on this aspect of the work are included in the **Background Section**, as this goal formed the basis of seeking assistance from the Creative Communities Program. All five towns have distinct characters and, at the same time, share the identity of being part of the Islands. Leaders in the local creative economy believed that shared projects could help the towns rally around shared characteristics to work in a way that promotes everyone's well being more effectively than they might each accomplish alone.

The final projects chosen by Grand Isle County residents all have the potential for bringing greater unity to the county's different towns. Expanding **Indoor Community Space** will help groups find places to hold events in inclement weather, including making space accessible and easy to find throughout the Islands. All towns will participate in building the community space database. The **Off-Season Activity** project team builds community activities throughout the year. The project to **Develop Trails to Tour Local Farms, Arts, and Other Islands Highlights** is perhaps the most visible example of joining all towns together. This initiative literally joins every community in the Islands. While one prime audience will be visitors, who can use the trails to explore the entire county, the trails system will also allow Islands residents to learn more about what is in their own backyards.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development has enjoyed working with everyone involved in Grand Isle County's Creative Communities Program. We would like to especially thank our local steering committee for their hard work putting together the community forums, as well as the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce, Fisk Farm, Blue Paddle Bistro, Merchant's Bank and Net Source of Vermont for hosting preliminary meetings. The forums would not have been possible without the space provided by the Gordon House, Ed Weed Fish Hatchery, and Grand Isle Lake House.

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



## **Overview of the Creative Communities Program**

By 2003, the idea of the creative economy had become pervasive in Vermont, but few policy makers and local leaders had understanding of how to advance the opportunity of the creative economy systematically in state policy or in practice in towns throughout the state. The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) convened the Vermont Council on Culture and Innovation (VCCI) to craft a strategic plan that would coordinate the work of statewide leadership, the congressional delegation and state legislature, and provide community leaders with a guide to practical action. The final product, *Advancing Vermont's Creative Economy*, was formally issued at the beginning of the 2005 Vermont Legislative session.

The VCCI report is available online at <http://www.vtrural.org>. It outlines the current strength of Vermont's creative economy and offers recommendations for increasing the contribution that the creative economy can make to the state's overall economic health.

One of the policy recommendations in the VCCI report was to establish a Vermont Creative Communities Program that would jumpstart local creative economy development projects by offering targeted assistance for community-led planning. VCRD received a grant from Jane's Trust to implement this program starting in 2005.

Today, the Creative Communities Program builds on both VCCI's findings and the successful Community Visit program that VCRD has managed for many years. Community Visits offer a way for communities to identify key issue areas and construct work plans for addressing selected public concerns.

## **The Creative Economy**

Organizations around the world, including several in New England, have studied and set their own definitions of the "creative economy." Some definitions focus on the revenue generated by particular creative sectors that fit standard industrial codes, others focus on the individual qualities of creative workers, and still others attempt to pinpoint specific policies that spark creativity in *every* worker.

The Creative Communities Program considers all existing creative economy perspectives and uses a working definition with three key components that are common to most creative economy discussions:

### **•The Importance of Place:**

Our discussion of "place" includes the natural, physical and community environments that form the foundation for creative economy work. Is this a place where people will *want* to work, live, and participate as active citizens? Is there a healthy mix of culture and commerce? Is there a strong community identity that distinguishes this place from any other?

### **•Creative Partnerships:**

The 2004 *Advancing Vermont's Creative Economy* report began to outline the breadth of businesses, individuals, and organizations that contribute to a strong economy. These

contributors include groups that have not traditionally been thought of as business partners, such as arts, heritage, place-based, and other (usually) not-for-profit organizations. They are core partners in economic development discussions. Who needs to be at the table to help build a strong local economy?

**•Individuals' Creative Skills:**

Businesses in every field generate a competitive advantage from new ideas and unique skills – how do we increase business' ability to capitalize on creative contributions? What type of environment attracts and retains today's top creative thinkers? What inspires creative thinking in *everyone* in a community?

## **The Creative Communities Process**

The Creative Communities Program consists of three public meetings that generate the brainstorming, prioritized projects, and action steps detailed in this report. The goal is to bring a diverse group of community members to the table who are in agreement in their commitment to a strong future for their community and can begin to work together to identify key steps for ensuring that future. The timeline for Grand Isle County's process was as follows:

### **August 21st, 2006 – First Public Forum**

In the month leading up to the first forum, a local steering committee helped get word out about the WAVES (WAKing Vibrant Economic Strategies) program, as the Creative Communities process in the Islands was titled. The first public forum combined presentations on what the creative economy means with brainstorming about how it applies to Grand Isle County and specific ideas for projects to advance local creative economic development. This list (pg. 12) formed the basis for the prioritization session in the second public meeting.

### **September 14th, 2006 – Project List Review and Prioritization**

The second community meeting reviewed and revised the list of project possibilities outlined in the first meeting. Through discussion, championing, and voting, participants identified 3 priority areas to become the focus of forming Project Teams and work plans in the third, and final, forum (p. 15).

### **October 24th, 2006 – Project Team Working Day**

In the final meeting run by VCRD, Project Teams for each project set specific strategies, identified available (and potential) resources, and outlined a work plan for the next year around the projects selected in the second meeting. A Resource Team invited by VCRD facilitated the group discussions, offered ideas and resource suggestions and answered questions from their experience. The work plans based on this meeting and recommendations received later from the Resource Team appear in the following pages of this report (pp. 17-32).

## **Background to Grand Isle County's Participation in the Creative Communities Program**

The Creative Communities Program is not the first time that Grand Isle County has met collectively to explore the economic profile of the Islands and make plans for the future. Strategic plans were developed in the late-1990's with Burnt Rock Associates and the Glynwood Center Countryside Exchange. A Strategic Economic Development Plan put together with the Vermont Department of Economic Development in 2004 has provided a strong framework for recent projects.

The 2004 Strategic Economic Development Plan set the stage for the Creative Communities Program by identifying countywide collaboration as a priority. The broad cross-section of the community that contributed to this plan showed Islanders' preparation to work together. It also led to specific collaborative projects such as a countywide benefit to help Grand Isle, Louisiana rebuild after Hurricane Katrina, establishment of a calendar coordinating committee for Islands events, and participation in the VT Arts Council's Palettes Project.

Many of the emerging collaborative initiatives emphasized creative use of existing assets. The South Hero Land Trust, for example, developed an Islands agriculture guide that brought interested customers to farms selling products, infusing a true sense of place into food purchases as well as supporting the farm businesses making the sales. Another major initiative has been to bring high-speed Internet access throughout the Islands, a key tool for local entrepreneurs and creative businesses. Projects underway at the time of Grand Isle's application to the Creative Communities Program included expanding performance venues at Knight Point State Park (home of the Lipizzan stallions, a significant summertime attraction), building a bike trail through the Islands to Canada, and seeking Scenic Byway designation for Route 2.

The existing economic mix in Grand Isle County presents a strong starting point for creative economic development. The Lake Champlain Islands Chamber of Commerce has identified tourism as the primary economic engine for the county, followed by agriculture and small-- and micro-businesses. These factors all rely on a strong cultural and community life. Visitors look for an authentic character as a reason to visit the Islands; agriculture builds on a traditional economic base for the Islands; the entrepreneurs running micro-businesses, have chosen Grand Isle County as a community they want to be part of both as citizens and business owners.

