



Manchester Community Visit

Report and Action Plan

June 2013

Vermont Council on Rural Development

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*Community members and the visiting team had a chance to mingle at the **Community Visit Day** dinner prepared by students*



*Participants share their perspectives in **Community Visit Day** forums*



*Participants read the list of opportunities on **Community Meeting Day***



I. Introduction

The VCRD Visiting Team who came to Manchester and participated in the Manchester 2020 process was so impressed by what they saw.

While Community Visits are designed to help towns come together, review major issues, develop priorities and line up for action, VCRD has a couple of other goals behind these efforts. We look to build new volunteerism and encourage more local folks to get involved in moving the community forward. We want to help build the connections of the community to human, technical and funding resources from lead agencies and organizations in the state. And we want to help the Visiting Team that we build learn more about local needs and the dynamics in the diverse towns of rural Vermont so they can better serve these communities.

Everyone enjoyed the beauty of Manchester and its surroundings and appreciated the tremendously valuable preserved heritage of the built landscape. But it was the people that most impressed. Visitors saw tremendous dedication to community. Passionate advocacy. Myriad great ideas for projects. Ambition. Will. Capacity and care. Brian Keefe, the community chairperson for the process said, “Manchester is a caring community”-- in the end the town built that into its vision statement. Manchester has a unique set of talents and resources and values to get things done.

Robert Putnam, a Harvard professor who wrote the book on human capital (“Bowling Alone”) called Vermont the “capitol of human capital” because of the rich commitment and talents of people devoted to their towns and to common efforts for the good. Manchester is surely one of those places where people have the unique capacity to come together to get things done – it has a unique combination of skills, commitment, generosity, intelligence, heart and organization.

It gives us great confidence in the ability of the town to realize the points of vision gathered together through the Manchester 2020 Community Visit process – and advance the strategic priorities established by the community and charted in this action plan.

It was not easy to choose these priorities at the Community Meeting, and there are many other good ideas for action listed in the ‘opportunities’ section of this report that can inform the ongoing work of the Task Forces and be ground for the work of other groups in town over time.

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

- **Develop a Small Business Incubator**
- **Become a Biking Center and Destination**
- **Attract Higher Education Opportunities**
- **Redevelop the Riverside and Open a Riverwalk**

The Task Forces working to advance these issues are organizing today – please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report).

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

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on March 11, 2013, Visiting Team members heard testimony from Manchester residents in nine focus group areas that had earlier been identified by the local steering committee. Notes and issues raised in these sessions are detailed in Part VII. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the key **Opportunities** before the community (Part III).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the Manchester **Community Meeting** on April 11, 2013 when VCRD presented the Opportunities list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **Manchester Priorities** (in Part IV) were then the focus for the formation of four Task Forces established to build plans that would address them (see bulleted list above). VCRD had also sifted through all the testimony from the Community Visit day for potential points that could be included in a **Manchester 2020 Vision Statement**; on April 11 we reviewed some of these points and gathered many more from participants and poll tested them for the version presented on May 21 and, based on public feedback edited for the edition in this report (in Part II).
3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on May 21, 2013, the Task Forces met with a second Visiting Team to get organized, build Action Steps, and consider state, federal, non-profit, and private resources that may be available to support their work. The resulting **Task Force Work Plans** are listed in Part V.

Resource Team Members (listed with contact information in Part IX) signed on with a commitment to serve as sounding boards and referral agents for the Manchester Task Forces. Many of these visitors can be partners in the work before the committees; others can be great sources of advice or connection to other resources. **Call on them for help.**

Members of the Resource Team listened closely to the issues brought forward by town residents and have made suggestions in support of Manchester's efforts in each challenge area. Their **Recommendations** (Part VI) ***are not prescriptions; community members are in the best position to make decisions about their next steps and strategies.*** Recognizing existing local efforts and the leadership of the Task Forces, these recommendations are offered, rather, as suggestions for potential next steps, and as lists of potential resources as the Task Forces make their way forward.

In the end, Manchester has established solid priorities for action, built a new umbrella for coordination, and set momentum toward the achievement of short and long-term goals that will lead to a great variety of successes in improving the Manchester's life and prosperity.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is dedicated to helping Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Manchester as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to Manchester Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Manchester projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

At VCRD we deeply appreciate the leadership of Ivan Beattie and the Manchester Town Selectboard in inviting the process, the Manchester 2020 Steering Committee that framed it, and the business and community leaders who first encouraged it. The Manchester media have been instrumental in sharing the story of 2020 and inviting the community together; we need to especially recognize the Manchester Journal and Andrew McKeever, and Tammy Reilly and the great coverage of GNATV.

Manchester is lucky in its strong town government with John O’Keefe, Town Manager, and we appreciate all the practical help and support of Pauline Moore, Economic Development Director. Lee Krohn, known as one of the most effective planners in VT, was instrumental in bringing the process to Manchester and a touchstone in each aspect of the work. We appreciate our hosts at the Israel Congregation Synagogue, town offices and fire department, and especially the gracious hospitality of Mark Tashjian and Burr and Burton Academy.

We deeply appreciate the investment of the generous supporters of the process: Bill Drunic, The VT Country Store and an anonymous fund holder at the Vermont Community Foundation – our special partner in this and so many other efforts.

Getting things done is all about leadership and all of Manchester should be grateful to those who’ve stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: John Conte, Ellen Ecker Ogden, Jen Hyatt and Bill Laberge.

Brian Keefe has shown more initiative and organization, and taken more leadership than any Community Visit Chairperson in memory. He is a true talent and dedicated servant to the community in this process; his balanced leadership gives confidence that Manchester will succeed in moving the mark on its key priorities.

Finally, we deeply appreciate everyone who put themselves on the line for their community in this process – you are great, and you make us proud of Vermont.



Brian Keefe on Community Meeting Day

II. Manchester 2020 Vision Statement

Compiled from testimony of potential points that could be included in a Manchester 2020 Vision Statement on Community Visit Day on March 11th; reviewed and added to at the April 11th community meeting; and poll tested for the version presented at the May 21st meeting and printed here:

As Members of the Manchester Community, We Look to a Future Where...

... Manchester builds on its heritage, environment, culture and innovative economy to retain and strengthen its authenticity and sense of place.

... the town exemplifies the best of Vermont, with a vibrant and compact downtown within an open and picturesque natural setting.

... Manchester has a dynamic and innovative economy founded in local commerce with indigenous, creative small shops serving the needs of locals and visitors alike. We are a gateway to Vermont for tourists, a regional center for surrounding towns, and a dynamic community with a rich cultural and civic life. And Manchester is a recreational destination, with a variety of quality outdoor recreation options at all times of the year.

... Manchester is a great place to raise children, offering a wonderful quality of life and pre-eminent K-12 educational opportunities. Our town is recognized as providing the highest and best education opportunities for its children, and is noteworthy for the dramatic expansion of higher education and training options for adults of all ages.

... Manchester is a model pedestrian-friendly town. It has also opened its 'back doors' to the Battenkill River, and the riverfront is the site of the Manchester Riverwalk, featuring outdoor café seating, and renewed riverfront activities and amenities.

... Manchester is vibrant after 5:00 PM. Stores, restaurants and nightlife are happening with lots of street activity for people of all ages.

... Manchester serves as the regional hub for all of the surrounding small towns; and takes the leadership to bring them together. People who live in surrounding communities feel that Manchester is their core community center -- and they visit and shop here rather than go to other urban cities in or out of Vermont.

... Manchester is a caring community, a sharing community, and a generous community. Manchester has well-supported social safety net programs, providing emergency and supplemental food, clothing and housing options for people in need.

... Manchester epitomizes the best of Vermont's civic tradition with people thinking and working positively together for the good of the community.

... Manchester is a small, safe, vibrant and sustainable town, a model community for the future.

III. Initial List of Opportunities and Challenges

Identified by forums with community members on March 11 2013 and Burr & Burton high school students on February 28 2013.

More than 220 Manchester residents joined with VCRD staff and a 33 member Visiting Team for the Community Visit Day on March 11, filling meeting rooms in the Town Hall, the Fire Department, the Israel Congregation Synagogue, and Burr & Burton Academy. They took time from their workday and other commitments to attend forums and a community dinner at the Burr & Burton Cafeteria, and to begin to work together in shaping the future of the town. The following issues emerged as initial challenges and opportunities. This list was presented back to community members at the Community Meeting on April 11 for voting and prioritization:

Connect Land with New Farmers

A Task Force could form to address the crucial task of developing an inventory of underused land that could be available for agricultural use and farm incubation, and to provide a match-making service of linking land to a new generation of farmers and food system entrepreneurs.

Develop a Small Business Incubator

A Task Force should identify an appropriate building in the downtown, and open space in it to incubate small and creative businesses in technology, the arts, manufacturing, and/or food products and services. By providing some common business infrastructure and shared space, the Incubator could seed next-generation business development in downtown Manchester and attract young creative entrepreneurs (and their families) to live in the community.

Become a Biking Center and Destination

The beauty of the land and the rolling roads are priceless assets for local bicyclists that can also make Manchester a major destination for cycling enthusiasts from around the world. Improved bike lanes and local bike maps showing best routes in the Manchester region, plus targeted marketing, could attract more bikers and encourage local riding. A Task Force advancing Manchester as a Biking Center could also create a major bike path linking the downtown and village with key destination points in Manchester and other regional town centers. Biking Tours could be developed and marketed to encourage younger tourists to visit and stay in Manchester. The team could work to ensure that there are good routes for kids, and campaign to get local children on bikes.

Open a Community Arts Center

A Task Force could spearhead an effort to create a space for artists and galleries in one of the vacant stores or unused buildings downtown. The Community Arts Center could provide courses for all ages – from children to seniors – and act as an ‘arts school’ for the town – and at same time have studios and gallery space to showcase and sell creative work from local artists.

Build a Farm to School Program

Manchester can celebrate local foods and healthy lifestyles while encouraging students to learn about agriculture. A team could develop a Manchester Farm to School program that would expand student gardening, improve school meals, connect farmers to the cafeteria and the curriculum, and bring students to the farm for experiential learning opportunities.

Improve Community Transportation

A task force could evaluate community transportation options including buses, shuttle or trolley systems for residents and tourists alike, connections for train travelers, and potential infrastructure development like a Manchester Park and Ride.

Attract Higher Education Opportunities

Manchester needs higher education courses in the community to attract and retain creative young people, provide post-high school vocational training, support hospitality business needs, encourage small tech business development, and enrich the life-long learning of adults in town. A diligent Task Force could work with higher education institutions in Vermont to market the town, identify program spaces, encourage curricular offerings, and attract at least one higher education satellite program to town.

Redevelop the Riverside and Open a Riverwalk

The Battenkill is a remarkable and neglected asset. A Manchester Riverside Task Force could take leadership to help the community return to the river, open its back doors, develop a Riverwalk, encourage shopping and dining opportunities facing the water, expand outdoor commercial and entertainment space to make a more vibrant downtown, and increase Manchester's appeal as a tourism destination.

Build a Unifying Calendar & Improve Communications

Manchester needs a single unifying calendar to bridge all community groups and list all events for residents and tourists alike. A calendar widget could connect all community, municipal and tourism websites to ensure that all residents, regional folk and tourists can see and participate in all the rich activities in the Manchester area. A centrally located kiosk could share maps of businesses, local hiking and biking trails, and the updated calendar of all local activities. An expanded downtown WiFi zone with a local business portal could also spur local shopping and awareness of events.

Advance Affordable Housing

A Task Force could focus on ways to advance worker and middle income housing in the downtown including upper floor development, new housing development, or the conversion of currently vacant or under-utilized properties. This is especially important to provide for young people and young families.

Redevelop a Downtown Building for Creative Local Retail

In line with the goal of diversifying commerce, retaining local businesses, and filling vacancies, a Task Force could advance a public/private partnership to purchase or lease commercial space that could be broken into small affordable local shops in the downtown area.

Develop a Vermont Food, Art & Forest Products Showcase

Manchester has key assets in its local foods, artisans, artists and woodworkers. A 'best of Vermont' showcase of the products of local talent could be a shopping draw; sales could stimulate the sector. The showcase could be a center-point for the expanded 'authentic Manchester' brand development.

Improve Signage & Online Visibility

Residents would like to see improved way-finder signage for key parts of town and local attractions, banners to build a unifying sense of downtown, improvements in street numbers for building identification, and new online tools like iPhone apps marketing businesses, activities and community assets – one of which could serve as a buy local e-directory.

Develop a Downtown Green & Gazebo

A Task Force could form to develop a new downtown park with a gazebo for outdoor performances, music, events, relaxation and recreation. Some would like to see an outdoor skating rink as part of this.

Develop a Food Coop & Year Round Farmer's Market

Many residents, especially young people, are excited about Vermont's local foods movement; they would like to see Manchester develop a food coop that could re-use empty space in the downtown and conjoin with a year-round indoor farmer's market. A task force could frame out this development, evaluate its feasibility, and bring people together to constitute its first membership.

Schedule an "Open Studio Weekend"

A group could work together to develop an open studio weekend or 'art hop' for regional artists, artisans, wood workers and farm to celebrate 'real Vermont' and sell local products. Tie into a downtown party, sidewalk sale, and music event to make a fun weekend for all.

Advance Friendly Regulations

Business friendly zoning and regulation could be a way to help diversify downtown housing, shopping and entertainment. A team could form to promote new zoning that encourages downtown housing density, small, diverse, and locally owned shops, a riverside café and public access on the shore, and a downtown nightclub, and provides incentives for landlords to fill vacancies and diversify shopping opportunities with smaller and indigenous commercial development. Some residents would like to see an effort to remove barriers to outdoor seating, evening music, and other restrictions that discourage a lively downtown experience.

Convene a Poverty Council

A Task Force of Manchester charitable and service organizations and residents could work collaboratively to break down barriers and address poverty issues. The Task Force could start by leading a community and family needs assessment to evaluate the most crucial needs for housing, food, medical and dental services, transportation etc., and then frame ways to answer these needs to help families manage today and make progress out of poverty in the future.

Build a Community Center

A multigenerational community center could be a center for services for folks from seniors to toddlers with activities for everyone in between. Students would like to see more activities downtown, more music, concerts, and gathering places to hang out and relax. Some believe the town should include an indoor pool as part of a community center development; others are most interested in providing free and safe activities for youth outside the school day.

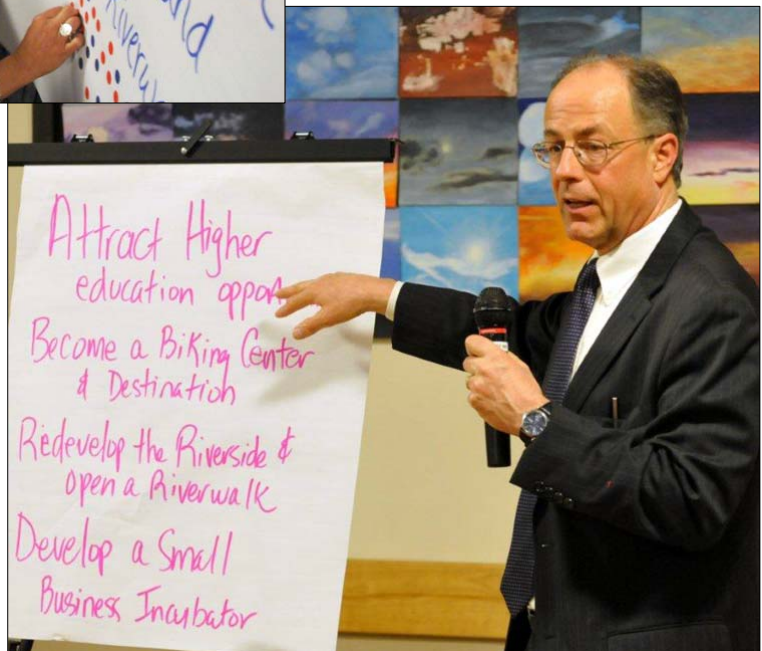
Build a Community Department Store

Some residents believe that Manchester should develop a cooperative, community-owned department store. Community members could buy shares in the store which would provide clothes for children and adults, housewares, and other goods for local use – it could also appeal to tourists. A Task Force could evaluate feasibility and serve as the founding board for the store.