Along with establishing what strong creative economy starting points already exist, local discussions prior to submitting an application to the Creative Communities Program identified some weaknesses to address. The primary question was how the Island towns could all work together. The distance between towns (over a thirty mile spread) and tendency to not look outside one's own town for partnership, worked against collaboration. Furthermore, simple goodwill between towns was not enough; people needed specific projects on which everyone could focus. Upcoming events, such as the Quadricentennial of Samuel de Champlain's arrival in the region, or completion of projects, like building bike trails in partnership with LocalMotion, required better co-ordination to ensure success.

One key asset for encouraging more collaboration and new projects around the creative economy is the spirit of leadership that exists in the Islands. Interest in the creative economy, and other

community initiatives, has spanned many diverse groups, including artists, farmers, banks, non-profit organizations, Franklin County, and many individual businesspeople. Enthusiastic, thoughtful participants joined in creative economy meetings prior to, and during, the Creative Communities Program. Many participants were comfortable with taking charge of projects and stepped forward when it was time to lead project teams at the end of the Creative Communities Program.

The Steering Committee that helped put together the public meetings of the Creative Communities Program were enthusiastic proponents of the creative economy from the start. They quickly re-named the local process WAVES (WAKing Vibrant Economic Strategies) and set an aggressive publicity campaign. Members of this initial committee were:

Christine Allard  
Carol Behrman  
David Borthwick-Leslie  
Bob Camp  
Darcy Coates  
Mary Harwood  
Minner Hobbs  
David Lane  
Julie Lane  
Pat Rainville  
Ruth Wallman

The following section describes the start of WAVES in Grand Isle County.



# **I. First Public Forum on the Creative Economy**

## **WAVES (Waking Vibrant Economic Strategies)**

### **August 21st, 2006**

The first public forum in WAVES took place on the evening of August 21<sup>st</sup> at the Gordon House (Grand Isle), home of the Lake Champlain Basin Program. The late August starting date provided a chance for summer-time residents to take part in the start of the discussion process. The Grand Isle location provided a central meeting place in an effort to make the forum accessible to people from throughout the Islands, and residents from each town participated.

The evening began with a welcome from Mary Harwood, who is chairing the WAVES process with assistance from Ruth Wallman and Darcy Coates. Creative Communities Program Director Helen Labun Jordan gave an overview of the program's structure. To provide background on the creative economy in Vermont, Alex Aldrich, Executive Director of the Vermont Arts Council, and Robert McBride, Director of the Rockingham Arts and Museum Project (RAMP), spoke about their own work. The Vermont Arts Council has focused on building a dialogue between many different disciplines around economic development. RAMP and Bellows Falls, its location, often appear as an example of a creative economy success story. A combination of cultural and community development projects have generated an atmosphere of a town on the move where businesses want to locate. Bellows Falls hosted a creative economy summit with the Creative Communities Program in November, 2006, and a report from that event with further background information is available online at: <http://www.vtrural.org>.

The following notes record the forum participants' thoughts on the creative economy in the Lake Champlain Islands. The next section arranges these notes into the possible projects that participants in the second public forum used to select three projects to become the focus of work over the next year.

### **What does the Creative Economy mean in the Islands?**

- The Islands Center for Arts and Recreation (ICAR) brings important cultural activities to the Islands and also activity to the Knight Point State Park. Activities include the Lipizzan Stallions, Mozart Festival and Shakespeare.
- The Islands have a strong agricultural history.
- The South Hero Land Trust guide to agriculture shows a diversity of direct farm products. Forty-four farms are included in their guide. Dairy farms without products for direct sale increase that farms number.
- Dairy farms are major landowners in the Islands and keep that land open.
- Creative farm-based energy production is moving forward.

- The Islands moved slowly from a farm-based community to an economy that relies largely on visitors. But in the last several decades the split between the economic activity in the tourist season and off-season has become extreme – more than other tourist-oriented communities in Vermont. There is not much balance between the busy summer season and rest of the year.



- Islands Arts engages many local people, especially as volunteers. Islands Arts works with schools on arts programs and first showed that music could work on the Islands (now there's the Mozart festival).
- There's a growing interest in showcasing local artists. Individual artists get together on an informal basis and build a supportive community.
- The Islands have started to look creatively at affordable housing.
- The Fisk Farm is a great center for activity. It would be better if the Farm were more than a summertime activity.
- The Lake Champlain Basin Program has a winter lecture series that gets good turn out, which shows that there's a market for non-summer activities.
- An ongoing project in Broadband is bringing high speed Internet throughout the Islands, providing the tools for home-based and entrepreneurial businesses. Many arts-based businesses, such as writing and design, require this Internet access.
- There are important festivals in the Islands. The Bluegrass Festival in Alburgh brings attendees from all over. Applefest is a major attraction every year. The Quadricentennial for Lake Champlain is coming up in 2009. The Islands are literally in the middle of that celebration, and should be leaders in events.
- The Islands have been building a strong recreational infrastructure. Biking is particularly strong. This recreation can tie into history and culture, for example with interpretive trails. One down side is that this infrastructure tends to be fair-weather focused.
- There is a business roundtable every month to discuss ways to work together. There are still more opportunities to coordinate, for example coordinating Bed & Breakfasts, caterers and other businesses around weddings.
- The Preservation Trust of Vermont owns the Grand Isle Lake House, which is used by non-profits and for concerts.
- The winery has concerts.

- Lake Champlain is an important asset. There are marinas, ferries, state parks, kayaking and other water activities.

## What are specific projects we could undertake?

- Bring balance to the seasons so that there is activity outside of summer.
- Retain agricultural activity.



- Local people need to be aware of the things happening at home, instead of always looking outside the Islands for activity and community involvement.
- Be aware of demographics and baby boomers turning 60. Governing bodies and businesses should coordinate to prepare for those demographic shifts.
- Broadband is a key component of the creative economy, since many people now work in fields that require high speed Internet access.
- Coordinate recreation programs Islands-wide and include a budget for staff.
- Teach creative activity.
- Build a meeting space for artists, other than the library.
- Save the Town Hall in North Hero – recognizing that this proposal has been defeated by voters before. Feasibility studies would need to be reviewed as well as different options for financing the necessary restoration.
- Host an Islands Fest that incorporates arts, history, agriculture to highlight everything in the Islands. The celebration could last over multiple days, with a map of the area, concerts, art presentations, etc. One example is the Mad River Valley celebration.
- Use the Lake more, like it is used in Burlington, with tours, cruises, dinner on the lake.



- Identify public spaces that could be gathering places, places to hold events inside.
- The Islands need a gym, a place to get exercise when it can't be done outside. This would increase health for area residents.

- Convene a Task Force to study extending the visitor season. The Chamber of Commerce is starting to move in this direction with a study of 4 season fishing.
- Hold a literary festival; place could be a theme.
- Bring more community activities to community parks (Grand Isle and Isle La Motte both have community parks). Work with CIDER and Seniors.
- Promote farm-based energy
- Arrange an Islands-wide open studio event combined with open farms. Again, look at the off-season.
- Hold creative workshops in the winter, with artists from here or outside. Another option is a series of community workshops where individuals share their talents in any field.
- Volunteer burn out is a problem. There should be some formal (paid) administration to support volunteer groups, building a common capacity with all the towns.
- There should be a community ice skating rink with music, a café.
- Support ICAR, including finishing the existing site plans of an ice rink and band shell.
- Extend the agriculture guide to build trails around the Islands, like Vermont's cheese and wine trails, that highlight things to do.
- Don't do anything. The risk of unintended negative consequences is too high.
- Lake Champlain's water quality needs to be stabilized for a strong economy. Work cooperatively to ensure adequate water quality.
- Use eco-tourism to promote the Islands as a 4-season destination.
- Build a Lake Champlain Islands-specific brand. For example, with a Lake Champlain Islands milk.
- Build e-commerce.
- Create programs for kids in school that tie into Vermont standard 4.1; understanding place.

## II. Initial List of Project Possibilities

The August 21st public forum produced stacks of notes from enthusiastic discussions. As described in the previous section, the forum began with what creative economic assets exist *already* in the Lake Champlain Islands and then used this list to start a discussion of possibilities for consciously building from these strengths. This second half of the discussion led to a list of project opportunities.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development looked through the forum notes to pull together the first draft of a projects list. These projects express the specific ideas presented on August 21<sup>st</sup>, combining very similar ones and adding in considerations that came up during the background discussion. They block out a list of ambitious concepts that could provide a starting point for project teams to research and refine. VCRD did not filter projects based on feasibility or how closely they relate to the creative economy. Instead, this process simply organized the notes, combined small ideas into larger ones, and connected general observations to concrete project possibilities.

Revisions to the initial list occurred at a public meeting, on September 14<sup>th</sup>, where participants added new topics, combined existing topics into single projects, and made corrections to each proposal. This public process produced the following, final proposed topic list.

**Form a Task Force on Increasing Off-Season Activity:** For many Islands businesses, the busy times in summer far exceed activity in the slow season. The Chamber of Commerce has started to work on this issue, for example with a task force on 4-season fishing. The larger list of potential creative economy projects also includes multiple possibilities for off-season activity, including eco-tourism, creative workshops, education around place, and writers' retreats. A group should be convened to tackle the big issue of how to add activity in slow times. Addressing this issue will mean not only investigating how to increase activity, but also evaluating whether capacity exists for that increase and weighing potential negative impacts on local communities.

**Create Indoor Space for Performances and Community Events:** The Islands need



an indoor space for performances during the cold months and during inclement summer weather. This space should include not only performance capacity, but also space for informal community groups that now have difficulty finding appropriate meeting rooms. This group should inventory existing spaces (potentially including the North Hero Town Hall), facilitate better community use of underutilized spaces, make any needed improvements and, if necessary, create new indoor spaces to meet particular needs.

**Coordinate Volunteer Activities:** Many activities rely on the efforts of volunteers. The Islands should increase the effectiveness of volunteer activities and prevent volunteer burn out by having one or more paid staff people to lend support. This support will be particularly important in coordinating activities across all towns in the county. One place to start could be recreation and the arts. The Islands Center for Arts and Recreation is a strong example of an organization that has promoted creative economic activity and may need volunteer coordination assistance to continue its plans for the future.



**Build Indoor Recreation Opportunities:** Recreation and physical activities on the Islands are currently outdoors-oriented. Indoor facilities are needed, particularly for use during poor weather. Indoor facilities should support residents' health as well as being community gathering places. They should target multiple generations, including older residents. A particular recommendation is to construct a skating rink.

**Host an Islands Festival:** Host an Islands Fest that incorporates arts, history, and agriculture to highlight everything in the Islands. The celebration could last multiple days, with a map of the area, concerts, art presentations, etc that incorporates existing festivals and brings attendees to different towns within the Islands. One example is the Mad River Valley celebration. Two specific types of festivals mentioned in the discussion around these activities were literary festivals and the upcoming Lake Champlain Quadricentennial.

**Diversify Uses for Lake Champlain:** Many people use Lake Champlain, for example kayakers, canoers, ferries and state parks. However, some areas of use should be developed further, for example lakefront walkways, dinner cruises and more tours of the lake. Revamping Islands' use of the Lake should tie into the upcoming Quadricentennial celebration.

**Bring More Activities to Community Parks:** In addition to state parks, the Islands have several community parks. These parks should be the sites of more community activities that draw together residents from around the Islands.

**Develop Trails to Tour Local Farms, Arts, and Other Islands Highlights:** The many different resources of the Islands should be made more visible with designated trails to guide people through local highlights, including agriculture, arts, historic buildings, and landscape features. The guide should be visually appealing, incorporating local artwork along with the basic information. This project could celebrate the particular assets of agriculture and arts through an Open Studio / Open Farm event. An overarching goal of this project should be enhancing education about place in the Islands.

**Promote a Lake Champlain Islands-Specific Brand:** The Islands should build on their unique character by promoting a Lake Champlain Islands brand. Milk is one potential starting point. This brand should include local residents as a target audience. With so many

people commuting off of the Islands for work and other activities, it's often challenging keeping local residents tuned in to what is available in their own backyard. Part of any brand marketing should include increasing this local awareness, strengthening the connection between residents and their home communities.

**Run a Series of Creative Workshops in the Winter:** Local residents could offer workshops throughout the winter in areas where they are knowledgeable, including the arts. One particular point of interest is extended writers' workshops lasting over several days. These workshops would add activity to a slow season, bring community members together, and showcase local talent in a variety of fields.

**Increase Farm-Based Energy Production:** One area being explored by Vermont farmers is on-farm energy production. This energy could come from a variety of sources, and the Lake Champlain Islands should target farm-based energy as an area for future agricultural development.

**Develop Education Programs Around Place:** Vermont school education standards promote understanding of place. The Lake Champlain Islands have a rich history and that history ties into creative economic development today. A group should work with local schools to help the community implement education around children's understanding of place. This education around place is a general principle that underlies many of the suggested creative economy activities.



**Incubate Local Entrepreneurial Businesses:** Recent initiatives, including Islands-wide wireless Internet access, are increasing the possibilities for entrepreneurial and home-based businesses. Farm-based energy production, extended non-summer activities, and diverse uses for the waterfront are all suggested creative economy projects that include an element of local entrepreneurship. The Islands should target the growth of entrepreneurial businesses and e-commerce through a comprehensive incubation plan.

### III. Priority Topics Selected September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006

The Ed Weed Fish Hatchery provided space for the second community meeting of WAVES on September 14th, 2006. This meeting is the center point of the democratic decision-making that takes place through the Creative Communities Program, where residents select priority areas that will become the focus of yearlong project teams. This is a forum where ideas flow freely, arguments are offered, perspectives shared, and people have the opportunity to champion their beliefs and then vote their priorities.