Added during the meeting:

Multi-Generational Nightlife and Activities

Sustainability and Carbon Neutrality



After deliberating and championing the options, participants chose 4 priorities through a dot-voting exercise

IV. Manchester Priorities

Determined by Manchester residents at the VCRD Community Meeting, April 11 2013.

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Manchester residents whittled down a list of 22 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with red and blue stickers, over 150 participants chose four issues that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the April 11 meeting by signing up for one of four Task Forces in the selected areas.

Manchester residents selected four priorities for future action:

✓ Develop a Small Business Incubator

A Task Force should identify an appropriate building in the downtown, and open space in it to incubate small and creative businesses in technology, the arts, manufacturing, and/or food products and services. By providing some common business infrastructure and shared space, the Incubator could seed next-generation business development in downtown Manchester and attract young creative entrepreneurs (and their families) to live in the community.

✓ Become a Biking Center and Destination

The beauty of the land and the rolling roads are priceless assets for local bicyclists that can also make Manchester a major destination for cycling enthusiasts from around the world. Improved bike lanes and local bike maps showing best routes in the Manchester region, plus targeted marketing, could attract more road and mountain bikers and encourage local riding. A Task Force advancing Manchester as a Biking Center could also create a major bike path linking the downtown and village with key destination points in Manchester and other regional town centers. Biking Tours could be developed and marketed to encourage younger tourists to visit and stay in Manchester. The team could work to ensure that there are good routes for kids, and campaign to get local children on bikes.

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V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, May 21 2013

Manchester Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. On Resource Day committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small 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 truly take ownership of the work, and begin the exciting process of turning ideas into action.

Task Force: ✓ Develop a Small Business Incubator

Chairperson: **John Conte**

Facilitator: **Patricia Coates**, State Director, Office of Congressman Peter Welch

Resource Leaders: **Lars Hasselbrook Torres**, Creative Economy Director, Agency of Commerce
Chuck Colvin, Poultney Downtown Partnership Leader & Business Incubator Developer

“A Task Force should identify an appropriate building in the downtown, and open space in it to incubate small and creative businesses in technology, the arts, manufacturing, and/or food products and services. By providing some common business infrastructure and shared space, the Incubator could seed next-generation business development in downtown Manchester and attract young creative entrepreneurs (and their families) to live in the community.”

Action Steps

1. Find space; do inventory of assets (Bromley School, studios?). Are there tax incentives?
2. Define incubator focus.
3. Develop culture of innovation to surround the project:
 - Website (<http://incubate2020.wordpress.com>)
 - Connect mentors, especially experienced business leaders to counsel entrepreneurs
 - Capture energy of businesses working in proximity
4. Explore food venture facility – would need commercial kitchen
5. Provide services to entrepreneurs; mentors, advice, help
6. Survey of entrepreneur’s interests and needs; independent workforce
7. Hold some pop-up dinners in empty buildings

Resources

1. Research state and local tax incentives
2. Evaluate Federal grants
3. Evaluate private grant and investment opportunities
4. Asset inventory: property, human, business resources
5. Look at “Next Gen” businesses, i.e., young people, including Burr & Burton participants
6. The Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies
7. “Local 64” as a model in Montpelier

Raw notes:

- Find good models; visit incubators that work
- Decide what services and resources the incubator provides
- SCORE could participate and/or be located in the space
- Identify which local businesses are likely to succeed here
- Make connections; develop business with connections to other priorities
- Don't limit business opportunities or the creativity of potential entrepreneurs
- Consider a priority for drawing young entrepreneurs / artists
- A Business plan competition could be developed connected to the higher education task force
- There could be Internships for students
- Include surrounding communities; draw on larger pool of participants
- Provide recommendations on services / resources for entrepreneurs
- Be aware of realities of managing incubator space
- Identify the right manager for incubator
- Identify obstacles to new and growing businesses
- Local64.com / coworking model could be explored

Task Force Signups

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Jennifer	Weinstein	jhw@theweinsteingroup.net	768-8333
Cheryl	Young	cy5545@gmail.com	867-5921

Task Force: ✓ Become a Biking Center and Destination

Chairperson: **Ellen Ecker Ogden**

Facilitator: **Greg Brown**, Retired State Commissioner of Housing and Community Development & Director of the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

Resource Leaders: **Jim Sullivan**, Executive Director, Bennington County Regional Commission
Paul Gallo, Chair, Rutland Creative Economy, Leader in Rutland Bike Path Development

Susan Schreibman, Rutland Planning Commission

Jason Van Driesche, Local Motion, community transportation organization

“The beauty of the land and the rolling roads are priceless assets for local bicyclists that can also make Manchester a major destination for cycling enthusiasts from around the world. Improved bike lanes and local bike maps showing best routes in the Manchester region, plus targeted marketing, could attract more road and mountain bikers and encourage local riding. A Task Force advancing Manchester as a Biking Center could also create a major bike path linking the downtown and village with key destination points in Manchester and other regional town centers. Biking Tours could be developed and marketed to encourage younger tourists to visit and stay in Manchester. The team could work to ensure that there are good routes for kids, and campaign to get local children on bikes.”

Action Steps

1. See Town Manager about plans for bike lanes on Richville Road and others – roads will be repaved in the next year
2. Sweep roadsides / fill potholes to improve bike use
3. Let tourists know town is bike friendly. Post on website, have logo and signage

4. A bike share system to reduce car traffic could be considered
5. More bike racks could be placed in strategic locations; create a biker’s help center
6. A bike logo to let riders know best biking routes (eg, Equinox trails)
7. A town-wide bike map with rules of the road and bike trails / lanes can be developed and can connect to the Riverwalk
8. Continue to work to develop the rail to trail program when the issue comes out of court – consider town purchase
9. Continue the Safe Routes to School program
10. Have town strip right side of road for de facto bike lanes
11. Reach out to bike tour companies to invite them back and help them succeed
12. Work with retail / hotel / restaurant / school / rec center community to create incentives for bikers
13. Market Manchester for road biking; club to club contact; bike club mapping program
14. Carry out “Share the Road” campaign

Task Force Signups

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Task Force: ✓ Attract Higher Education Opportunities

Chairperson: **Jen Hyatt**

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

Resource Leaders: **Ellen McCulloch-Lovell**, President, Marlboro College

Tim Donovan, Chancellor, Vermont State Colleges or Dan Smith, VSC Director of Community Relations and Public Policy

Joyce Judy, President, Community College of Vermont

“Manchester needs higher education courses in the community to attract and retain creative young people, provide post-high school vocational training, support hospitality business needs, encourage small tech business development, and enrich the life-long learning of adults in town. A diligent Task Force could work with higher education institutions in Vermont to market the town, identify program spaces, encourage curricular offerings, and attract at least one higher education satellite program to town.”

Action Steps

1. Perform a Needs Analysis that includes:
 - Identifying available space: Bromley School, Burr & Burton, Berkshire Bank and other options
 - Developing a survey of students (both current and out of school) and the community on what they are looking for in higher education opportunities
 - Build an inventory of what we already have
 - Develop an assessment of what has best return in jobs creation
 - Asking the business community what skills and education needs are for their workforce
 - Consider pricing of courses in evaluating potential programs to build or attract
 - Review what other towns have done to attract higher education opportunities
 - Survey talents of community members and build a talent bank that could be drawn on for local sharing of skill, talents and experience – a new model for educational activity where the whole community is the classroom
2. Decide the focus for the first classes to be attracted or developed: Medical technologies, arts, technical, trades, food, hospitality or creative entrepreneurship
3. Approach potential partners / schools to explore what a satellite program could look like, what would they need? What do students currently take? How can the town make it work for their program to locate services in Manchester?
4. The Committee will coordinate between educators and institutions including businesses providing education.
5. Make Manchester a new model of education.

Resources

1. Are there other towns we could copy as models? Mt. Auburn Associates study of creative Berkshires could be one model to explore
2. Dept. of Labor Apprenticeship Program: follow up with Annie Noonan Commissioner

3. Higher Ed institutions in VT are key partners to explore
4. Harold Gumspeen Foundation
5. Chamber of Commerce / BCIC / Bennington County Regional Commission
6. "Made in America" movement
7. Career Development Centers in Bennington and Stafford
8. Creative Economy Director Lars Hasselbrook Torres at the Vermont Agency of Commerce
9. Dept. of Veterans Affairs
- 10 Johnson Studio School could be seen as an arts model
11. BBA
12. The Town of Hardwick
13. Northshire Bookstore could be a resource
14. Vermont's Congressional Offices
15. NY Film Academy
16. NY higher education institutions

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Task Force: ✓ Redevelop the Riverside and Open a Riverwalk

Chairperson: **Bill Laberge**

Facilitator: **Jon Muise**, Area Director, USDA Rural Development

Resource Leaders: **Scott McArdle**, Philanthropic Advisor, Vermont Community Foundation
Richard Amore, Agency of Commerce and Community Development

“The Battenkill is a remarkable and neglected asset. A Manchester Riverside Task Force could take leadership to help the community return to the river, open its back doors, develop a Riverwalk, encourage shopping and dining opportunities facing the water, expand outdoor commercial and entertainment space to make a more vibrant downtown, and increase Manchester’s appeal as a tourism destination.”

Action Steps

1. Governance / structure to be developed
2. Create vision for Riverwalk

3. Design Riverwalk
4. Do an existing conditions analysis
5. Involvement: identify partners and stakeholders
6. Communicate between committee members and committee to community
7. Resource development toward implementation of riverscape improvements

Resources

1. Vermont Downtown Designation through the VT Downtown Program at the Agency of Commerce
2. The Vermont Community Foundation
3. USDA Rural Development
4. National Conservation District
5. Bennington County Regional Planning Commission
6. ACCD Vermont Community Development Program
7. Vermont Land Trust
8. ACCD Municipal Planning Grants,
9. Communities that have done this sort of work: Springfield, Stowe, Winooski, Montpelier, Waitsfield, Bennington, Portland OR, Providence RI, Savannah GA, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Cape Cod Rail Trail

Raw notes:

- Business community involvement
- Community uses: day and night
- Cost / feasibility
- Identify and include partners / opposition
- Student involvement / ownership
- Involve civic organizations / partners; garden club...
- Research / precedents / models
- Legal advice
- Identify multi-modal opportunities (biking)
- Environmental impacts
- Research organizational structures; governance
- Develop map of project area and context
- Communication strategies
- Town's involvement
- Explore incentives
- Economic impact of River Walk
- Innovative landscaping
- Fundraising – kick-starter
- Define scope / project area: egress and ingress; points of entry access; address blight – restoration; bridge design / build
- Leverage strategies working with groups

- Space for arts / opps
- Inventory property owners
- Infrastructure, green
- Create / find vehicle for land to be transferred

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VI. Resource Team Recommendations

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

✓ Develop a Small Business Incubator

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

A delegation from the committee should visit several locations including the Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies in Middlebury and Burlington, the Vermont Technical College Innovation Center in Randolph, the Poultney incubator run by Chuck Colvin (contact info Chuck in the back of this report) and Local 64 in Montpelier led by Lars Hasselbrook-Torres. Co-working space may be more achievable than traditional incubator space. Connect with Lars Torres (lars.torres@state.vt.us) at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. He's the new Director of the Office of the Creative Economy. The Task Force could review the "Co-working in Vermont Starter Guide" – co-published by Local 64 & VCET (Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies) – a step by step guide to getting started.

A clear starting point for the Task Force could be to do a survey of home-based businesses looking to expand and their space needs.

The task force should identify potential micro sectors of interest to the community, that fit the criteria for the community and catalysts and partners who will seek out, invest, publicly support the ventures...State agencies may be the first go-to partners (like the Agency of Ag).

The task force could tap into current work of sector activity in ag/sustainable food systems and the health sector. There are emerging findings and directions which may be helpful. But Manchester needs to find its own niche, and the collective leadership of the task force should consider arts and studio space, crafts, light manufacturing, software or information systems businesses, and other areas that surface in surveying new and young business start-ups in the area.

The committee might want to evaluate the option to obtain Vermont Downtown Designation to provide access to tax credits and other incentives/benefits. There could be potential funding for planning/implementation through USDA community development and/or rural business enterprise grants.

Make sure to partner with Efficiency Vermont to make the incubator space most efficient from electric, thermal and transportation perspective. Location efficiency as well. Partner with Renewable Energy Vermont – make it a net zero facility.

Identify potential issues which need assistance and which might have future financial support that might be emerging for the SW region....education services, integrated family services, early childhood.

So much depends on leadership. In Poultney the incubator succeeds because a property owner decided to devote his building to incubating small businesses, and he has made it work as a business model. The Task Force should think about and communicate with individual property owners and entrepreneurs who might provide leadership for a viable incubator project in the private sector.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE SMALL BUSINESS INCUBATOR TASK FORCE:

The Bennington County Regional Commissioner has a federal EDA grant to assist with the Downtown Designation process – contact Bill Colvin at 442-0713 for help with this if the Task force needs it.

USDA Rural Development Brattleboro Office covers the Manchester area can be very useful; Jon-Michael Muise is the Area Director, (802) 257-7878 ext. 4. Jon is a great facilitator and could be able to help the task force access funding to move the project forward.

Contact VT SBDC www.vtsbdc.org and Bennington County Industrial Corp Peter O’dierna 802-442-8975. Both contacts will be key partners in development and access to resources and possibly capital.

David Bradbury at VT Center for Emerging Technologies could be a good advisor to a project. He can be reached at 656-3880.

Pat Moulton Powden, at the Brattleboro Development Center is a wise counsel on these sorts of developments: she could be reached for advice at 257-7731.

Lars Hasselbrook-Torres at the Agency of Commerce, Creative Economy Office, 828-3618.

✓ Become a Biking Center and Destination

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

Develop a vision and bicycle plan which sets forth the opportunities for a network of bike paths, bike lanes and mountain bike trails that will enhance tourism, business opportunities, and community development. Once a vision, plan and map come together there are programs to support the development of some of these funds.

Bring the essence of this vision to local organizations – from businesses (especially outdoor businesses), to schools (for attracting younger people – and their parents), to municipal and regional officials and leaders, and ensure that all feel on the team of making Manchester a biking center and destination.

Include planners, business, and community development interests – both local and regional – in this task force. Town planning and regional planning staff may be able to help the Task Force do logistics from GIS mapping to negotiating with property owners. The Task Force should work to gain their commitment to partner in the effort.

The Task Force could look to develop new/expanded bicycle maps – area-wide and highlighting specific tours. Outreach with these maps to commercial tour operators, the press, and bike stores in and close to VT can help diversify the tourism economy with benefits to inns, restaurants and stores – all should

be allies in moving this work forward. The up-stream/down stream business and supply chain could occupy some of the empty store fronts (bike repair, sales, clothing and accessories, "grab and go" food for bike trips).

Reach out to bike tour operators based in Vermont to learn what facilities they need when planning trips. Bike touring will be advanced by talking to businesses about becoming bicycle friendly for employees and customers. The Task Force could also promote more actively online. Chamber website has a spot for bicycling, but it is quite general and has a statewide focus and could be refreshed; the town site could also feature bicycling to help build this as a key feature of the town brand.

Essential to the emergence of Manchester as a biking destination is the development of a vibrant local bike culture. Consider organizing fun community rides such as the [Halloween Ride](#) that Local Motion organizes every year. This is just one example; the point is to get local folks on bikes and having fun, then document it online for the world to see. Consider doing a walk-bike stenciling campaign using spray chalk and stencils provided by Local Motion. Another great strategy is to organize an "Open Streets" event. This is when a major street is closed to traffic for a period of time – typically a Sunday morning – so community members can get out and walk or bike the street and socialize. There is a great program called [Bicycle Benefits](#) that you might want to check out. It's a small company that sells stickers for \$5 that bicyclists affix to their helmets. They then qualify for discounts at local businesses. You could use this system as a way to build a network of bike-friendly shops, inns, and restaurants in your area.