The first step in the evening was to review the list of ideas drawn from the initial forum in August. Participants revised this list, added new ideas, and combined some closely related items to develop the final version listed in the previous section. Discussion then narrowed in on the projects that were top choices for all in the room. Finally, a combination of discussion and voting led to the final three priority projects. These projects reflect the criteria initially identified in the Lake Champlain Islands' application to the Creative Communities Program:

- Building cooperation between all towns in the Islands
- Rallying participation from a diverse group of community members, including new volunteers
- Jumpstarting creative economic development – setting the foundation for leveraging culture and community to build a strong local economy.

The three priority issues selected by the Lake Champlain Islands are:

**Expand Options for Indoor Community Space:** There are multiple needs for indoor space in the Islands: space for performances during the cold months and inclement summer weather, space for informal community groups that now have difficulty finding appropriate meeting rooms, and space for indoor recreation options. Many of the other proposed creative economy projects, for example creative workshops, would require easily accessible, friendly indoor options. The issue of indoor space also touches on other creative economy themes, including use of historic structures and finding ways to make gathering places inviting to all towns in Grand Isle County. This group should inventory existing spaces (potentially including the North Hero Town Hall), facilitate better community use of underutilized spaces, make any needed improvements and, if necessary, create new indoor spaces to meet particular needs.

**Form a Task Force on Increasing Off-Season Activity:** For many Islands businesses, the busy times in summer far exceed activity in the slow season. The Chamber of Commerce has started to work on this issue, for example with a task force on 4-season fishing. The larger list of potential creative economy projects also includes multiple possibilities for off-season activity, including eco-tourism, creative workshops, education around place, and writers' retreats. A group should be convened to tackle the big issue of how to add activity in slow times. Addressing this issue will mean not only investigating how to increase activity, but also evaluating whether capacity exists for that increase and weighing potential negative impacts on local communities.

**Develop Trails to Tour Local Farms, Arts, and Other Islands Highlights:** The many different resources of the Islands should be made more visible with designated trails to guide people through local highlights, including agriculture, arts, historic buildings, and landscape features. The guide should be visually appealing, incorporating local artwork along with the basic information. This project could celebrate the particular assets of agriculture and arts through an Open Studio / Open Farm event. An overarching goal of this project should be enhancing education about place in the Islands.



## **IV. Action Plans** **October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006**

On October 24<sup>th</sup>, community members from throughout Grand Isle organized into Project Teams to implement the ideas generated during the earlier strategic planning sessions. Each Project Team has a chairperson to run sessions for the next year. At the first team meetings on October 24<sup>th</sup>, committee members worked closely with facilitators and resource teams to develop step-by-step action plans, and to devise a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. This final phase of the program marks the time when residents begin the work of turning ideas into action. The Resource Team members, listed at the end of this report, are available to lend ideas as the projects move forward. Their initial recommendations are in the following section.

### **Form a Task Force on Increasing Off-Season Activity**

» **Form a Task Force on Increasing Off-Season Activity:** For many Islands businesses, the busy times in summer far exceed activity in the slow season. The Chamber of Commerce has started to work on this issue, for example, with a task force on 4-season fishing. The larger list of potential creative economy projects also includes multiple possibilities for off-season activity, including eco-tourism, creative workshops, education around place, and writers' retreats. A group should be convened to tackle the big issue of how to add activity in slow times. Addressing this issue will mean not only investigating how to increase activity, but also evaluating whether capacity exists for that increase and weighing potential negative impacts on local communities.

**Committee Chair: Ruth Wallman** ([ruth@lakechamplainislands.com](mailto:ruth@lakechamplainislands.com))

#### **Project Team Sign-Ins:**

Jennifer	Buckner	<a href="mailto:jennifer@buckner.cc">jennifer@buckner.cc</a>
Bob	Camp	<a href="mailto:camphero@aol.com">camphero@aol.com</a>
Mary	Harwood	<a href="mailto:mharwood@hughes.net">mharwood@hughes.net</a>
Mitzi	Johnson	<a href="mailto:mitzi@surfglobal.net">mitzi@surfglobal.net</a>
Naomi	King	<a href="mailto:lemonlily@pshift.com">lemonlily@pshift.com</a>
Hardy	Machia	<a href="mailto:hardy@catamount.com">hardy@catamount.com</a>
Pat	Rainville	<a href="mailto:hihopes@together.net">hihopes@together.net</a>
Don	Smallwood	<a href="mailto:sheroao@sover.net">sheroao@sover.net</a>
Ruth	Wallman	<a href="mailto:ruth@champlainislands.com">ruth@champlainislands.com</a>
Katya	Wilcox	<a href="mailto:dupasquier@aol.com">dupasquier@aol.com</a>

#### **Action steps**

##### **1. Winter Carnival**

Working together with residents from throughout Grande Isle County, the task force will design and implement a signature event of the Vermont Winter season celebrating the lake and the Islands as the ice capitol of the east. Activities in this major event will

include a Duck Tape Derby (mirroring the Summer boat race), outdoor contests (e.g. wood splitting, survival skills, races) community skating, and a public celebration.

- a. Do an inventory of ice sports and be the VT leader in para-skiing, skating, cross-country, snowmobiles, ice boats, and unite these activities in VT's premier celebration of the ice!.
- b. Connect these events to the existing ice fishing derby
- c. Investigate attracting other events to the carnival like a snowmobile event, a working dog show, an outdoor ice rink, to make this a community celebration with something for everyone.

## 2. **"Muddy Gras"**

The Muddy Gras will be a Spring festival costume ball – where island residents will be invited to come as their favorite Hero. This dance and potluck community party will feature music and a "Hero of the Year Award" ceremony.

## 3. **All Island Trek**

The committee will plan and develop an off-season travel ski/ snowshoe/ walk as a regular weekend feature through a course that winds throughout the islands. Each day's trek would end at a home for a potluck dinner.

### **Other Activities Ideas for Future Consideration Include:**

- Develop an Islands-wide Writers' Conference and tie it in to additional events like a live poetry slam, book groups conference.
- Produce a Working Dog Show
- Set up regular community potlucks
- Set up a potluck, living room concert series.
- Set up an Arts / Artisans series of free classes where community volunteer craftspeople share their skills and encourage others in developing skills.

### **Resources**

- Invite representatives from each of the 5 town recreation committees to join this committee.
- Work with VT Dept. of Tourism & Marketing to get word out through multi-media.
- Invite Fire & Rescue Squads to be represented on the committee – they will be needed to help with rink and other ice activities.
- Forest, Parks & Recreation.
- Business leaders can be invited to join committee and support events.
- Applefest organizers could provide logistic advice.
- Local artists & musicians.
- Sports & recreation club.
- Town highway crew for moving snow to make ski banks and other forms for events.
- School kids.

## Expand Options for Indoor Community Space

» **Expand Options for Indoor Community Space:** There are multiple needs for indoor space in the Islands: space for performances during the cold months and inclement summer weather, space for informal community groups that now have difficulty finding appropriate meeting rooms, and space for indoor recreation options. Many of the other proposed creative economy projects, for example creative workshops, would require easily accessible, friendly indoor options. The issue of indoor space also touches on other creative economy themes, including use of historic structures and finding ways to make gathering places inviting to all towns in Grand Isle County. This group should inventory existing spaces (potentially including the North Hero Town Hall), facilitate better community use of underutilized spaces, make any needed improvements and, if necessary, create new indoor spaces to meet particular needs.