Someone mentioned that Kiwanis has done a bike rodeo for kids in the past. Local Motion offers resources for taking youth bike skills training to a much higher level. [Check out this overview of our Kohl's Kids Bike Smart program](#) – it may be useful as you look for ways to encourage young people to ride while helping them stay safe. You may find it useful to look to Shelburne as a model in this regard, as they have made a commitment to building bike skills into their PE curriculum with help and support from Local Motion. Two useful contacts there (both Shelburne residents/parents): Gabriela Meyer <gabi.morris@hotmail.com> and Susan Hull-Grasso <malbec@comcast.net>.

The Task Force wants to promote cycling by both residents and visitors. The team could implement a plan to expand bike racks at all destinations, and evaluate setting up free bike rental system with depots around town and village. It could work to build "complete street" design for both local and state projects where bike traffic planning is integral to all future transportation projects. Work with local bike clubs, local police, and state police to identify dangerous situations for bicyclists and prepare mitigation strategies and plan forward for expanded bike lanes, and street sweeping at critical spots. Convene focus sessions with local biking enthusiasts – both road and mountain biking – to identify assets and issues and build a volunteer base.

Look at other biking destinations that have been successful. VT Dept. of Tourism and Marketing has some resources and Central VT Chamber has bike maps and routes that could be used as examples to attract tourism. The Manchester Regional Chamber can develop biking packages for local hotels and B & B's to use.

RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP THE BIKING TASK FORCE:

Bennington County Regional Commission produced some maps and tour guides years ago; they may still have some files and can provide GIS support for new development; better maps may have already been developed since. This is a good area for partnership between Town Planning and regional efforts. The Task Force could inventory all local and regional maps to see what is most needed, and check with Battenkill Sports and others on best routes. Make sure maps and guides are readily available on the web. (BCRC contacts, Jim Henderson and Mark Anders: 442-0713).

The RPC has some transportation planning funds with an emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian interests. Project scoping can sometimes utilize these funds. Other bike funds include:

- Transportation Enhancement funds (to be identified under new federal legislation as “Transportation Alternatives”) can support bike/ped projects.
- ANR has “trails and recreation” funds.
- VTrans’ “safe routes to schools” program might be able to fund some of the projects (if they access schools and are a part of a school program).

Commercial tour operators such as VBT Bicycling and Walking Vacations (Bristol, VT) may provide good input on what makes a community/area ideal for bicycling vacations. Others:

- Vermont Mountain Biking Association (VMBA)
- Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition
- Jon Kaplan, VTRANS Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Manager 828-0059
http://vtransengineering.vermont.gov/sections/ltf/bike_ped/policy_plan

The town of East Burke and the Kingdom Trails organization in the Northeast Kingdom would be a great resource for advancing these ideas – and a great place to visit to see how it’s been taken to scale on the mountain biking side. (www.kingdomtrails.com, 626-0737).

The **VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program** is soliciting applications for projects to improve access and safety for bicyclists and/or pedestrians through the planning, design and construction of infrastructure projects. The Bike/Ped Program provides funding for either scoping (feasibility) studies or for the design and construction of projects. Applicants must attend a training session on one of two available dates: Monday, June 3, from 1-3 pm and Wednesday, June 5 from 6-8 pm. Applications must be either post-marked or received by Friday, July 26, 2013. For more information, contact Jon Kaplan at jon.kaplan@state.vt.us or (802) 828-0059.

Look at old railroad beds and potential mountain bike trails if there is a need to develop more trails. VT Youth Conservation Corps or Americorps might be able to help with trail development. (Contact Tom Hark, President of VYCC at 434-3969 x 100).

Model communities to look at: Boulder, CO www.bouldermountainbike.org Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance; Bend, OR www.visitbend.com; Madison, WI

League of American Bicyclists – model communities – resources, guides, etc.
<http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communities/>. The work on the Cross VT

Trail may also have findings useful to the Task Force – you could contact Greg Western, ED at 498-0079 for more info on their efforts.

Local Motion in Burlington led by Spencer Chapin helps move all sorts of bike projects forward...they could lend advice and maybe energy for project development.

Jason Van Driesche, was really helpful in compiling many of the ideas listed here – he could be a terrific help: jason@localmotion.org.

Local Motion offers a variety of printed resources for promoting walking and biking. Please don't hesitate to put in a request for anything that you think you could use. Most are available at no charge. Local Motion is available to consult on bike infrastructure projects – path development, road redesign, and so on – on an hourly fee basis. Services include the following: helping project advocates map out partnerships and strategies for maximizing the transformational potential of their project idea; providing guidance on funding sources for walk-bike projects that are a good fit for what they want to accomplish; conducting a technical review of concept plans or scoping studies for projects that are already in the design phase, helping advocates understand the planning process and identify opportunities for influencing project design; advising local leaders about smart strategies for mobilizing community support for the project and channeling that support in ways that maximize its impact.

The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing may have some resources for sponsorships/events aligned with biking in Manchester and/or State of Vermont. VDTM Commissioner Megan Smith – megan.smith@state.vt.us. Vermont's Department of Forests Parks and Recreation also has connections to potential trail funding (476-0170).

Bell Sports has been generous to projects elsewhere – consider reaching out to Bell Flow Trail Project to fact find how to get involved for Manchester; Kingdom Trails was recently granted a cash award for trail development.

The Outdoor Industry Association (www.outdoorindustry.org) is a trade association representing the outdoor industry. It routinely has projects that engage outdoor industry – manufacturers, retailers, non-profits, etc. – and this opportunity could 'fit' as a model.

Contact Jeff Munger at Senator Sanders' office: 800-339-9834 to learn about the Federal Hwy. Administration programs: TEA (transportation enhancement activities) and get his help and advice on the National Scenic Byways program.

✓ Attract Higher Education Opportunities

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

Contact CCV, Vermont Tech, and UVM about satellite locations and needs. CCV had tried to bring courses to Manchester in the past with limited success.

Work with businesses and residents to identify specific needs and focus on those priorities.

Identify a location that can serve as a classroom(s) as well as a local place to go for more information about online classes in general.

Invite Tim Donovan, Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges to meet with local leaders.

CCV is one of the likely institutions....any institution would need to aggregate students. It may make sense to create a consortium of institutions to aggregate a continuum of courses to attract an aggregate student population.

If the higher education center was properly equipped and connected, synchronous and asynchronous opportunities would exceed traditional offerings and mitigate the need for student cohort creation.

Unique offerings could be marketed to the tourist/adventure market if carefully designed.... “visit Vermont and learn/experience the local food networks.”

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE HIGHER EDUCATION TASK FORCE:

CCV Bennington: Jeannie Jenkins (jeannie.jenkins@ccv.edu).

USDA Brattleboro Office: Jon-Michael Muise, Area Director, (802) 257-7878 ext. 4.

Chancellor of the Vermont State Colleges, Tim Donovan (contact information in the back of this report).

Community College of Vermont, President Joyce Judy (contact information in the back of this report).

Marlboro College, President Ellen McCulloch-Lovell (contact information in the back of this report).

Champlain College Emergent Media Center.

UVM

Vermont Technical College

Vermont HITEC

Association of Vermont Independent Colleges

Green Mountain College, Paul Fontaine, President, Bill Throop, Provost (287-8214).

Osher Life long learning (OLLI), CCV, UVM

✓ Redevelop the Riverside and Open a Riverwalk

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

Years ago the Manchester “Downtown Task Force” looked at this potential – and back then there still was a stairway from behind Main Street businesses down to the riverside and a rudimentary bridge over the river. A design charrette at the time came up with appropriate uses and designs – a similar process would be a good way to kick things off again – and it would be interesting for the group to look at the designs from back then as one potential starting point. At that time the focus was on the area between the back of Main Street/the town green (which was then a Ford dealership), and the shopping center/old bowling alley on Depot Street. The area where Hand Motors is located was looked at during the Junction project, but it was determined to not have as much potential as originally thought – and the Hands have since expanded on that site. I don’t think much consideration has ever been given to the river frontage downstream of the Bagel Works; maybe it is time to take a look at this area again.

The Task Force could build from the design charrette to create a master plan for the area(s), recognizing the environmental constraints as well as recreational and business opportunities.

It will be important to create and share a vision: develop a physical design scheme for what the Riverwalk could look like. Share the vision with key stakeholder groups to create buy-in. Evaluate costs and viability for the vision (including zoning, possible environmental permitting considerations, transportation nodes and access, etc.). Build a constituency of support. Raise funds locally and through potential grants.

Examine the ownership and interests of owners of the property downstream of the Bagel Works and within the scope of the project as determined by the Task Force.

It will be important as a first step to develop a baseline understanding of the river's own needs relative to flood mitigation and biological health. Any work to include the river as a downtown feature needs to consider these factors.

Identify all potential stakeholders including land owners and abutters.

The Manchester Community Land Trust and all local conservation partners including the Vermont Rivers Conservancy, Vermont Land Trust, and the Vt. Chapter of the Nature Conservancy could be convened to get their help and buy in for the creation of trails and development of the Riverwalk.

A General Note: Many of these opportunities around the Manchester 2020 plan of work could be incorporated into a town economic development strategy such as the one just completed for the Town of Bennington. A similar strategy for Manchester could lead to a unified Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region that would open many new funding doors. Manchester might want to coordinate development of such a strategy with other Northshire towns. Bill Colvin at the BCRC (442-0713) is a good contact for information about economic development strategies and CEDS.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE RIVERSIDE TASK FORCE:

Many of the resources that could be available to the Riverside Task Force are closely connected to those for the Bike Task Force; clearly these two teams will want to work closely together.

Representatives from both may want to meet with Kingdom Trails, and the citizens who recently put together the Barre Town Forest project as well as the Stowe Land Trust which recently closed on the Cady Falls mountain biking project. If they want a more local perspective they can talk with Rob Woolmington who has done great work through the Fund for North Bennington. Another resource of local inspiration is Nona Estrin who headed up the East Montpelier Trails group.

Contact info for Paul Gallo and Susan Schreibman who have led the development of the Rutland bike and pedestrian path can be found with the Resource Team list at the back of this report.

Vermont ANR River Management Program can provide info on stream ecology and management (828-1294)

The Vermont Downtown Program could help access funds or tax credits: Vermont Downtown Designation, Leanne Tingay, *Downtown Program Coordinator*, 828-3220 and leanne.tingay@state.vt.us.

Or visit their website for more information:

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/downtown.

Scenic Byways Grant Program and Transportation Enhancement Grants (now called Alternatives) could be investigated through VTrans (828-3522). VTrans staff can help in other ways too; Sue Scribner at VTrans could help identify funding options. This includes the bike/ped and enhancement programs (828-3588).

Community Development Block Grant program managed by the Agency of Commerce: ACCD Vermont Community Development Program, Local Transportation Facilities

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/funding/vcdp. Cindy Blondin, *Grants Specialist*, 802-828-5219 and cindy.blondin@state.vt.us. And ACCD Municipal Planning Grants might be useful in funding for further framing of the project:

http://www.accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/funding/overview/municipal_planning_grants. Wendy Tudor, *Grants Administrator*, 802-828-5249 and wendy.tudor@state.vt.us.

Vermont Community Foundation, Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup, *Philanthropic Advisor for Program and Grants*, 802-388-3355 ext. 295 or cilstrup@vermontcf.org. <http://www.vermontcf.org>.

USDA Rural Development. Vermont office: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/NH-VTHome.html>. Jon Muise, *Area Director*, (802) 257-7878 x106 and jon.muise@vt.usda.gov.

National Conservation District, <http://www.nacdnet.org/vermont/>. Jill Arace, *Executive Director*, (802)496-5162 and jill.arace@vacd.org.

Bennington County Regional Planning Commission, James Sullivan, *Executive Director*, 802-443-0713 and jsullivan@bcrvt.org.

Vermont Land Trust (<http://www.vlt.org/>) and Vermont Nature Conservancy (<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/vermont/index.htm>) are natural allies in advancing this effort.

Communities that have done significant riverside development over the last few years include: Springfield, Stowe, Winooski, Montpelier, Waitsfield, Bennington, Portland OR, Providence RI, Savannah GA, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Cape Cod Rail Trail.

White River Jct. has done some interesting development along the river- Contact Joan Goldstein at Green Mountain Economic Development Council at 295-3710

The Visiting Team gathered for a briefing luncheon before the Community Visit Day at the newly opened "Park House."



VII. Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 220 Manchester residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on March 11 2013

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

Tourism and Transportation

Resource Team: Bob Allen, Greg Brown, Karen Glitman, Molly Lambert (facilitator), Scott McArdle, Lawrence Miller, Sue Minter, Kathy Murphy, Jim Sullivan, John Tracy, Rob Fish (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

Regional Attractions

- Manchester is located close to many natural and scenic areas, including the Appalachian Trail, the Shires Byway and the Stone Valley Byway.
- Manchester is an access point for various recreation activities, including skiing, golfing, skating (Riley Rink), swimming (the new pool house) and hiking.
- The Manchester area hosts many annual events, including the horse show, car show, music festivals (Hills Alive), antique show, tennis events and interscholastic tournaments.
- Manchester is the logical step off point to explore the art opportunities in Bennington County. The area is home to the Dorset Playhouse, Southern Vermont Arts Center, Hildene and various galleries.
- Manchester is also relatively close to Saratoga Springs Racetrack and Casino
- The Outlets in Manchester provide shopping experiences.
- Small mom and pop stores and restaurants provide great food and hospitality. Hotels, such as the Equinox and Bed and Breakfasts, offer tourists a unique alternative to brand-name hotels.
- Other local attractions include The Northshire Books Store and weekly farmers market.

Culture of Manchester

- The area has a long history of tourism and recreation going to 1700-1800s. Manchester knows how to host.
- Manchester has a more relaxed way of life. People come up from the city and want to relax – sit in rocking chair or hiking.

Groups love to come here from different places and meet, play and relax in uncomplicated way.

- People come to Manchester for the weather.

Transportation

- Manchester is relatively close to the Albany, New York, Boston and especially Burlington and Rutland.
- Route 7 is the major North/South conduit West of Green Mountains.
- There is a bus that travels from Bennington to Rutland
- Manchester taxi travels to Albany all the time. There are a lot of people coming and going.
- The Center of Manchester is working a bit better since the rotaries were installed to replace “Malfunction Junction.”

Other Assets

- The local chamber of commerce provides a great service by marketing Manchester to the outside world. The 7 day/week visitor welcome center offers tourists a logical stop in point for learning what is going on in the area. Publications offer incredible amount of information
- Moving overhead wiring underground has enhanced the town’s beauty.
- The availability of Wi-Fi in center of town opens up new opportunities.
- The town is willing to take steps to improve things.

What are the Challenges in this Area?

Transportation

- The area is difficult to access without a car. Even with a vehicle, east/west transport is difficult.
- Transportation has a lot to do with employment. Without a personal vehicle, employment is difficult to reach.
- While there is a local bus, service is limited and making connections is difficult. There is also no bus service late in the evening for people who want to drink or stay out late, nor any internal bus system.

- As the price of gas rises, we are becoming more isolated.
- There is no regional train service.
- We need more regular connections to train, bus and airport service, especially to the Albany area.
- Our transportation system is not very accommodating to bicycles. In addition to safety concerns on roads, there is little in the way of mountain biking opportunities.
- There are few mass transit options that reach doctors, hospitals, etc.

- The building of the roundabouts sucked local resources dry. There is little money left for additional projects.
- Manchester is no longer a natural stopping off point for travelers. Since Route 7 changed course, Manchester has had to become a destination.
- Manchester lacks a way finder system to guide tourists.
- Manchester is facing a growing traffic problem and lacks a park and ride facility or a system of pick ups at hotels.
- There is no transport up to the Mountain. We helped support Stratton Mountain, now they need to support us.
- Historic 7a has no street numbers. The road runs a long distance and addresses are confusing.
- GPS units are confused by Manchester/Manchester Center/Village of Manchester system.
- The various areas of the town, such as the arts, outlets, and downtown areas are not connected.
- The farmers market needs a better location; It is right by three streets – proves challenging.