**Committee Chair: Marian Fritz** ([mfritz8672@aol.com](mailto:mfritz8672@aol.com))

### **Project Team Sign-Ins:**

Pam	Allen	<a href="mailto:apples@together.net">apples@together.net</a>
Carol	Behrman	<a href="mailto:cabas2@yahoo.com">cabas2@yahoo.com</a>
Joyce	Borthwick-Leslie	<a href="mailto:dborthw349@aol.com">dborthw349@aol.com</a>
Jennifer	Buckner	<a href="mailto:jennifer@buckner.cc">jennifer@buckner.cc</a>
Darcy	Coates	-
Lisa	Crean	<a href="mailto:earicycle@hotmail.com">earicycle@hotmail.com</a>
Linda	Effel	<a href="mailto:zoning@town.grand-isle.vt.us">zoning@town.grand-isle.vt.us</a>
Marian	Fritz	<a href="mailto:mfritz8672@aol.com">mfritz8672@aol.com</a>
Tracy	Giro	<a href="mailto:tragiuro@together.net">tragiuro@together.net</a>
Hardy	Machia	<a href="mailto:hardy@catamount.com">hardy@catamount.com</a>
Jeff	Martin	<a href="mailto:cthrice@adelphia.net">cthrice@adelphia.net</a>
Joanne	Necrason	<a href="mailto:jnecrason@pivot.net">jnecrason@pivot.net</a>
Tinker	Palmer	<a href="mailto:windmillfarm@pivot.net">windmillfarm@pivot.net</a>
Rob	Rousseau	<a href="mailto:rousseaur146@hotmail.com">rousseaur146@hotmail.com</a>
Linda	Seavey	<a href="mailto:cfacirca@together.net">cfacirca@together.net</a>
Cheryl	Vantine	<a href="mailto:clerk@town.grand-isle.vt.us">clerk@town.grand-isle.vt.us</a>
Katya	Wilcox	<a href="mailto:dupasquier@aol.com">dupasquier@aol.com</a>

### **Action Steps**

#### **1.) Town Hall press release**

The future of the North Hero Town Hall relates directly to available community spaces. This committee will make its perspective on the Town Hall known to voters, including through letters and other community organizations.

#### **2.) County-wide Database**

Build a database that covers:

- Useable spaces, including the size of people they accommodate, restrictions of use, contact information and user fees, if there are any. Explore the Chamber of Commerce as an online place to maintain this database.
- All community organizations from the five towns that may use space, with contact information and what they do.
- Outside users



The database will be made available online (potentially through the Chamber of Commerce) and organizations around the Islands with websites will be encouraged to link to it.

### **3.) County-wide Survey for Needs**

The Project Team will conduct a county-wide survey of 3 main areas of need:

- Audience needs
- Facility needs (capital costs, tech, etc)
- Artists' needs

The survey should be available for Town Meeting along with an outline of a larger distribution plan for those who are not at Town Meeting, or if distribution at that event isn't feasible. Other options include sending the survey to residents via regular bills, like water or property taxes, and having designated drop offs (Town Offices, libraries) for returning the completed surveys.

### **4.) Presentation from Windmill Bay**

Part of the research behind possible projects will include a presentation of the Windmill Bay project.

## **Resources**

- Local people & organizations
  - Chamber
  - Island Arts
  - Historical Societies
- Chamber website for communication
- Planning Grants available
  - VT Arts Council
  - NW Regional Planning
  - VT Community Foundation
- Local VFW
- Database survey help from:
  - Fred Schmidt (Center for Rural Studies at UVM)
  - VT Council on Rural Development

## **Background information**

### **Uses for Indoor Space**

- Rain sites
- Year-round performances
  - Dance
  - Acoustic
  - Live theater
  - Film
  - Drummers / Teiko
- Mozart Festival
- Weddings
- Workshops
- Large Scale / International Festivals
  - Farm
  - Tech
  - Arts
- Meeting spaces – room from 5 to 20+
  - Including Board meetings
- Conferences & Break out rooms
- Recreation
  - Yoga
  - Martial arts
- Visual arts
  - Work studios
  - Gallery space

### **Brainstorm of Spaces**

#### *Alburgh*

- School
- Library
- Church
- Town Hall
- Rescue Squad
- Country Club
- Country Store
- Legion
- Welcome Center
- Windmill Bay Farm
- Storel Museum

#### *Grand Isle*

- Proposed 4,000 sq. ft. library
- Proposed 4,000 sq ft. Community Facility / VFW
- Grand Isle School
- Teen Center / Annex
- Conference Room at Netsource
- Hatchery
- Basin Harbor Program
- Lake House
- Churches
- Rescue Building
- Library

### Isle La Motte

- Fisk Farm
- Town Hall
- St. Anne's Shrine (indoor & outdoor)
- School House (historical society)
- St. Joseph
- Methodist Church
- Library
- School
- Masonic Temple

### North Hero

- Town Hall (maybe)
- Knight Point State Park
- N. Hero School
- N. Hero House
- Camp Abenaki (YMCA)
- Shore Acres
- Library
- Court House
- Methodist Church
- Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce
- Camp Ingels
- Catholic Church (maybe)

### South Hero

- Camp Hochelaga (YWCA)
- Folsom School – includes library
- Congregational Church
- Eagles Camp (seasonal)
- Merchants Bank
- St. Rose of Lima
- Snow Farm
- Blue Paddle Bistro
- Coaches Restaurant
- Masonic Hall
- Granny's Attic
- Proposed conference center at Sandbar
- East Moon Arts & Fitness Factory
- Family Center



## **Develop Trails to Tour Local Farms, Arts, and Other Islands Highlights**

### **» Develop Trails to Tour Local Farms, Arts, and Other Islands Highlights**

The many different resources of the Islands should be made more visible with designated trails to guide people through local highlights, including agriculture, arts, historic buildings, and landscape features. The guide should be visually appealing, incorporating local artwork along with the basic information. This project could celebrate the particular assets of agriculture and arts through an Open Studio / Open Farm event. An overarching goal of this project should be enhancing education about place in the Islands.