Growing Pains

- The town is finding it difficult to balancing growth with the uniqueness of Manchester.
- There is a lack of communication between industries. Restaurants, motels, ski areas need to better coordinate efforts to attract tourists.
- There are too many signs resulting from change especially near the roundabouts.
- Overhead wiring should be put underground.
- Zoning regulations put in place to control growth are now inhibiting us from doing things to grow our tourist industry.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

Mapping, Signage, and Transportation

- We need to make sure all buildings have visible street numbers.
- Manchester needs to figure out how to get into mapping/gps networks. Building numbers should be standardized.
- We need signs where Route 7 and 7a split up and at other major location, such as on the Shires Byways.
- Need some iPhone tourist applications. We need to become a more digitally connection place. All communities should be included in this effort.
- We must figure out a way to affiliate Manchester, Manchester Center, Village of Manchester – social networks, such as Yelp, separate them all out, making businesses hard to find.
- We need to find a way to better connect the various destination points in the town. It is difficult to move between lodging, outlets, downtown, arts and natural areas both in terms of signage and transportation. Wayfinder system in town to help guide people
- Manchester needs a small cheap bus/trolley system that goes everywhere. For instance, Dover has the “Moover.” It costs 50 cents to go almost anywhere in the region.
- When VTrans repaves a road, they should add a shoulder or bike lane. The area must become more friendly to bikers and pedestrians. When we redo Route 11/30, bike paths and sidewalks should be included.

We need more signage and pole banners welcoming people to Manchester.

- Wi-Fi is not available in enough places.
- There is no Starbucks or any café in town other than the bookstore.
- We market to families. The sidewalks close up early. There is little to do after 5 or 6 pm. We need something for teens and adults alike to do in the evening.
- While there is great music in the park, the park is lacking a nice gazebo.
- How do we market the area? Current marketing efforts are confusing. What do we call ourselves? What is our focus? Stratton, the outlets, shires, Manchester in the Mountains, etc.
- We need all 18 communities to be a successful tourist destination. It is hard to just be Manchester.
- We are a region, but we have not identified Manchester’s niche?

The Economy

- The local economy is weak, especially in the winter. Manchester is three season area and we may be losing one of the seasons due to climate change.
- There are now empty stores downtown and in the outlets. The quality at the outlets is also no longer there. Quality of some of the stores is not there any more – high quality outlets gone.
- The Manchester brand is too associated with shopping. This is a liability and a stigma.
- Attendance at most events in town is down.

- We should cosmetically improve the rotaries. They are already visually pleasing, but should be even more inviting.
- We must enact zoning changes to allow increased signage. We should have pole banners welcoming people to Manchester.
- We need to develop an accurate representation of the community. The current tourist map is distorted.

Events and Destinations

- We should develop biking and/or tours around the idea of “hand-made Vermont.” or Vermont Country Roads.
- We should develop community trails, especially along the river. We should host community hikes with prizes to show off area like they do in Germany.
- The elf train ride was great. We need more themed train rides, such a senior train or a music train.
- We should have a giant farmers market.
- We need more special events, as well as more ongoing activities in the winter and to serve the teenage population.

The Outlets

- We need to look at whether outlet shopping is the long term future of Manchester. Regardless, we need to better integrate that experience. Outlets don’t support local non-profits, arts, etc. We should reach out to them.
- We should look to other models for communities that manage to market themselves as authentic.

Other Town Improvements

- We need a village green and gazebo for music events.
- We should put all wiring underground.

Regional Cooperation

- We need more cooperation between different industries.

- Stratton Mountain should be approached about working collaboratively to advertise the area. Other partners should include the outlets, towns, and hosts of regional events.
- Manchester should be pinnacle of what Vermont has to offer
- We need calendar of events for community, region – list of all things in one place

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The Manchester region is very diverse and has an array of attractions.
- We need to remember to think regionally and value specific resources such as the Green Mountain National Forest, Merck Forest, the Battenkill River, Equinox farm.
- We should bring Vermont businesses into downtown
- Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but those strengths have weaknesses.
- Manchester in the Mountains is critical to success of area.
- Outdoor recreation and nature should be a focus.
- Dover has the Moover, what should be the equivalent for Manchester?
- People should get involved with the Regional Planning Comm.
- The town should create a sign inventory to prevent sign over-kill.
- We should congratulate ourselves for the turnout – 50 plus.
- There are tremendous assets here, but challenges when comes to connecting and communicating those assets to the greater community.
- We need to make it so that having a car is inconvenient rather than the only way of getting around. We need to create a wayfinder, fix GPS problems, and a build a digital app. for the community.
- We should open vacant store fronts to non-profits to open up shops. This is a way to get over vacancy.
- We should host an open studio weekend.

Expanding Economic Opportunity

Resource Team: Bob Allen, Greg Brown, Karen Glitman, Molly Lambert, Scott McArdle, Lawrence Miller (facilitator), Sue Minter, Kathy Murphy, Jim Sullivan, John Tracy, Dan Keeney (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Town's Location: A number of people pointed out that the community's proximity to urban areas made it an attractive getaway and tourist destination. There is a wealth of recreational assets that draw people here in both summer and winter months. Residents also take full advantage of their outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Manchester has a rich economic history; it's been known for a long time for its vibrant recreation and tourism community, as well as its former mineral economy and agricultural economy.
- The economic base mostly surrounds hospitality and retail shopping. Most businesses are local in character and ownership, and there is a strong synergy between business owners. This synergy drives an uncommon community involvement, as well as enthusiasm and commitment to preserving the town's character even as it grows and evolves.
- Human resources: The town has a high-quality workforce, and also a wealth of experience in the form of retirees' expertise and the many diverse backgrounds brought from other places to Manchester. This has largely been an untapped resource thus far in Manchester's modern history.
- The community has an outstanding educational system that not only produces solid citizens but also draws new people to the region, particularly young families and people with significant financial resources.
- There is a general acknowledgement that Manchester has an effective town and local government, and economic organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and non-profit coordination. Additionally the faith community plays a very strong leadership role.
- People appreciate the valuable support of the second-home community, but still feel that demographic is underappreciated. People point to them and their associations in larger regional economies (New York, Boston, Westchester, Montreal, etc.) as a huge direct and indirect asset base for the community.
- There is a strong but perhaps underutilized and under-resourced Arts community.
- Manchester residents have excellent taste and a great standard of living, in terms of community cohesion, the intimacy of face-to-face interaction downtown, and strong civic spirit. This has been manifest in the support of schools, the movie theater activism, and more generally a spirit of willing volunteerism.
- People felt, in a discussion of the issues with vacancy rates and commercial space, that this was a great moment for new commerce and manufacturing to come into Manchester.
- The community has SCORE, an organization that offers great counsel and technical support for incoming entrepreneurs.

What are the Challenges in this Area?

- People sensed a tension between, or at least a duality of, economic activity and opportunity in the form of a tourism-focused service economy and a resident-focused service economy. Many saw this as a tricky balance. For instance, people feel a definite need more accessible necessities of daily life – department store wares and a good affordable grocery store. Manchester is steadily losing those people who have

- substantial day-to-day needs: young families with kids and working adults, as opposed to tourists and retirees.
- Relative to other places, Manchester is seen by residents as having a high cost of living. Housing costs are higher than state and regional averages, especially in terms of home values and rental housing stock. There is at least a perceived higher cost of household essentials, although there was disagreement among those present about whether this was in fact the reality.
 - People feel that the town's old economic model of (partial) reliance on the outlet mall is being challenged by competition outlets elsewhere in the region.
 - People feel that there is income stratification.
 - Residents, especially those owning business, see a challenge in the seasonality of employment. Employers find it difficult to ensure long-term job security and thus retention of a skilled service labor force is difficult.
 - While property taxes may be low, the tax burden is very high, and people are troubled and feel threatened by the rapidly increasing property taxes and cost of living.
 - People felt that there was a lack of high-quality, modern industrial park space.
 - People perceived a lack of amenities for young professionals and adolescents: no music scene, minimal art scene, high costs, employment limitations, no night life.
 - There are challenges surrounding the car dependent system of transportation, especially as it relates to night life and accessibility of services.
 - People feel acutely the lack of an institution of higher learning – ie., a liberal arts school or trade college, or a satellite of a university.
 - The outlets and other shopping centers are seen to be dying slowly. There is a feeling that with an increasing vacancy rate, perception by outsiders has become reality.

- People felt that the lease terms being offered by landlords for commercial property were too high and that they demonstrated a disconnection between out-of-town owners and the local real estate market and economy. People felt a need to change the outlooks of stakeholders through a cooperative/collaborative effort and dialogue.
- People disliked another problem with absentee landlords, and even corporate land ownership or property management. They felt there was a lack of engagement but also that the vacant space was seen by out-of-town owners as a tax write-off. They do not want to be at the mercy of these people.
- Due to the high cost of living and the lack of attractions, there is a challenge in paying a living wage to the right workforce with the right expertise.
- People felt that the professional/legal/financial advisor sector lacked a modern feel, or just maybe a lack of familiarity with new opportunities and processes. This was perceived by younger would-be entrepreneurs.
- Government programming and loans from the Small Business Administration were not geared toward genuinely small businesses like those in Manchester.
- People saw the high electric power costs as an inhibition for a potential manufacturing sector.
- Seasonal changes and changes in climate pose risks for businesses reliant on recreation and agriculture.
- People are sensitive to the disadvantages of being a 'gold-town' and lament the required distribution of the community's tax revenue to the rest of the state; the tax structure is not popular among residents.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- People wanted community collaboration to attract SBA and other business and development grants.
- People saw a need for local market research, in order to match consumer and community need with commercial supply (the example given was stores like Pac Sun, that supplied daily needs to people in town).
- Manchester needs incentives for landlords to populate commercial spaces.
- It needs a business incubator, that could include informational resources available within a small business development center, shared business infrastructure, and potentially more working space.
- The town needs a new approach to zoning for center of town, ideally with an eye to focusing on downtown housing opportunities and perhaps multi-use development. Some were wary of changing the town center too much, however.
- Climate Awareness should guide moves toward economic stability. Building a community efficiency value system can be an economic driver.
- Manchester could develop new community events during its recreational off seasons, and strengthen its existing events.
- Events and tourism focused around active lifestyles could attract young people and new tourist bases to town. For example: competitive ski/board events; long distance races and triathlons; bike tourism. Attracting sponsors for events goes hand-in-hand with this.
- The town needs a unified and collaborative marketing message, which could be part of a strategy to start a dialogue with developers, and to restructure tax incentives. The town needs to make starting businesses affordable and attractive to entrepreneurs.
- The town needs a better, one-stop mechanism for information sharing and marketing events. To combine the strengths of multiple existing marketing outlets would create a cross-pollination of innovation in strategies, and multiply the audiences reached. Additionally, a related element would be a dedication to touching base with events coordinators to ensure that events and institutions stay vibrant and problems are addressed before they get out of hand.
- People feel strongly about the need to maintain quality of life and town's identity as its population ages. Programming like ENCORE, which incorporates senior involvement in community

to a degree that includes employment, purpose, and bringing past professional expertise to bear.

- Any efforts require a depth of data that is not available at the moment. We need to be able to articulate what is available in Manchester to would-be investors, incoming corporate entities. We should also deliver this information, focusing on deliverable goals, and not necessarily try to rebuild lost opportunities (e.g. US Open)
- Manchester should match its (potential new) educational assets, both in terms of adult and continuing education and in terms of post-HS liberal arts and vocation training, to build targeted economic sectors: agriculture, food service, etc.
- Development should take place along the river.
- We need to capitalize on our out-of-town contacts – people who might realistically consider investments in the community.

- Can we work to advance a Southwestern Rail Corridor? How realistic is this? Could we have a community non-profit transportation form?
- Manchester can recruit franchises from regional businesses.
- Manchester needs to locate and identify new economic populations to attract. gateway industries. Once those are in place, we can add to those, and grow associated/accessory industries. Build hospitality and retail, but also create infrastructure, grease rails for manufacturing.
- Attracting workforces should mean veterans & families (younger demographics); tap into educational resources made available.
- The town should establish a strategic plan, identifying infrastructure bottle necks.
- We need a committee to focus on affordable housing solutions, especially for younger people.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The absence of factual data could be detrimental to articulating short-term priorities.
- People value the outdoor lifestyle, proximity to cities, arts, etc. Affordable housing and transportation are clearly issues of concern.
- Community communication seems vital, along with a general need to share event information and economic data/information. Expanding communication opportunities may come with VCRD's expansion of Front Porch Forum, but people could bring nonprofit and business advising to bear through VCRD resources.
- There's the difficulty of attracting and retaining young folks; meeting other young people can be especially challenging. The town is in a major period of transition like they were in 1980s. They still value many of the same assets: quality of life, natural resources, critical people and expertise available. There is a very diverse economic environment – all the ingredients needed are here.
- There's great opportunity in ENCORE-like programs; involving seniors with 'passion, paycheck, purpose.' He saw a focus on level of fulfillment, and not necessarily FOCUSING on the financial needs.

- Age stratification is important, it's important to tailor goals/needs to all levels. She mentioned the sustainability threat, and the possibilities for the community to grow with its already-high electric car activity: perhaps with a charging station and events surrounding electric cars and renewable energy.
- Communication and Planning are the main themes missing. Manchester needs *trade-specific* education, along with its already great schools. There is a need for something anchoring like a department store, for which there's lots of space. Also, people value their town government and thought there's not enough zoning – that's unusual. Affordable housing was the most central aspect of economic development discussion, and he heard a desire for an intensive multi-use core of town.
- Manchester is in a transition time.
- The tools are here. We need to use the right language to discuss innovation and change with growing an under-30 demographic. Strategic planning is vital as a process to correctly identify ways Manchester can blend its traditional values with technological changes and demands of 'growth'
- Human Resources are one of the best assets here. Manchester needs to utilize its natural surroundings, and not sacrifice its environmental distinction.

Defining Authentic Manchester

Resource Team: Bob Allen, Greg Brown, Karen Glitman, Molly Lambert, Scott McArdle, Lawrence Miller, Sue Minter, Kathy Murphy, Jim Sullivan, John Tracy (facilitator), Rob Fish (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Manchester is rich with locally owned and developed assets.
- Manchester's assets include the Northshire Bookstore, Hildene and the country club.
- Assets include the village, local artisans, local restaurants, our creative economy.
- There are things that are uniquely Manchester.
- We are tolerant and willing to try different things.
- Manchester has diversity. You could be a sports person, love the arts, or love to ski. There's something for everyone.
- There are things for the mind, body, and soul.
- This is an extremely caring community. People watch out for and help each other. We offer so much to each other being the type of the community we are.
- We have a respect for the "old" and a willingness to bring in the "new." We've got a solid community.
- Manchester is a great place to visit. Our natural setting is an asset.
- The Battenkill has great trout.

- Manchester is a great place to live. We have a great quality of life. There's everything you need for family life here until kids get to age 17 or 18.
- Our economy is based on hospitality.
- The VT reputation is an asset. VT is authentic, values the individual, and idiosyncratic. We have unique elements not elsewhere.
- Manchester has great schools.
- Our surrounding towns – the shires of VT is an asset.
- In Manchester, you can live in a beautiful place and work hard on what you want to do and be supported by your local community.
- The Elf train was great!
- Our perception of ourselves changed with the building of the roundabouts. We started talking about how good Main Street looks rather than complaining about that intersection.
- The 80s may have been crazy here, but the times brought us back here to raise our families.
- The area is fun for families.
- The town is peaceful. It is quiet. You are not hit with lots of advertisements.
- A majority of the people are here because they want to be here.
- The specialness comes from the people and values; not the outlets or anything else.
- A lot of good has happened since outlets came.
- People who own second homes in Manchester have provided a philanthropic base for the community.
- There is such great culture here. The town really supports the human services and non-profit sector.
- Visitors have a great experience. Here is a quote from one visitor, "I just want to tell you it's so nice to find authentic people with an authentic product."

What are the Challenges in this Area?

- There is a feeling of inauthenticity that we need to address as a community. There is a proliferation of vacant outlet stores and foreign brands. We need to revisit who we are as a community to find our authentic self.
- We rely too much on retail stores.
- The rapid changes that occurred in the 80-90s impacted our architecture.
- Manchester at times seems contrived.
- Are the people who don't think Manchester is authentic here? How do we represent them?
- We can't think of ourselves in a vacuum.
- People in service industry do not feel a part of the Manchester experience. This includes the people who clean the second homes. The town is divided because of it.
- The town is divided between those with the homes and businesses and those who come here to service us. They don't feel connected.
- We can define ourselves, but not the surrounding towns that impact our community.
- How do we protect the ability for people to pursue individual dreams?
- We are known for outlets.
- It is hard to make a living here unless you are following a dream.
- Outlets are inauthentic. We lost our authentic VT credibility because of the presence of outlets.
- We don't have fun here. We are too worried about shape and color of this building for instance and how many signs are on the street or not on street.
- The streets aren't filled with people. We need to lighten up. Let's have a ball. This is one of the greatest places on the planet.
- In 70s, young people came into town to party; most of our entertainment today is very high brow and "chi-chi."
- Young people do not want to stay here.
- In the 80s – we had sidewalk sales – we had fun!
- How do we define Manchester authentically?
- We need to all sing the same message.
- Events are great but need to find the core underneath it.
- 20-somethings are coming but not staying.
- It's a hard time out there – especially for the people who don't feel included.
- The town has a nickname "zippy." It means you can't afford to live here but you also can't afford to leave.
- People want a real Vermont experience. That is missing here.
- Hundreds of homes are for sale right now in Manchester. These are mostly second home owners who donate a lot to the community.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We must design steps that go into Vermont image.
- We must protect the sense of individuality and authenticity.
- We have an opportunity to redirect what people think about us as outlets close. We must seize that opportunity.
- Look at how Hardwick has been reborn because it redefined itself as the center of a local food revolution. We don't have agricultural base, but are there parts of that experience that we can export to Manchester?
- We need to lighten up!
- This is an opportunity to define us and control outcomes.
- We need to rethink our events. Should a craft fair really cost \$10?
- We need to create and support events that bring visitors and community together.
- We need to focus attention on marketing and branding toward families. The 20-somethings may be out of reach.
- At end of a bike ride, organizers polled participants and by far Manchester was the best part of the ride because stuff was going on. They felt things were active. We planned the sidewalk fair, concert on green, farmers market to coincide. We should continue that strategy.
- When I first moved to Manchester, I was excited about the annual tree lighting. In the end it wasn't the festivity I expected and hoped for. The next year, we transformed the

- event into the lighted tractor parade. We must continue to revamp and improve events.
- We need entrepreneurship. How to make it easy for them to be successful.
 - We need economic devel. for people who are living here.
 - We need to know who we are and what we are doing well before we can create a vision.
 - We need to do something that is unique, such as a wild food day, snow ball fight (like tomato fight in Spain) or a mud bogging event?
 - We all know what the events are, but if you come from out of town you do not know what is happening. We need a community-wide calendar that every hotel has posted. The Chamber has a calendar.
 - We need more events like a parade. We need things that bring local people out; service people who live here. You want to be transported when you visit a place.
 - We need to learn how to talk about our successes.
 - We all need to be ambassadors for Manchester.
 - We need to figure out things we can do to have ourselves defined as a friendly place.
 - We need a customer service excellence program. This would be an official program so everyone who was working in the service sector is trained in how to do the job exceptionally well.
 - Attitude precedes action. We need to feel good about ourselves first. Then anything is possible.
 - We need more activities for adults after hours.
 - We need to find out what is happening in the world that is a powerful force and jump on it!!
 - We have tons of agriculture and foodies – let’s have a wine and food festival! The “local food wagon” is a way to bring everything together.
 - We should organize the longest “locavore” table in the world. It cold snake up the hill.

- I went to a jelly mill as a child and still remember it today. We need to create those opportunities.
- We need to embrace our history.
- We need to promote events locally too! Locals need to have the opportunity to take part in events. The message needs to be loud and clear to everyone who lives here too.
- We stage events for tourists – not for us. We need more events for working people.
- We need to consider whether we have the infrastructure to grow more and serve more people. We need to think long and hard about how we want to grow. There are lots of empty beds. We need to fill those before we build more.
- We need to do more for the people doing the service.
- We need to show people what it means to be a Vermonter.
- We need to survey what makes people want to come here.
- Manchester needs good high speed internet that is readily acceptable. High-speed internet is what brings entrepreneurs to a community.
- We need to go right through the whole season and give an authentic experience to visitors. We can do all that here. We need to market Manchester as authentic Vermont and so much more.
- We need to use the Youcanvt website to market Manchester as a place of business. We need to market the lifestyle.
- Town government and taxpayers need to make a decision to invest in attracting new business.
- Manchester once held the World’s Largest Potluck Supper at Equinox. We should bring that back.
- Equinox and other institutions have lost their community spirit. We need to bring back those institutions into the conversation.
- We need to better market Hills Alive. The event is 6 weeks long. There are 125 performance arts events across the region.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The community is so engaged!!
- Manchester needs to decide whether it wants to grow or remain the same size.
- Demographics are a big issue. Manchester needs to decide whether it wants to be for all people at all stages of life.
- There are tremendous assets here. The problems are mostly about communicating and strategizing and creating a vision.
- Food and farm is real opportunity. The Vermont Community Foundation is focusing on food and farm. If they did that in Hardwick, you can do that in half the time here.
- Manchester has the greatest school system in the state, but not a lot of young families. Manchester needs to market to families.
- Manchester could potentially be the food entrepreneurial center of the Northeast.
- The second home owner issue is real. The town needs to learn how to engage them.
- Tremendous history and natural resources, but also all the great people that have moved to Manchester make for a community that is remarkably diverse

- I heard the following themes - “Fun, Friendly, Food.”
- The town has great ideas and a lot of energy. The weakness is communication. The town needs FUN. Instead of a tree lighting, why not have a tree burning after the holidays?
- I feel like we moved from values to events. We should examine why that happened.
- The town needs to think more about itself, not just visitors.
- The most important thing about Manchester is being a member of the community. You can’t really share that with visitors unless they move here.
- I head a lot about events. Is that what you think is going to work or is that just a tool?
- Manchester is a great place to raise kids
- There is a bit of resentment that the way our communities are built is only around the schools. Schools are important but there are others who have no reason to be a part of it.
- Experiences and memories are powerful. We need to provide tourists with the opportunity to connect and take experiences away and last a lifetime.
- Locally owned locally operated is key.

- We are a caring community and need to maintain that.
- We want to be a great place to live at any age.
- We need to tie in the shires and Manchester in the mountains.
- We need high end crafts, in addition to a food focus.
- Authenticity is not created, it is what we are.
- We need to define what's important here: child friendly; family friendly. We need an ambassador to promote our natural resources.

Housing

Resource Team: Hal Cohen, Steve Dale, Tim Donovan, John Fischer, Jeff Francis (facilitator), Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, Wendy Morse, Doug Racine, Gus Seelig, Caitlin Lovegrove (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Affordable housing exists, including the THM houses developed by Jack Heaton and the houses being developed by Habitat for Humanity.
- There are some vacant spaces above storefronts that could be turned into affordable housing.
- The Food Cupboard is a phenomenal opportunity to help low income residents.
- Even low income residents can attend great schools, such as B&B.
- Financial counseling (one on one) and homebuyer education (in a class form) is offered by Neighborworks of Western Vermont, BROCC and others.

What are the Challenges in this Area?

- Affordability: \$450,000 for a house is still unaffordable.
- It is particularly challenging for young professionals to be able to afford to live in Manchester, since there are few rental opportunities.
- A certain "Vermont Pride" keeps people from applying for Habitat for Humanity housing or from going to the food shelf.
- There's no middle-income housing. There's some low-income housing (like Habitat for Humanity) and there's very high-end, but nothing in the middle.
- Some affordable housing projects were developed at the height of the housing market (in 2007) and are now still vacant because they are still priced too high.
- All of the housing programs, such as that built by Habitat for Humanity, have criteria that residents have to meet, and the most difficult criteria is financial responsibility (people are too debt ridden and not financially responsible enough.) These programs are therefore having trouble finding qualified families.
- There isn't affordable land.
- Lack of employment that sustains financial responsibility.
- Lack of land infrastructure: you have to develop land once you buy it in terms of water, roads, etc.
- Lack of transportation outside of the town center.
- 2nd homes mean that a lot of housing is vacant a lot of the time.
- Many people commute to work in low-income jobs in Manchester, but cannot afford to be here. This also creates a divided community, because people live elsewhere and cannot participate in the Manchester community.
- There are some mobile homes in Manchester, but these create a cycle of poverty. It's affordable, but not comfortable.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Higher Education programs should relate to local community: teach trades like Culinary Arts, etc. so as to keep people engaged and staying in Manchester.
- Bring in a community college, so students stay in Manchester.
- Offer training for jobs that would have higher salaries.
- Job creation: Manchester has an outlet market, restaurants and hotels. Generally the incomes in these are minimum wage jobs. We need to look at bringing bigger business here for bigger wages, and we need to create a greater diversity of employment opportunities.
- Create an incentive for retailers to convert second stories into rental apartments. (Perhaps also clarify and make regulations easier for converting them.)
- Create more housing downtown.
- Create a sense of Community Vibrancy so that you can see people downtown after 6pm.
- The Town of Manchester should purchase brownfields to get Federal money to clean up the property and turn it into affordable housing (also potentially eligible for TIF?).
- The town could turn the Factory Point Bank building into affordable apartments.
- Create mixed income housing.
- Start preparing people for financial responsibility early (in HS).
- Create affordability through lower utility cost by having a central heating facility for some housing.
- Build a bigger nucleus of "workers" to participate in civic activity of the community.
- Reopen the homeless shelter that was here for a month, but was closed due to money issues.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Challenges: Community with high median price for homes, expensive land, expensive to develop, expensive to bring vacant areas up to code, expensive rentals. Issues around employment, transportation, financial literacy and affordable housing.
- Assets: community neighborhood associations, financial literacy training.
- Do businesses in town really think that this is an issue? Why are there vacant storefronts? How has the business community engaged here?
- How can you get some local ownership into these vacant storefronts? National chains will never have the same sensitivity that locally owned shop owners have.
- Linking economy, workforce, education to housing, means there will be a multi-pronged solution: None of the solutions will occur if they are worked on from only one perspective. They need to be worked on from both ends (ex. Businesses that need to pay employees more, and businesses that say they can't pay more.) What are the many connections we need to make to make some of these solutions possible?
- Work on sustainable development: jobs leading to housing.
- Manchester appears to be a bi-modal economy: poor and wealthy. It is very difficult for a middle-income person to live in Manchester. The community needs a full range of people, from poor to middle to wealthy. There is capital, though this does make land more expensive.
- The price of entry into this community is extraordinarily high (as in Woodstock). One difference though is that in Woodstock there are a lot of small shops owned by people in the community.
- "Manchester on the precipice": a real yearning to benefit our youth and keep young families here.
- Similarities to Woodstock, though Woodstock was worse (families could not afford to raise their families there so school enrollment was falling).
- Manchester is a great place to live and raise a family.
- Issue of civic leadership: if all of the youth are leaving, who are the next generation of involved leaders and volunteers?
- Is there a way to create more intentional diversity? Looking in Manchester, and engaging broader partners.
- The community is aware that there is an issue, and it isn't going to get better (problem may be worse in 5 years).
- Is there a way to incentivize affordable housing?
- Is affordable land outside of the Manchester area a solution to mimic the meadows, Hayes Court and Spruce Brook?
- What is the market for affordable housing in Manchester?
- Is there work that could be done more closely with the town?
- There is a lot of affordable housing here in Manchester. Form a local housing committee, and get housing education into the school curriculum.
- Help people put small apartments into big homes. As you age and your children leave, you can create smaller apartments in your large home.

Poverty

Resource Team: Hal Cohen (facilitator), Steve Dale, Tim Donovan, John Fischer, Jeff Francis, Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, Wendy Morse, Doug Racine, Gus Seelig, Caitlin Lovegrove (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Resources for those in need include a community food cupboard, and an Emergency Needs Fund.
- The religious community offers many programs to help, including Auto Angels.
- The Manchester Elementary school and Burr and Burton have many great programs including the Kind Fund at MEMS, the Target Program at Burr and Burton, and nutritious food programs (such as the garden at MEMS)
- Students in Manchester can go down to the Career Development Center in Bennington for technical training.
- The Learning Kitchen teaches people how to cook and eat well while giving them the food to replicate the skills they learn.
- There are several groups helping seniors including the Southern Vermont Council on Aging, Neighbor to Neighbor, and Meals on Wheels.
- The Big Brother/Big Sister program helps to mentor children.

What are the Challenges in this Area?

- Manchester is viewed as a "gold town," and people don't talk about poverty; it is hidden and there is little public awareness of it.
- Poverty holds a huge stigma, particularly in a "rich" town, so there is a certain reticence to discuss it or ask for help (a "Vermont Pride").
- Poverty in Manchester is very cyclical: the same problems affect families for generations. There is a culture of poverty such as the one written about by Ruby Payne in Bridges Out of Poverty.
- There is a constant and consistent need for emergency relief, from food to fuel and beyond.

- There is often a Band-Aid approach of fixing immediate problems, instead of a more long-term approach to help people move out of poverty and into the middle class.
- People who are in the position of need often don't know how to use their own resources to the greatest ability.
- It's hard to know where to refer people for help. It is a fractured help system.
- While there is endemic (generational) poverty, situational poverty is rising, particularly after the 2008 crash. Many foreclosures have been recorded in town since 2008, whereas there were very few before that.
- Poverty is a result of generations, employment, medical care, transportation, housing, fuel and food.
- Part of the problem is the Manchester job base: No full-time jobs with benefits for people in Manchester. Many who work

in town (particularly in the outlets) commute from outside of the community.

- 38-40% of students are "free-lunch" users in elementary and middle school. About 10% of this is "situational" poverty.
- There are no vocational schools in Manchester such as the Stafford Technical Center in Rutland.
- It is more difficult to reach out to elderly living in poverty because you can't reach them through schools.
- There is a lack of public transportation.
- No senior center or teen center.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Learn to value other types of skills that will be useful in getting jobs: remove the stigma of technical education.
- In addition to fuel and food handouts, help folks in poverty navigate financial responsibility, social skills, nutrition, health, and every other angle that will prepare them to be successful and to pull out of generational poverty.
- Create a pool of resources and foster a "team" feeling in order to break the barrier between "Northshire" and "Southshire."
- A community library is being built to be a satellite for vocational education.
- Get transportation to families who need it.
- Keep education going year-round for those who would otherwise not have the opportunity to continue or maintain learning throughout the summer.
- Make sure there is legislative representation for low-income issues.
- Incorporate food and nutritional education into schools and beyond.
- Engage people who are in poverty and ask them what they need as opposed to just assuming. Conduct a Community Needs Assessment and Family Needs Assessment that involves a lengthy survey that goes through various areas of poverty to

see where services need to be directed most (housing, food, dental, transportation, etc.)

- Have a social worker employed in our schools on a full-time basis.
- Explore a "time-bank:" an exchange of skills and time instead of just money.
- Need to build relationships with lower-income families to connect with them and help to be their voice. It's all about trust. Find a way to make someone in that community feel very comfortable, doing something that's valued.
- Continue with "Band-Aids" and quick wins to help to build hope.
- Have recipients know their benefactors in order to build a relationship instead of just receiving anonymous gifts of money and resources.
- Build a senior center and/or teen center.
- Try to build a sense of overall community to break down barriers between titles like "poor," "seniors," "toddlers," etc. Find a way to collaborate across charity organizations and stop silos from building.
- Create a poverty task force to help foster collaboration amongst everybody who cares about helping improve poverty.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Great level of understanding and passion from the faith community, the schools and beyond.
- Ruby Payne was referenced multiple times. This shows that there is a deep understanding in the community about the implications and impact of poverty, so this is significant.
- Clear from the beginning that folks say that this is an issue that doesn't get a lot of airtime in this community. Interesting that there is a special stigma here because it is an affluent community. There is a stigma around vocational areas of education as well.
- Initially, it is understood that there are pockets of poverty in Manchester, but then you began to realize that poverty runs throughout the community.
- Address the job base in this community: there is a high number of low-wage and no-benefit jobs. These employers are

often from out of state and have no ties to the community. How do you attract better employers? Is there a way to have more of a dialogue with Manchester's employers? Consider how to value employable skills.