**Committee Chair:** Jim Holzschuh ([holzschuhj@aol.com](mailto:holzschuhj@aol.com))

### **Project Team Sign-ins:**

David	Borthwick-Leslie	<a href="mailto:dborthw349@aol.com">dborthw349@aol.com</a>
Christine	Bourque	<a href="mailto:harmonyvt@yahoo.com">harmonyvt@yahoo.com</a>
Ted	Boyd	<a href="mailto:didaart@yahoo.com">didaart@yahoo.com</a>
Jennifer	Buckner	<a href="mailto:jennifer@buckner.cc">jennifer@buckner.cc</a>
Brian	Costello	<a href="mailto:brian@localmotion.org">brian@localmotion.org</a>
Diane	David	
Linda	Fitch	<a href="mailto:islewitch@aol.com">islewitch@aol.com</a>
Maurie	Harrington	<a href="mailto:maurieh@aol.com">maurieh@aol.com</a>
Minner	Hobbs	<a href="mailto:minner@shlt.org">minner@shlt.org</a>
Jim	Holzschuh	<a href="mailto:holzschuhj@aol.com">holzschuhj@aol.com</a>
Naomi	King	<a href="mailto:lemonlily@pshift.com">lemonlily@pshift.com</a>
Dave	Lane	<a href="mailto:david.lane@state.vt.us">david.lane@state.vt.us</a>
Julie	Lane	<a href="mailto:jlane@vtusa.net">jlane@vtusa.net</a>
Hardy	Machia	<a href="mailto:hardy@catamount.com">hardy@catamount.com</a>
Ellen	Thompson	<a href="mailto:ellent9275@aol.com">ellent9275@aol.com</a>
Katya	Wilcox	<a href="mailto:dupasquier@aol.com">dupasquier@aol.com</a>

## **Action Steps**

### **1.) Network**

The committee will build formal connections with related groups to be aware of updates and deadlines.

- a. Off-Season Activity committee
- b. Lake Champlain Quadricentennial planning (contact Barbara Harding at Addison County Chamber of Commerce)

### **2.) Market Study**

A market study will determine specifics of who would use a touring guide and how. Questions will include:

- a. Are there target audiences we should bring more of to the Islands (eg young people, local people touring their community, etc.)?

- b. What are the best tools for getting information out? Includes timing of website v. paper copies of guide.



### **3.) Set Criteria for Inclusion**

The committee will set parameters for whom to include in the final guide / map. Possible criteria include:

- a. Hours, seasonality
- b. Connection to particular transportation routes – eg bike path? Is there geographical diversity?
- c. Juried work
- d. Connection to unique, authentic experience
- e. Retail outlet v. not-retail (and how to include landscape features or farms without on-farm sales)
- f. Diverse areas / genres represented
- g. Criteria for what *not* to include / places to be kept for local knowledge alone

### **4.) Inventory points of interest that match final set of criteria**

### **5.) Map out possible routes and drive these routes**

- a. Also consider items to include that aren't on the driving route – side bars with seasonal information, useful websites, etc.

### **6.) Build a signage / common logo / confidence marker plan**

- a. It's important to note that some aspect of signage may take several years to implement.

### **7.) Contract for graphic design and publication**

In formats decided during market research (#2)

### **8.) Implement distribution plan**

(see brainstorm list at end of action plan)

### **9.) Look for tie-ins with statewide activities**

Particularly set deadlines to allow for being featured in the 2009 Quad celebration.

### **Future Projects to Build Towards**

- a. Monthly open studio / art walk
- b. Arts displays in non-traditional spaces
- c. Pre-Holidays shopping tour
- d. Tie-ins to Canadian holidays
- e. Open Studio connection

- f. Tie-ins to festivals
- g. State Parks Day
- h. Fishing Derby / ice fishing
- i. Off-season activities group
- j. Recreation & sports events –eg SHLT triathlon
- k. Scavenger Hunt

## **Resources**

### *Anticipated Funding Needs:*

- Printing & distributing guide
- Signage
- PR for events
- Some marketing projects
- Potentially hiring someone for data collection / project management

### *Potential Resources*

- Inventory existing guides (eg. For bike trails, Ag guide, wedding industry, Chamber of Commerce) to know what information has already been collected.
- Vermont Dept. of Tourism & Marketing – technical assistance and grants
  - Diane Konrady
  - [www.vermontvacation.com](http://www.vermontvacation.com)
  - [www.vermontpartners.org](http://www.vermontpartners.org)
- 2009 Lake Champlain Celebration – marketing, coordination (no \$ currently available)
  - Barbara Harding
  - [www.celebrationchamplain.org](http://www.celebrationchamplain.org)
- Newspaper partnerships for PR (incl. Off-Islands papers)
- Secretary of State for business information
- Partnerships with local groups that have similar goals
  - Tourism
  - Arts & culture
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Individual benefactors
  - Business sponsors
- Lake Champlain Basin Program / Heritage Corridor
- Scenic Byway-related grants
- Agency of Transportation (enhancement grants)
- Regional Planning
- Agency of Agriculture – Buy Local program

## **Background – What’s Happening Now**

- Trail Study – Localmotion / Brian Costello
- Localmotion Signage & Amenities
- Bike Ferry & Recreational Amenities

- Work on Scenic Byway along Rte 2
- Agriculture Guide – South Hero Land Trust
- Northern Canoe Trail through Islands
  - Kiosk in North Hero
- Farmers’ Markets including both food and crafts
  - Vendors may also be open to visitors
- Fisk Farm – music & arts
- Champlain Valley National Preservation Area
- Quadricentennial in 2009

### **Brainstorm – Getting the Guide Out**

\*Note: For future planning, it would be best to track where people hear about the guide.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website connections – including downloads</li> <li>• Welcome Centers</li> <li>• Bed &amp; Breakfasts</li> <li>• Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Hotels &amp; Motels</li> <li>• Restaurants</li> <li>• Ads pointing to pick up points</li> <li>• Participating attractions</li> <li>• Farmers’ Markets</li> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Quebec / Montreal</li> <li>• State Parks</li> <li>• Town Offices</li> <li>• Bank</li> <li>• New York</li> <li>• Ferry Dock</li> <li>• Castle Trail</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bicycle Tours</li> <li>• Fall Foliage Tours</li> <li>• Marinas</li> <li>• Press Coverage – invite reporters to travel the route</li> <li>• Essex Junction Expo Center</li> <li>• Conference Packets (activities for Vermont visitors to do)</li> <li>• Big E</li> <li>• Wedding Industry</li> <li>• Vermont Magazine / Vermont Life</li> <li>• Real Estate offices</li> <li>• Burlington-area colleges to give to visitors (e.g. prospective students, parents’ weekend, commencement, etc.)</li> </ul> |
|---|--|



## Creative Communities Resource Team Recommendations to WAVES

Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state, and agree to serve as partners and advisors to the WAVES Project Teams. Their recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the Lake Champlain Islands' unique assets and needs. It is hoped that community members will turn frequently to these pages for concrete ideas, resources, and support. Resource Team members are eager to support the Project Teams as they begin their work. Call on them for help (contact information is found at the end of the report). The following are recommendations compiled from the Resource Team's comments.

### Task Force on Increasing Off-Season Activity

The off-season activities group has overlapping interests with the indoor spaces group, both for using the spaces they help access and for partnerships with local organizations, clubs, schools, who are involved in creating activities for Islands residents. **Coordinating** efforts could be made easier by developing an event support template that includes available space, available recreational resources, parking information and a list of marketing and other related support.

Connect winter activities with curricular activities in schools (make your event known to teachers and schools well in advance and encourage curricular tie-ins). Many third-grade classes, for example, follow the Iditarod each year, and you might be able to encourage similar connections. See [www.iditarod.com](http://www.iditarod.com), and the festival might be part of such activities; the race begins on March 3 in 2007.