- Maybe a multi-generational center is the right thing for this community to help focus energy and programming, and gets people out of silos and working together actively.
- Sounds like there are resources that are not available in Manchester that are used in other parts of the state (Bennington was cited often as an example of various programs). Creating a poverty council to get ideas from elsewhere in the state might be a great idea.
- Many references to good and productive "ion" words: Education, organizations, coordination and collaboration, transportation, resource allocation and connection.

- Focus on connecting kids to work. All kinds of learning are helpful. Internships and apprenticeships are keys to introducing youth to the transition from learning to work.
- Key might be the Stratton Foundation's efforts with second-home owners. The Wilmington community came together after Irene, and second-home owners helped tremendously. Can we learn from the Stratton Foundation to have a way to educate second homeowners/part-time Vermonters to be more philanthropically engaged?
- Personalize learning: create personalized pathways for people.
- Student voice and mentoring: huge powerful role for youth and lesson for adults as well.
- Education is the link to employability and training, not just for youth but for adults in the cycle of poverty in employability skills.
- A lot of conversations on mentoring: if kids are going to see a role model out of poverty, they need to see that role model as someone who is like them.
- It is easy to help with food, but transportation, housing, fuel are more difficult to support.
- Make connections and build relations: get low-income folks involved in the community and schools.
- Band-Aids vs. long term fixes: we need to focus on both.
- There wasn't so much discussion about those earliest years; need to focus on proper nutrition for young moms, proper education for pre-school kids.
- There was a lot time talking about generational poverty, but we also want to do what we can to prevent situational poverty from becoming generational.
- Transportation: is there a way we can leverage school busses for a public transportation system during the day or in evenings?

Opportunities in Education

Resource Team: Hal Cohen, Steve Dale, Tim Donovan, John Fischer, Jeff Francis (facilitator), Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, Wendy Morse, Doug Racine, Gus Seelig, Dan Keeney (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The town has incredible depth and breadth of educational opportunity in its institutions. The various schools cover the whole range of learning styles-- great public K-8 school, great Maple Street private school, Burr & Burton Academy, Long Trail School.
- BBA offers multiple directions for all kinds of students to go in, as soon as you enter BBA, depending on your interests.
- Along with the formal educational institutions, there are many corollary educational organizations: extracurricular learning through Dorset Play House, SV Art Center, the bookstore and library, recreational access, great funding.
- The local GNAT television resource and other digital learning offer great opportunity.
- There is a great deal of cooperation between the Elementary/Middle School and preschool and pre-K programs, which facilitates long term collaborative efforts.
- There are opportunities not only for alternative K-12 education but also diverse adult education.
- Green Mountain Academy serves an adult education population – for non-credit, intellectual enrichment.
- Parents of students demonstrate high levels of participation in school events and programming at multiple levels, and even in terms of leading a private school fundraising effort to support the local schools after Act 60. The community offers lots of philanthropic support for school missions.
- There is strong communication across educational levels; BBA serves as an all-purpose educational center. Its TARGET program for alternative educational approaches offers new approaches for those not succeeding in standard classrooms: e.g., experiential learning in the Green Mountains. Field study opportunities like Medquest and other job-shadowing programs let students contextualize their education and look to the future.
- The community has a great asset in the educators themselves.
- The religious communities, especially the inter-faith council have a major role in setting and preserving the community's educational values.

What are the Challenges in this Area?

- Communication could be improved. We need to widely disseminate information about the assets of the community; this can be difficult.
- Dealing with poor children in the context of an affluent community represents a major challenge. Like most communities in Vermont, Manchester suffers from a serious achievement gap. Mental health and social service gaps are shown in student outcomes; there is a challenge in how to address neglect at home.
- Post-HS degree programs and vocational training are most entirely absent from the community's assets. There is no CCV presence; all of this amplifies and is indicative of the insularity of the region.
- Educational costs are increasing and the property tax burden is a major source of worry and concern to people. It was noted that the community has to work extra hard because of the revenue-sharing requirements of Act 60.

- State challenges to school choice are very much on the mind of the community members. S. 90 represents the latest attempt by the state to take away school choice and local control of a system that should be seen as a model for the state. The hostile legislative environment doesn't acknowledge the public private partnership we have, that the immediate community supports; more to the point, the larger state educational establishment does not support it.
- The community has trouble holding onto families who come to the community explicitly for the schools but then leave when their children have completed their education.
- More attention could be paid to incorporating students into decision-making processes, re: curriculum, method, etc.;
- Special education is a challenge, particularly as students with special needs transition to adult life. It's vital to link them to the right skills and commensurate academic challenge. This applies to gifted students as well. Not enough focus is paid to identifying and appropriately challenging exemplary students.
- There is a perceived deficiency in math and science skills.
- The community's lack of diversity and small population is leading to stunted interaction within cohorts, particularly in cases of tracked academics; the shrinking population is exacerbating the issue; we need to attract more young families.
- One challenge is the arbitrary geographical discrimination in terms of what schools tuition can be applied to. In Manchester? In surrounding towns? You get different options.
- There is a lack of affordability, which prevents BBA graduates from staying in the community often after graduation.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- The community needs to have some adult education opportunities – classes in business, sales, accounting, marketing etc.
- Manchester can focus on leveraging relationships between formal educational institutions with non-profit resources; integrating work experience and experiential learning; reducing the stigma of personalized learning or apprenticeships; restoring the apprentice concept.
- We need to create dual enrollment opportunities for high school students, which would of course be substantially helped by a UVM satellite or Vermont State College
- The town could have a business incubation facility that doubled as an experiential learning center and digital training support center.
- We could be making better use of existing facilities; nighttime adult education in same locations (BBA for example). We could take fuller advantage of our technological resources as well, like more utilization of interactive TV space @ BBA.
- There is a demand for more formalized partnerships between GNAT and other digital media and schools based around singular objectives.
- Manchester would benefit from a program focusing on moms and children in poverty; something like a woman-to-woman mentorship program could address at-home issues of students on the wrong side of the achievement gap.
- The community really wants some post-HS education: low-residency collegiate educational programs is something that could work.
- Additional in-town evening community educational programming for adults would be nice.
- An Education leadership group / task force could move these concepts forward. Such a committee/task force must include multiple categories of stakeholders.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There is a distinct focus on connecting after HS, and aiding transition to the workplace. The community should frame its educational opportunities in terms of what the town's residents need to stay and thrive – this applies to formal education in the community especially. Poverty and the achievement gap is a real issue and affects everyone in education.
- There's a good direction in the community's valuation of personalized learning; customizing educational opportunities have great potential for curricular growth. The community really represents a successful school choice model. The engagement of the student population and utilization of facilities is impressive.
- There is strong communication around the affluence/poverty challenges and the achievement gap.
- This community has better ideas and opportunities to address achievement gap and poverty challenges than most. There are lots of local resources to deal with this situation and a lot of merit in apprenticeship programs providing vocational training and post-HS transitions, as well as personalizing educational opportunities in other ways.
- It's important to 'find the hook for every child'. For Manchester in the difficulty competing with nearby communities that have more comprehensive social safety net and educational services is challenging – Manchester represents a geographical gap in that coverage. Distance learning can be a valuable tool when dealing with lack of population density; so can using facilities in multiple ways for multiple populations. There are many ways to simulate those resources: video labs, low-residency programs; iPhone-based opportunities. The town's level of motivation is encouraging.

- There are ways the community could hard-wire higher education opportunities right into HS graduation with vocational training opportunities and particularly apprenticeship models.
- It's less a matter of finding resources (they're here) as it is making strategic choices to build on your outstanding assets. There was a great community focus on poverty and bringing the faith community to bear on social and educational problems. The 'Moms' mentorship program has the potential to be hugely innovative. In another session the importance of Intergenerational communication and programs and

- institutions that could facilitate that was brought up – there's definitely a way to use that community priority to integrate learning and cross-generational pollination.
- There are inter-related strengths, at multiple levels and across private and public sectors, bookstores, etc. Marlboro College explored the potential for services in the region, and a previous certificate in nonprofit management they were offering; given the community enthusiasm, Marlboro might have an interest in re-approaching the possibilities for a collegiate presence in Manchester.

Downtown

Resource Team: Roger Allbee, Paul Bruhn, Tricia Coates (facilitator), Paul Costello, Joe Fusco, Art Jones, Tara Kelly, Jenny Nelson, Michael Snyder, Abbey Willard, Sharon Combes-Farr (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- New roundabout helps with traffic flow in the center of downtown.
- New Chamber of Commerce building assists businesses and tourists in the area.
- Removed utility poles to make the natural beauty to come into our downtown area.
- Lots of planning for a new and updated library on the north end of town is under-way.
- Stunningly beautiful location.
- Wonderful recreational opportunities for visitors and families with varied interests.
- Northshire Book Store and really strong local retail identity (Mountain Goat, etc.) and a place for children to do things, help make our downtown a family destination.
- Hildene, Southern Vermont Arts Center, local Theatres, are examples that our culture and education are thriving.
- Manchester is a destination, because these things already are in place.
- There is a great opportunity to diversify the downtown, in terms of the mix of storefronts, to attract more tourists and to serve them.
- We successfully fundraised enough money to save/renovate our local movie theatre which had closed.
- We have a thriving farmer's market that was relocated from a more rural area right to the downtown.
- We also have a very beautiful river that runs down through the main section of downtown.
- We could also look at the 20-year ago town plan to improve the Downtown of Manchester to see several improvements that have been made, including the round-about and zoning changes to encourage development.
- Recently created an economic development office. We can leverage that to create a plan to make retail spaces in the downtown.

What are the Challenges in this Area?

- Retail sector has challenges.
- Rental rates can be a challenge for the local diversification of retail.
- Don't make downtown Manchester like Long Island, be sure to keep what Manchester is and keep it what it is supposed to be and don't get rid of the beauty and individuality of what is Manchester. Make sure you keep this as a beautiful wonderful place to come to.
- Don't forget that people live here too. We are not just about tourists. We need bottle redemption shops, grocery stores, etc. Don't ever forget that people live here!
- Zoning changes that would be required to make some of the changes discussed and the further challenge of making sure that changes don't make Manchester look like a "cookie cutter" community.
- If you want to open a store front, there are very few real opportunities; there are 7-year leases with a lot of paperwork.
- There are empty storefronts, but they are limited for a real person to open a store.
- There is an issue with vibrancy. We have limited times of vibrancy – just the busy times on weekends have activity. But we do not have it on other times. How do we drive measureable vibrancy at other times?
- It took 20 years to get the roundabout. It takes a lot of time to make changes. There is a large segment of the population that does not want to make changes.
- Physical layout could lend itself to a walkable downtown. However, we don't have a town that is anything like that for people who actually live here.
- Missing services include basic things like a kids clothing store, food, basic household necessities, etc.
- Parking is a challenge for stores.
- Other pedestrian issues limit the ability to walk downtown.
- Zoning challenges – no big box stores are allowed.

- Can some of these businesses we are talking about practically be supported by the size of the full-time population?
- Challenge of the divergent opinions about what is best to attract more tourists vs. what is needed by the local full-time population.
- Lack of nightlife. Something would be good to keep shops open in the evening.
- We need someplace for teen agers to go that is safe in the evening.
- We do not have smaller (1,200 square feet) retail spaces out of the larger vacant outlet buildings, to support retail diversity.
- There are some major eye sores in the middle of town and they present a challenge.
- The biggest challenge is environmental. We cannot build a community on a retail model. We need something more than that.
- Big institutions – country store, Orvis, Hildene, Equinox – they all seem disconnected from the community. They don't seem to be deeply woven into the fabric of the community.
- The river bank is not walkable and there are aesthetic challenges to the river bank. It is overgrown. Water should be a great aesthetic attraction for the downtown.
- Take down the barriers to outside seating and evening music.
- We have an ugly large parking lot that prevents the river walk from being effective. We have to change how things are set-up from the old factory store model if we are going to make these changes.
- Town shot down a great idea to create an ice skating rink where J. Crew was.
- Things take way too long.
- There is nowhere interesting for kids to go except the book store.
- We need to market ourselves better to bring young professionals here.
- We do not have a land use plan or vision to pull everything together.
- Is bicycling in downtown really safe? Don't encourage it if it is not safe.
- Snow piles are prohibitive to more pedestrian traffic downtown.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Create multi-use buildings to encourage diversification of retail and services.
- Make an opportunity where people can actually live downtown, not just shopping.
- Make the downtown really accessible to people on foot. Encouraging foot traffic is very important and we should take that very seriously.
- Take these elements and put together very strong working groups to create plans and get it done.
- Have Manchester subsidize a retail place, so that smaller businesses and artists can come back to downtown Manchester and open new types of businesses.
- Create affordable small shops for people to rent to open small, local businesses. Encourage larger buildings to be divided into smaller places for rent.
- Explore the possibilities about what to do with the Kimble Grist Mill and develop this space to be an asset to the downtown.
- Re-scaling retail.
- Make sure Manchester doesn't end up looking like every other town.
- The River walk and paths should be repaired. It is a real gem of a spot and can make Manchester into a destination. (Providence is a good example of how to do it). Concerts, kids programs, tours that start at the river, lighting, walkway, etc. will all help with the pedestrian transportation issue.
- Open an old-fashioned soda fountain.
- Find ways to draw people to the center of town.
- Keep the authenticity of my community – it has to be Vermont – not old, but new Vermont. It needs to include restaurants, arts, music, and an outdoor community. It needs to support an authentic way of living.
- Have a group of bicycles available to community members to use and get around.
- Create bike paths for people from the surrounding areas to bike into Manchester's downtown.
- Create a small circular skating rink, like Rockefeller Center.
- Open a Community Store that is owned by the community and community members buy shares.
- Create campaign to get kids out on the bikes.
- Create lofts and more downtown housing.
- Get Peter Max to paint the roundabouts to draw people here.
- Open a community swimming pool.
- Change zoning to accommodate the vision that is developed.
- Create a vision for the downtown.
- Create <\$200K housing downtown.
- Create a green, carbon-neutral downtown. Be conscientious about how we build out downtown Manchester. The greener we are the better it is for the future.
- Open a food co-op like Brattleboro.
- Connect organic farmers with land-owners so that farmers can use this land.
- Remove more utility poles in other areas to open up more of the natural beauty.
- Have a downtown wireless zone.
- Create a space or place where art can be in the community and in the streets.
- Go to Saratoga and Hudson NY and see what they did and cherry pick what might work for Manchester.
- Create additional municipal parking that is well signed.
- Renovate the old bank building that is screaming for a new use.
- Have a list of everything you can get in Manchester so that you know where to go in Manchester where you can buy it. Whatever merchants are selling look at the list of everyplace.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This town has tremendous power and capacity to get things done – money and intellectual and artistic. The ideas that people are looking at as ways to advance the tourist economy are impressive. There is a need for more cooperation for development from local businesses. You can incubate new businesses. You are ready for a co-op. Kids are looking for cool things to do.
- Pedestrian walk along the river and bicycle paths are a key theme. Start a tricycle race in downtown to get residents to “biking early.”
- You talked about zoning in a fairly positive way.
- You all buy a lot of pillows!
- You have a talent and very serious inflection points. You can really define what the next 20 years look like. You are ahead of a game.
- You need to define the geography of downtown and determine what the purpose of the downtown is. What do you really want it to be? Is it just retail or does the community come together there? What is your downtown for and what is the goal?
- Challenge of high rents for starting local businesses and the needs for basic goods in the community.
- Impressed with the range of ideas. I was fixated on downtown – the purpose, seeing the mountains, recreation, biking, etc. The downtown is Manchester is a hub for more than Manchester. You need the other people from outside to make the concept work.
- You have an interest in identifying a local identity and a local destination. You have the customer base with residents and visitors. You have the resources to use local foods to bring to your community. You should start a co-op. Build a local restaurant by the river for walkers and bikers. You have a lot to make this sense of local happen here. Newport is an example with its new Vermont foods tasting center. Multiple businesses come together like a butcher, etc. to create an educational food hub.
- I always look for a childlike vibe about an idea – and that idea during our discussion was the river walk. I haven’t seen it and I want to go there. I was in Providence when they were in their turnaround. Take me to the river, wash me in the water. That is powerful. Public access to the banks makes connection to the community different.
- Challenge of creating a vision that strikes that balance between what is needed for tourists and visitors and the local population.