It will be crucial for the success of the Winter Carnival to plan for a variety of activities. A race could be set up, for example, as a skating race; if there's snow on the ice, it's a cross-country ski rally. By balancing activities, you can provide something for everyone, and at the same time you will be prepared if it rains.

To spread the word, engage kids and families and educate: ice-cutting on the lake (ice houses, ice boxes), snow rollers to compress snow on roads for sleighs, and so forth. Librarians and others can recommend children's books that relate to winter activities featured in the carnival. Libraries could display the books in the previous month.

Anchorage, Alaska has an annual "Fur Rendezvous," which may give you some ideas for fun activities or programs (ice bowling) or business initiatives that you may want to adapt. Visit [www.furrondy.net](http://www.furrondy.net).

Brookfield, VT has an ice-cutting activity each year in its pond next to the Floating Bridge. You could contact them for information and advice.

Call the **Nantucket, MA** Chamber of Commerce. Ask what they do to kindle some economic activity and find out about what that community does during the cold, wet, and grey off-season. (Martha's Vineyard might be helpful, too – it might have ideas that resonate with your towns' cultures and individual go-getters. Nantucket is more remote.)

The **Quadricentennial** of Samuel de Champlain's coming to Lake Champlain can give the Islands an opportunity to focus on history, heritage, natural beauty, and the lake – not just of that era (1609), but of any age. The Islands Trail committee is tying their work in with the Quadricentennial.



The **Vermont Humanities Council** (VHC) can help nonprofits find new ways to engage people, promote lifelong learning and build community in towns or regions. Visit [www.vermonthumanities.org](http://www.vermonthumanities.org)

- There is a grants program to support community initiatives of certain kinds that deal with history, literature, heritage, culture, art history, archaeology, comparative religion, ethics, and the like.
- VHC runs a statewide one-book community reading program in which students and adults across Vermont read one book and participate in related activities. Schools and town libraries typically partner together, often with other nonprofits, programs, and businesses. Each year the book is an excellent young adult book that is accessible to readers of different ages and abilities but one that is of interest to all. More than 60 towns take part each year.
- VHC heavily subsidizes public talks and reading and discussion programs in libraries and other nonprofit community centers.
- VHC offers free week-long day camps during the summer for middle schoolers at ten middle schools around Vermont. The camps are theme-based (e.g., Pirates, Ancient Egypt, Chilling Moments in American History) and encourage literacy, curiosity, and enthusiasm for learning.

The 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the **Battle on Snowshoes** (March 1758) near Lake George might afford an opportunity for a snowshoe race and other activities. And the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Roger's Rangers Raid on St. Francis (which started from Missisquoi Bay in October 1759) might afford an opportunity for hikes, treks, orienteering, re-enactments, or talks related to Native Americans and the French and Indian War.

Check **Valley Quest** at <http://www.vitalcommunities.org/ValleyQuest/ValleyQuest.htm>. Valley Quest is a community-educational activity centered in White River Junction. It publishes, in book form, numerous quests or community searches that follow clues from place to place to a final destination. The result is an exploration and examination of a

community's history and heritage and the natural world. You may want to create Quests in the region on cross-country skis or across the ice.

**Fishing Derbies** To encourage derbies, develop a report on ice conditions over the last 20 years (establishing reliability) and other related information, including lodging & access areas (Include local bait and tackle shops and fishing shanty rentals). A resource for fishing derbies is: **Tammy Gratton**, VT Fish & Wildlife Department, 111 West Street Essex Junction, VT. 05452, 802-878-1564

**Vermont Outdoor Guides Association** has done recreation resource inventories for three Vermont counties. They also have a large database of recreation related resources. Contact: **Graydon Stevens**, Vermont Outdoor Guide Association, P.O. Box 10, North Ferrisburg, VT. 05473, 800-425-8747, [gray@voga.org](mailto:gray@voga.org)

## **Expand Options for Indoor Community Space**

**Preservation Trust of Vermont** has extensive experience with both restoring historical buildings and using physical structures as a foundation for strengthening community life. **Doug Porter** from the Preservation Trust participated in the Resource Team visit to the Lake Champlain Islands. His contact information appears at the end of this report. Visit also: <http://www.ptvermont.org>.

The **Vermont Arts Council** awards annual Cultural Facilities Grants. The purpose of these grants is to assist Vermont nonprofit organizations and municipalities to enhance, create or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural activities for the public. Visit <http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/> to find out more.

Interns may be available to develop and distribute surveys. At the **University of Vermont**, the **Center for Rural Studies**, **Masters of Public Administration**, and **Dept. of Community Development and Applied Economics**, all do survey work with Vermont communities. Talk to Will Sawyer at 656-0892. Other possible intern sources are Middlebury College, 443-5000, or Community College of Vermont in St. Albans, 524-6541.

Send for the **Vermont Directory of Foundations** at [www.cpgfundraising.com](http://www.cpgfundraising.com) or call **Christine Graham** at 862-0327. It is a great resource for grant seekers with an interest in Vermont and lists federal and state funding sources for a wide range of community interests.

Contact the **Vermont Community Foundation** 388-3355 for list of potential grant sources for community centers or facilities.

Search the **Foundation Library Directory**. Contact **Marjorie Zunder**, Dept. of Libraries, Montpelier, VT, 828-3261. This is a very large database which can give you foundation information from around the country as well as Vermont: what they fund, grant application cycles and contact information. You can see what they offer at <http://foundationcenter.org>

The **Warren & Cecile Thompson Charitable Trust** funds community facilities:

Warren & Cecile Thompson Charitable Trust

16709 Port Royal Circle

Jupiter, Fl 33477

Warren L. Thompson (561) 747-6612

Write them a letter of interest and describe the project.

The **W.K.Kellogg Foundation** also funds community facilities: [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org)

The **Northwest Regional Planning Commission** may have ideas for further resources. Call Catherine Dimitruk at 524-5958.

Some funding options will depend on the specific projects selected as priorities. **Don Hirsch**, who participated as part of the Resource Team, has a perspective on what other communities and organizations have used as funding strategies. Contact him at 223-6632 for ideas.

The Committee will need to make hard decisions. Once an inventory is complete, what are the committee's priorities for opening spaces up for use? What will be the action steps to redevelop or convert a site for appropriate uses? The committee may find that it needs additional facilitative assistance over time. VCRD, 828-6024, or Preservation Trust, 658-6647, may be able to help.

## **Develop Trails to Tour Local Farms, Arts, and Other Islands** **Highlights**

### **Initial Planning**

One of the biggest challenges for committee work can be stopping discussion and starting the actual activity. Below, Martha Fitch (**Vermont Crafts Council**) offers a rough timeline to use as a starting place for planning activities:

- Group agreement on content, guidelines, and mission of the guide – time varies according to group. Contact the **Vermont Council on Rural Development** for help facilitating a strategic planning meeting (if needed) – *2 months*
- Applications: Production, mailing, processing, recruiting images – *4 months*  
Note: As applications come in, it will make things easier to mark the site on a map of the Islands.
- Second Round: Midway through the application process, the committee should devote a meeting to identifying where the trail is thinly populated (especially away from Rte. 2) or categories of sites that are



underrepresented. Recruitment will be needed. – 2 months.