Working Landscape, Food & Sustainability

Resource Team: Roger Allbee, Paul Bruhn, Tricia Coates, Paul Costello (facilitator), Joe Fusco, Art Jones, Tara Kelly, Jenny Nelson, Michael Snyder, Abbey Willard, Margaret Gibson McCoy (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- A lot of farmland surrounding Manchester and it’s a great opportunity for us to make sure they continue as working farms.
- There’s 1 dairy farm; vegetable farms; homesteading farm.
- Have a local energy committee.
- The Tutorial Center runs a Youth Ag. Program. They employ youth at minimum wage to work the gardens and the land; their produce is sold at farmers market and donated to meals on wheels and sold to Bennington hospital. Former Smokey House program – 5,000 acres in Danby. The educational needs not being met. Ag. was struggling. We’re working to resurrect that program for kids to earn ag. credit to learn about ag.
- There are 3 farmer’s markets: Dorset, Manchester and Londonderry.
- Fresh market at the Depot; nature’s market. Would like to see them promoted.
- Some local restaurants use local food. But every restaurant in town should.
- Hildene changed their model for weddings as a Vermont experience. All food is Vermont product, wine. They brand their weddings as the total VT experience. Work with 2 Vermont caterers.
- Vermont Fresh started with model to select one or two. They have amped up their criteria to something like 25% and do more fact checking.
- Would like to see more access to digital resources like dig Vermont, etc.
- Could we source more of our wood locally.
- Food safety is a concern. Monsanto blocked a potential lawsuit in VT for labeling of GMOs. It’s a huge problem for the future. Labeling would help with sustainability. We should support our local CSA’s and say no to GMO’s.
- BBA built a mountain campus with an environmental curriculum.
- How hard is it for local producers to get their goods to market?
- Hard to make a living as a farmer. They need support from their community to make it work.
- We’re all dependent on our cars. Public transportation would go a long way.
- Bike path would help too between Manchester and Dorset.
- Housing is premium. Prime ag. soils are turned into housing developments. Need to create a structure that allows ag. as a viable industry. Large field between senior center and the school. Good opportunity for gardens there.

- Energy. We can produce more energy than we need if we want to. Need investors for that. Solar, wind, digesters. Sell surplus energy to the energy company.
- Wind was contested in Equinox. Solar farm being pursued.
- Book store installed solar panels. Need to get the larger orgs in the community to think about producing own power.
- Needs to be managed as a business in order to get a profit out of it.
- Hydroelectric plant on Mt. Equinox that was able to generate enough power for all of Manchester. It's still there at the Monastery.
- In the middle of town there is a mill and a waterfall.
- Aquaculture is a possibility for the future.
- Homegrown energy push will help us transition to electric cars.
- Center of town could be heated with wood energy.
- Feeding ourselves. Obesity in adults is 21% and 26% of children. 30% in the US. Need to change our eating habits.

What are the Challenges in this Area?

- Land is expensive and not very available.
- There aren't production facilities. No local incubation kitchen. Price is prohibitive – i.e. in Hardwick it's \$38/hour to use.
- To lower carbon footprint, it's expensive.
- Don't have technical training for agriculture. There are some classes at the high school.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- If people knew about them they could do inexpensive things in their homes to lower their carbon footprint.
- Create an atmosphere that rewards people that car-pool for example. Students that car-pool should get to park closer.
- More community gardens in town. Beautiful land near the Equinox and Burr & Burton could be good spots.
- Transition town sold fruit trees a few years ago. Maybe find public institutions that allow people to plant the trees and make them fruit free for people. Apples, nuts, fruit. Lots of poverty in town. Make things available that you don't have to apply for. Enough wealth in town that could support the idea.
- Coop in the community. Or a year-round farmers market.
- The town's conservation committee should be re-established – it hasn't done anything in a number of years. Do a long term inventory of land that could be leased, a match-making service. Inventory of possible open land for farming.
- Greater northshire access television is happy to promoting all of these ideas. Always looking for new producers. It's on TV and also on the internet. Can link to programs. Do a show on working landscape and sustainability.
- State regulation impairs businesses on the land.
- Momentum and interest in edible gardens.
- Increase stewardship opportunities for kids.
- Schools are trying for more local food but kids don't want to eat it. They would be more interested if they were involved in growing it. Build a program in the school to get kids to grow food.
- Farm to School program is vibrant in some parts of the state.
- Dorset School did a composting program and now the kids just compost.
- Dorset School uses local foods.
- The Heat Squad that will do energy audit for \$99. Efficiency VT wants to weatherize 3% of Manchester.
- In stages, VT passed a law that organic material can't go into landfills. Composting is where recycling was 25 years ago. Build a composting infrastructure and facility that could be a great resource. Could get energy from it too with a digester that produces electricity.
- Farmers are busy. Make a global food farm collection distributor. Or online farmers market.
- Support local businesses rather than shop online. Also make community more walk-able and bike-able.
- Vermont County Store does an online farmer's market.
- Dorset just looking at their town plan. In the context of climate change people should encourage ag and forestry. Get it down in writing for the future.
- Derelict bowling alley could be a good winter farmer's market, or a community ag center.
- Local currency to foster local businesses. There is a great sawmill in town with local wood but people don't know about it. Buy local directory. How to get people not to drive to Home Depot when you have Sweeney's right here. Or shop at the natural food store rather than Shaw's.
- Little stores can't compete with big stores. They get huge discounts.
- State gave premium for buying local.
- Carbon tax nationally would dis-incent food being brought in from China.
- How to make it more cost effective for the farmers to produce.
- A year-round Coop to buy locally-grown produce. Maybe a bigger one people would flock to. The restaurants would go to them as well. By selling more volume the price might come down a little and people willing to pay more for locally-grown product.
- Talk to school about adding a block a day at the school where students could help out at local farms or at the community garden.
- Medical marijuana dispensary here.
- Edible landscape could be subsidized by transition town. They could fundraise and plant.
- Inventory of good lands.
- Financing mechanism to do solar installations that would get people interested.
- Why not work toward the public buildings and the schools having geothermal using compost.

- More pedestrian friendly Manchester with a local bus loop. Tourists and locals would use it. Any tourist town has that. Might take a lot of cars off the road.
- Lots of empty school buses because lots of local kids are driven there.
- Farm to Plate plan – where is Bennington County in it? There is an opportunity to think about basic tenants of the plan. VT eats 5% local food – highest in the US. By 2020 get that to 20%. Make it more affordable so it works. Maybe it's developing production facilities, or planting thousands of apple trees and processing them, or bringing bees back to town. Where does Manchester fit in to it?
- Clean line of communication between all the networks. Need communication structure to unite people.
- Farm to Plate Council in Bennington County is meeting next week. Do platform work to see what others are doing.
- Link restaurants, farmers, energy council, transition town. Website or email list to open up communication.
- Ag economics. Need for research. UVM used to do work in the area. Develop a diversified ag base that can find the pathway to sustainability and how to get their produce to market? Research for a viable model of what's working in VT.
- How to get the creative economy that utilizes the tourist money that comes to town. Incorporate it into a revitalized agrarian and funky vibrant Manchester.
- Partnerships are important. Find ways to utilize abilities of someone else that can inform you to do a better job. i.e., Europe and bikes – a community minded way. Could partner across the globe with products. Buy your CSA shares. Tourists will come to see the active life that comes from that.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Food creates opportunities for people to come together. Manchester understands the value of local food to your identity and keeping young folks here. Farm to School programs, the kids are so involved in their own food choices and how food is grown. It's a whole system for engaging kids. Through NOFA, called Vermont FEED. Green Mountain National Forest could be a partner both in conservation side and resource side. Their mission is the vibrancy of your community.
- Farm to Institution, CSA's, Farm to School. Has to be good support for farmers that are here if you want more to come. Be part of your local community garden to really appreciate your farmer. Coop has momentum. It doesn't take a lot of land to grow a lot of food. The Land Trust and others have programs for young farmers to come grow food there. Funky farm young Manchester.
- So much energy and passion around this set of local problems. But then the discussion comes up against so many obstacles. Would suggest not waiting for permission or traditional problem-solving infrastructure to do something for you. Example is Rutland, people are just doing what they want to do.
- Theme of children and enhancing programs in schools and community gardens. If build vision of the future of what would Manchester be in 20 year, then starting with youth should be fundamental.
- Supporting local businesses, buy local guides, building opportunities for people to shop locally like building a Coop and indoor farmer's market. A lot of interest and a handful of small things that can be done to encourage people to shop locally.
- We tend to think in long terms as foresters. Pay attention to the students that are jazzed. Local sourcing of wood products from energy to value-added. District heating with local source of wood. VT is national leader with 1/3 of schools heated with wood. Attracting young people is possible – there are trees everywhere. May be hard to find ag land but there's wood everywhere.
- Every community in VT is having similar conversation about local food. Concerned about how land is developed or used for ag, interest in youth involvement, need in ag focus communication clearing house, might be helpful to have a buy local guide, with local coupons. Looking at food system plan at the community level, look at surrounding communities in a regional approach.
- Inventory the farms here. What can we do about this? Some specific ideas spoke to real entrepreneurial spirit here. Local food distribution truck, composting facility. What might the community rally behind that 15 of you can get behind?
- With RAFFL and other groups talking about these issues. Have to focus on scale and scope. Things that we see as needs, i.e., production kitchen, getting more food in restaurants, we were often thinking too small. Think bigger in terms of making connections and partnerships. Locally grown guide for local farm stands. Demand down here. Untapped market and untapped demand here. Have a blog at RAFFL and land match-making issue. RAFFL could provide technical assistance for that.
- Power and capacity in this room and in this community is unparalleled. Intellectual capital and resources. But what's the spear-point in this area? Not the 30 ideas. The challenge is to take that to the next level by prioritizing ideas and taking them to action.

Arts, Recreation & Nightlife

Resource Team: Roger Allbee, Paul Bruhn, Tricia Coates, Paul Costello (facilitator), Joe Fusco, Art Jones, Tara Kelly, Jenny Nelson, Michael Snyder, Abbey Willard, Sharon Combes-Farr (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Northshire Bookstore occasionally has evening activities and that is about it.
- We have an amazing landscape with the mountains and waterways.
- The library has been running amazing programs, including lectures, historical talks, and kids programs.
- They have wonderful music programs at the library.
- The Perfect Wife (a local restaurant) has late night music.
- Hildene (the historical site that was Robert Todd Lincoln's estate) has some great activities.
- The Manchester Music Festival is a 7-week long event with 2 concerts per week in the summer and 6 other programs at other times of the year. We also teach students at a local music academy.
- There are tons of sports at all Manchester schools.
- There is an indoor ice skating rink at the far end of route 7 at the end of town. It hosts other indoor sports in other seasons.
- There are concerts on the Green from July through the middle of August.
- Dorset and Weston both have summer theatres. Burr & Burton Academy has a theatre. The arts center has a lot going on mostly in the summer time.
- There is a horse show and races.
- Bromley and Stratton ski areas have music festivals in the summer and skiing in the winter.
- State Parks can be better utilized.
- The Dana Thompson Recreation Park is an asset.
- There's a great Dog Park with walking paths.
- Bicycle paths.
- Equinox mountains.
- Long Trail / Appalachian Trail for hiking.
- We just saved the movie theatre.
- Orvis Fishing School and Museum.
- The Battenkill River.
- Bromley Skiing and Mountain Slide.
- The new Chamber Building is there to help post and promote activities.
- There is a pretty active local music scene.
- Dana Recreation Center will have tumbling classes and things like that in the brand new building.
- In the summer time, we can really claim to be an arts center.
- "Manchester VT Arts Collaborative" (become a center for the talent is here).
- There is a bike committee.
- Green Mountain Academy for Lifelong Learning.
- The Marketing Committee Initiative surveyed locals and visitors.
- Ponce has a nice socialization concept. You can bring your own wine, and the setting encourages casual mixing.

What are the Challenges in this Area?

- There is not a lot of activity after dinnertime. There isn't anything for people to do after dinner.
- There is no one central place with the community calendar.
- Need something physical to give it a sense of critical mass. There are so many activities. No sense of critical mass.
- Cost of activities is too high.
- The music that is playing is not very modern. It is not really very diverse. It doesn't attract young people.
- Too many of the activities are geared toward tourists.
- We don't have a central community center where people can go for lessons or classes or other activities that is centrally located.
- People go out for dinner or they have an activity, but they cannot do both. The Northshire Bookstore events are also at 7pm, when we want to eat dinner.
- Where can we accommodate a big concert? (others named a few places in the summertime that can host 400 people).
- There is a persona that goes along with nightlife about attracting celebrities. How come there is no highlighted brand that brings famous people to Manchester? Like a TV show or a radio show. (Famous people who do live here live here in a quiet way).
- The problem is the law of numbers. There is a diversity of interests, but we cannot get enough people to come. Things are subsidized and not enough people come. The numbers are not here to make a profit.
- The days of under-writing large events seem to be gone.
- To have big names, you have to have an audience.
- How can we effectively reach out to a diverse audience? There is a communication challenge of communicating with the various audiences.
- Other towns may have events at the same time and we are competing with them. Maybe if the towns coordinated, you could bring in more bigger-name acts. Towns need to coordinate.
- There are so many good artists. We don't have a good arts school with things like painting and ceramics.
- There is a seasonal aspect to many of the arts programs. Open studio is competing with something else.
- It's tough being an artist anywhere!