- Map out and travel route, making adjustments where needed. Write directions and check with route. Select final images (should be collected with applications, more may be needed). – 2 months
- Graphic Design – 1 month
- Printing – 3 weeks
- Distribution – 1 month and ongoing
- Evaluation – 1 month

Note that this timeline does not have categories for web design, creating a logo for displays along the route, or any special roadside signage.

### **Choosing Sites**

Different groups take different approaches to choosing sites. Some sites, like lodging, may already be well covered in other guides. Other sites of local interest should probably be kept local and not advertised to visitors. In between there are many options for selection and a very clear letter outlining your criteria will be vital as you recruit stopping points on your trail.

- A widely used example of creative economy work and, in particular, a creative guide to exploring a region is **HandMade in America** (<http://www.handmadeinamerica.org/>). This program is located in North Carolina and focuses on local craftspeople. The **Vermont Crafts Council** uses its application cover letter and form to educate potential participants about Open Studio weekend's goals. Participants sign a note agreeing to follow the guidelines. A nominal fee for participation also helps to discourage studios that are a poor fit. For an example of their guidelines visit: <http://www.vermontcrafts.com/links/oswcover.html>
- The **Addison County Cultural Heritage Guide** had different guidelines for each type of site included in their book. These were based on guidelines developed by HandMade in America. Contact **Barbara Harding** at the **Addison County Chamber of Commerce** (802) 388-7951.
- The **Vermont Department of Tourism & Marketing** has a **Heritage Tourism Coordinator** who could also offer assistance and information about approaches from other areas of the state. Contact **Diane Konrady**, 828-3683.
- Check out the site listings already available on the following websites:
  - Vermont Museum and Gallery Alliance <http://www.vmga.org>
  - The Northern Vermont Artists Association <http://www.vmga.org/exhibiting/shows/novermont.html>
  - Vermont Hand Crafters <http://www.vermonthandcrafters.com>
  - Vermont Crafts Council <http://www.vermontcrafts.com>

After you set guidelines for choosing sites, one of the most important positions will be the person (or people) in charge of storing and maintaining all information. A system for information management should be set from the beginning, both to help the starting stages of the project run smoothly and to set a foundation for continuously updating information after the original version of the guide is published.

## **Funding**

Much of the work behind organizing a trail to tour highlights of the Lake Champlain Islands can be done through volunteer work and collaboration with organizations that have already gathered information. Also, this project lends itself particularly to grassroots fundraising – getting a large grant to create a template may not be useful if it lacks widespread buy-in by local organizations and businesses who will sustain the project into the future.

Martha Fitch recommends planning a budget that definitely includes money for the following:

- Graphic design and printing of the final guide
- Web design and hosting (for examples of constantly-updated sites see the Crafts Council's designer: <http://www.lehet.com/html/portfolio.html>)
- Mailing and distributing final guide

Ideally, there would also be funding for an administrator to compile and manage information and an editor / writer to give the guide a unified voice.

## **Trails with a Recreation Component**

Vermont has some great examples of towns with successful recreation plans that feature walking and biking trails. Activity-specific trail development can also include snowmobiling, skating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, equestrian, birding, cultural & geographical highlights.

A statewide source of information is the **Vermont Trails & Greenways Council** at the **Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation**, 241-3683.

Some outdoor trails focus on the activity (biking, jogging, hiking, etc.) others can focus on a series of particular sites to visit. For example, you could feature migratory bird concentration sites that are accessible to the public or a tour of top photography sites. There are many options.

If you do choose to have a strong recreation trail component to this project, refer to the **Rutland City** report from the Creative Communities Program for a list of possible funding sources (report online at <http://www.vtrural.org> or call 223-3793).

## Participants in the WAVES Forums

Chris Allard  
Pam Allen  
Carol Behrman  
Jim Blandino  
Joyce Borthwick-Leslie  
David Borthwick-Leslie  
Christine Bourque  
Ted Boyd  
Jo Bozik  
Annie Brabazon  
Jim Brangan  
Jennifer Buckner  
Bob Camp  
Heidi Chamberlain  
Darcy Coates  
Dwayne Cormier  
Brian Costello  
Todd Cox  
Lisa Crean  
Diane David  
Linda Effel  
Lee English  
Linda Fitch  
Marian Fritz  
Tracy Giroux  
Chris Gordon  
Jack Harrington  
Maurie Harrington  
Mary Harwood  
Minner Hobbs  
Jim Holzschuh  
Linda James  
Mitzi Johnson  
Naomi King  
Julie Lane  
Dave Lane  
Maggie Lawliss  
Hardy Machia  
Jeff Martin  
Russell Mills  
Barbara Mooney  
Joanne Necrason  
Don Oechslin

Tinker Palmer  
Jeannie Peterson  
Roger Rainville  
Pat Rainville  
Rob Rousseau  
Linda Seavey  
Don Smallwood  
Howard Tepper  
Linda Thompson  
Ellen Thompson  
Ira Trombley  
Cheryl Vantine  
Ruth Wallman  
Katya Wilcox  
Bart Wilcox



## **Resource Team Contact Information**

Alex Aldrich  
Vermont Arts Council  
136 State St, Drawer 33  
Montpelier, VT 05633-6001  
aaldrich@arts.vca.state.vt.us  
(802) 828-5420

Martha Fitch  
P.O. Box 936  
Montpelier, VT 05601  
vt1crafts@aol.com  
(802) 223-3380

Barbara Harding  
Addison County Chamber of Commerce  
2 Court Street  
Middlebury, VT 05756  
barbara@midvermont.com  
(802) 388-7951

Don Hirsch  
Don Hirsch Design Studio  
95 Upper Barnett Hill  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
dhstudio@earthlink.net  
(802) 223-6632

Diane Konrady  
VT Department of Tourism & Marketing  
National Life Building, Drawer 20  
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501  
diane.konrady@state.vt.us  
(802) 828-3683

Doug Porter  
Preservation Trust of Vermont  
104 Church Street  
Burlington, VT 05401  
doug@ptvermont.org  
(802) 658-6647

Paul Costello  
VT Council on Rural Development  
P.O. Box 1384  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
vcrd@sover.net  
(802) 828-6024

Peter Gilbert  
Vermont Humanities Council  
11 Loomis St  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
pgilbert@vermonthumanities.org  
(802) 262-2626

Gerry Heuts  
Bristol Recreation Department  
bristolrec@gmavt.net  
(802) 453-5885

Helen Labun Jordan  
Creative Communities Program  
P.O. Box 1384  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
ccp@sover.net  
(802) 223-3793

Robert McBride  
RAMP  
7 Canal Street  
Bellows Falls, VT 05101  
ramp@sover.net  
(802) 463-3252

Addy Smith-Reiman  
NEK Arts  
P.O. Box 476  
Hardwick, VT 05843  
a.smith@nekarts.org  
(802) 472-8800



Vermont Council on Rural Development  
**89 Main Street, PO Box 1384**  
**Montpelier, Vermont 05601-1384**

*Images Courtesy of Wayne Fawbush Fine Photography*

Printing by Minuteman Press  
Montpelier, VT