- We have not been able to develop the critical mass for promotion of the arts.
- Building a community for artists, takes having something from the ground-up. There is no place in Manchester to incubate artists.
- There is a lack of promotion. We see Manchester being promoted in all these other places for the factory outlets. We have to do this collectively to promote the arts.
- There does not appear to be a central place to promote the arts. No central “gel center.”
- A disconnect between the desire for the arts and the arts that are here. It needs to be more focused.
- For those of us in our 30s, our jobs become our lives. What else is there for us to do? There is no life to support us socially when we come here for jobs. Challenge of attracting young people to work here.
- Transportation is a great challenge, especially if people are drinking at night.
- The retail space doesn’t attract small mom & pop artists. We need a row of shop space for galleries.
- Rents are too high in downtown, which has been hijacked by these larger retail outlets.
- The scheduling issue is a big one. We have hundreds of examples of scheduling an event on top of another event in neighboring towns.
- A lack of outdoor seating in downtown, which is very important in the summer.
- 20 and 30 year olds have nowhere to bump into each other and network.
- Spiral Press closes early (the coffee house in the Northshire Bookstore).
- There is no place for people to go and continue talking after the activities. Where do you go after an activity to talk to other people?
- There seems to be no place to eat dinner after 9pm.
- The Manchester Journal is a weekly so they cannot always tell us what is happening before it happens.
- We cannot find the support for a triathlon in town.
- Tourists are always asking for dancing or a piano bar and we don’t have either.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- What about having a kiosk to give you a sense of what is going on in the town or to buy tickets, etc. It is nice to see something that is physical. Brattleboro has a lot of outdoor boards that make things look very interesting about everything to do.
- The library has a plan to be a community center with meeting rooms of different sizes and also be a place where people can come together and talk and have a cup of coffee.
- We need an Arts School for both young people and older people.
- Leverage “Hills Alive” to promote the arts in Manchester.
- Leverage the information of the Marketing Committee Initiative and the surveys of locals and visitors that they have taken.
- Develop a campus for the arts where people can learn and grow. You would be bringing in young people.
- Create space for artists and galleries, perhaps by chopping up some of the larger retail space or a disbanded outlet.
- Create places for people in town to come together and talk and have a drink to talk about things. It’s a concept of socialization that can overcome alienation.
- Coordinate art-hop gallery evenings with receptions or a studio tour. We did it a little bit last summer. Burlington does it the first Friday of every month with buses taking you from one gallery to the other.
- Have a TV show that records and discusses the path of all of this building and development to broadcast to the community and the State of Vermont to get more people involved in the process. Follow the development of these projects through a reality TV program.
- There is a lot going on. However, 90% of the time, I hear about it after the fact. Create a community calendar.
- Create a Facebook page or website with photos and videos of events.
- Central publication / website with a consolidated calendar of events. Ramp it up to get interested people to get the calendar done. Market Manchester events into other communities to draw people here.
- Create a Manchester App.
- Should the calendar leverage the Chamber Commerce calendar?
- To grow your arts community from the ground up, the key is having spaces. Use a land trust to subsidize spaces in the downtown, creating a core for gallery spaces. You cannot have a gallery if you do not have artists. You cannot have artists if there is no place for them to live and work that is cheap.
- The Grist Mill has 3,500 square feet. As a community, we can do something with that. It is owned by Kimball Martin Real Estate. It could be a location for creative economy incubator space. The Old Bowling Alley could also be developed as such a space.
- Open an arts center or school for the arts. However, you need very good parking for this.
- Create a town website.
- Enhance the river walk, by allowing for a permit for a waterside café where the Grist Mill is. Keep it open after the movie gets out.
- Bring higher education to the area to help solve some of these problems. This will attract younger people and jobs.
- Have a place where you can sit around on couches at night; a community table.
- Do more things like the concert on the green, because it brought together a lot of people from different walks of life and make sure that the other places are open afterwards.

- Keep stores open until 9pm.
- Bagel Works would make a great night club. A night club is exercise. Young people would then shop by day and dance by night.
- Create choices for after school activities. Accommodate a younger crowd that does not drink.
- Do something with the big old yellow bank building. (Berkshire Bank building).
- Redo streets to include a bike trail for kids. Keep in mind that the trail needs to go somewhere.
- Open an arcade, outdoor ice skating, outdoor shows, and a bunch of other things for kids to do.
- First Friday concept. Pick one night a week and get everyone to stay open later. Make that night evening out in Manchester. Raise the flag for that one evening. Start with that to show that there is a market after hours.
- Find a link between the things that are open and happening and make it easy for people to go from one thing to another.
- Create more affordable educational opportunities, such as night classes in the arts that are attractive to all ages (Frog Hollow used to do this here, but then moved to Burlington).
- Open a Community Arts Building, which can be a home for people to come together in the winter, where things can happen for all ages. The bank building was built a long time ago and there is a way to open up the space for this.
- The Manchester Music Hall can be donated to a non-profit. It is a great building with great potential. The option runs out in April. Is there interest in extending this?
- For Summer Solstice, shut down the street and have activities.
- Have passports with stamps to encourage people to get to the different shops, etc. with a prize for filling up the stamp book.
- Create a space to socialize. It should have alcohol but it doesn't need to be a bar. What about a wine shop with wine classes and tarot cards, etc.?
- Price Chopper may like to move out of their building and that could be a place with a lot of square footage.
- Turn the Bowling Alley into something like Higher Ground in Burlington.
- Set up a cooperative office for the many non-profit offices all over town and have joint copy machines, and be an incubator for creativity.
- Open an indoor arcade for birthday party space for kids.
- Change the mix of the retail in town and make it affordable for shops to do business here.
- Entice people to use the Southwestern Rail Corridor and have a weekend of events.
- Create a Fashion TV show that would have fashion people competing for retail space on Main Street.
- Focus on the outdoor events and healthy events that draw people here, by increasing the frequency of outdoor trips and things outside that do not cost a lot. (e.g., Guided tours, bird watching, hiking bicycling and other low cost activities).

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There are already a lot of things to do here and a very good energy. Leverage the River Walk idea and the Reality Show idea is a great one.
- Look at the example of the Town of Morrisville. They have River Arts, Arts Classes, Dance Classes, Renovated Space, etc. in the middle of town to do it around arts.
- Living in Vermont, there is not a lot to do at night. The folk music idea is inexpensive.
- If you pick one of the ideas for these old buildings and River Arts efforts, then you will be able to do most of the things you want, but don't do too many.
- I had perceptions about Manchester that were thrown out the window. The community needs more communication and promotion. There was a lot of expression around this need. The story about what you are saying about yourselves. You are rewriting this story. You are not about outlet malls. People from the town hear about change and then it will really percolate and support will grow. Use the talents you have to get other people on board with the process we are engaged in. Once you have people on board, you won't have to worry about naysayers.
- You have an inspirational landscape and you have pride in your community. You should go back to nature and the outdoor landscape.
- Celebrate around local foods and wines, local non-profits and agriculture. Use San Francisco as an example.
- It is great that you want to have things for all ages. That is an asset.
- Lots of assets, lots of ideas, and you have the passion. Our work is done. It may be in pieces, but you just have to bring it together. Across age groups and demographics. Don't gear too many things just for visitors. Generate your events for you and your guests will enjoy that too!
- Arts. Outdoors. Food. Technology. These things are you, so build your events around them.
- Don't get hung-up on the big idea. Do things that are cost effective and just do them. Young people – let's go play flag football in the park. Or let's all go listen to music [here](#).
- There are a lot outdoor activities and you are lacking indoor activities. You want to build an arts culture that is independent of the critical mass that you get from tourists. There are too many things that they are scattered like pebbles. Come together to do the one or two things.
- Your summer solstice is your chance to have an information booth to get what you are doing out there. You have all the energy you need!
- The power of this community to get things done for its size is beyond what any other town in Vermont can do. The vast number of ideas is unbelievable. Choose one and you can renovate a building. If you choose one thing, it will leverage all of the rest.

Visiting Team Debrief

Scribe: Margaret Gibson McCoy

Tourism & Transportation

- How to get people from the hubs, Amtrak, Albany, Burlington, Boston, better bike paths, wayfinding signs, consolidated info for visitors and residents
- Accommodations and events around bike tourism
- Electronic wayfinding, need for GPS, or an app

Expanding Economic Opportunities

- Tremendous number of assets, need better communication, and a strategic planning process for prioritization. And what they want to do about the outlets and how to bring young families here.
- Using the DT to diversify the economy
- Attraction for young professionals and nightlife
- Post outlet economy a theme

Defining Authentic Manchester

- The age gap between 19 and 30 – we need to have more fun. But 2nd home owners are integral part and how to weave them in.
- They are ready to go, they know who they are
- Not an island and defined by their neighboring communities
- Regional approach
- Need to have events not just for people from the outside but for people that live and work here
- Outlets are the elephant in the room. What are you going to do about it?

Housing

- Mismatch in terms of what people earn who work in town and what kind of housing is available. Need for financial literacy, issue of poverty wove through the discussion. No focus to solutions. Need help to do that.
- Young professionals want to live here for the school system, but they can't afford to live here.
- More vital downtown, over the stores could be turned into apartments. Creative thinking.

Poverty

- Gold town, poverty is hidden, not talked about but it exists. 38% are on Free and Reduced lunch. Transportation, education, collaboration involving low income community in the community.
- A lot of stigma about being poor and a Vermont pride in not wanting to ask for help even when the resources are there. Connection to the out of state employers that have businesses here not paying FT or benefits and making it hard for people to live here.

Opportunities in Education

- Extraordinary educational assets in the community. Stronger connection with institutions of higher learning. Deficit for people who want to advance their education once they want to pursue higher learning. K-12 system interested in flexibility

in terms of opportunities for students. Interested in more individual learning. Need to connect human services to the education system and some emphasis on those in poverty could do a better job if they address the needs of the adults in that sector.

- Trades training stigma aspects and not a lot of opportunities. Interest in looking at apprenticeships for youth. Feel peril in the hands of the legislature. They consider selves wonderful product of school choice opportunities. Wary of what could happen with respect to changes in law around school choice.
- People come here when kids are in school and then leave when kids are out of school. Is that true?

Downtown

- Change in retail with outlets closing, the town views as an opportunity. Would like to see more diverse economic base. Attract entrepreneurs. The DT is a way to pull the whole community together. The river walk that flows through town led to bright eyes and ideas.
- The community might need to do outreach to Ben to see if he can be part of the transformation, or not. Didn't like the idea of the community planning for the ideas of his stores.
- Local needs for purchases vs. more specialized retail.
- Rent came up, high price.

Working Landscape, Food & Sustainability

- This conversation was less energetic because there is not a critical mass around agriculture. Only a couple people who could point to farms. Not much knowledge of the forest products industry. Not a sense of being networked agriculturally. An early conversation compared to a lot of places in the state. They haven't organized around it compared to other places.
- Interest in the community garden space and edible gardens.
- Want to support the local businesses. There are 2 health food stores in town and they don't want to hurt those businesses.

Arts, Recreation & Nightlife

- Incredible things happen here. Nothing to do after dinner. Lots of buildings in towns could be renovated for this purpose. They need to choose a direction and decide on a building and line up.
- Equinox music hall willing to give to a non-profit whose willing to take it on. In the range of \$2M to take it on would solve it in terms of answering needs.
- Culture of community participation in making things happen. Philanthropic capacity to do stuff here.

Manchester School Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with 20 Manchester students 2/28/13

What assets do you care about most when you think about the future of Manchester?

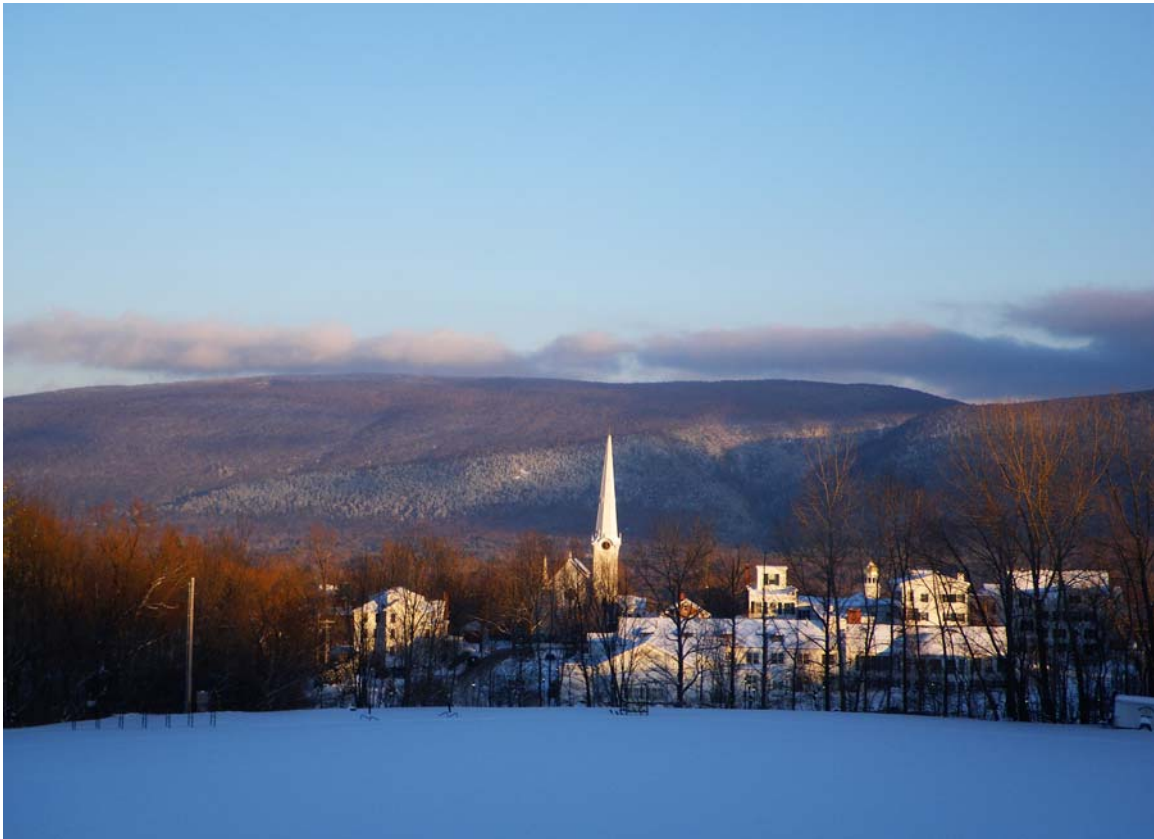
What do you care about the most when you think about the future of Manchester?

- Having more things for people to do; companies like Google have little restraints but offer a lot of opportunity that make people happy and get a lot done. Find more organized things around town to get involved in.
 - Manchester is becoming more focused on pleasing the adults and tourists but not the youth. Get stores that we can afford to buy things in.
 - More things on the town green; successful with about 4 events per summer. Make it bigger and more often. The Chamber of commerce has concerts in the rec field. Students lead events in the school year but not the summer.
 - Manchester feels Vermonty – people come here to relax. Keep the character of Vermont. Continue to have outlets stay open. They are good but they are closing and there are layoffs. Highlight the kids that are living here.
 - Lots of shopping opportunities for cute little things for tourists; we need a balance of tourist spots and places that locals can go to shop or spend time. Places like that would help with the tourists too. Ski families have kids and want something to do.
 - There's nowhere around here to get school supplies. Have to go to Bennington and Rutland. We have Rite Aid but need others.
 - Unhealthy for Manchester to be defined into the future as an outlet town.
 - We should capitalize on tourist interests – golf courses, Equinox. Manchester should offer more organized events or concerts that would bring attention to the town.
 - There are only service industry jobs here, or retail. Getting a degree in anything else--there's no place to work here.
 - Manchester isn't a big business town. Tourist industry is the main one. Small companies might work here like small tech. companies – we could be pro-active in working to develop them.
 - Building regulations restricted Orvis from growing its company here.
 - The Elf train was a huge success.
 - Economic opportunity is important to retain a youth population. Difficult in the off season to find a job.
 - We don't fill outlet shops with things that are relevant to people that live here. Teenager clothing stores rather than for just wealthy older people. Cell phone stores.
 - We need touristy stores and outlets but we also need to diversify.
 - Foster growth of business beneficial to both tourists and locals. Bookstore and Cilantro are good examples – if they connect both economies they are more likely to do well.
- What are the stores that would resonate with the Manchester brand, tourists, and Vermont?
 - The Elf express was successful because it was geared for little kids.

Practical action ideas

- Opening bowling alley, we only have a movie theater. Had one but its vacant now. Both tourists and locals could use it. Make it multi-purpose with other events there.
- Working Lands – maple sugaring issue is that it's very expensive to get into and maintain; hard to find places to sell products when there's a tourist industry that would be happy to buy it. How about a Vermont product store? Country store and general stores. Maybe farmers working together to figure out how to market. Take care of the people that are trying to keep people organic.
- Have a coop in town to sell local products. Have a year round farmers' market.
- Year-round indoors farmers market and coop. Dorset has one. Many have never heard of it because it's out of the way.
- Tourists come for hiking and beauty, for a homey feeling.
- The Equinox preserve and mountain is a huge natural resource but people don't really take advantage too much. Maybe advertise it more with a tourist center or something so people know about it.
- Map at the gazebo, put the hiking map in the rack for tourists.
- High turnover with outlets and stores, a lot of the maps in town are out of date. Need to update them.
- Incent businesses to own rather than lease. Signals more permanent commitment to the community. The outlets are more corporate. Get more to make the commitment. Get more local businesses. Bagelworks.
- Do more organized kid based events at the riley rink. Roller skating, have a soccer tournaments there. Sometimes it's an empty building.
- Not a good communications network. Town started using their facebook page which is good and they update it fairly regularly but people don't know about it.
- Some division; class division – the tourists, upper class, the working class. Some events that only some groups go to. Getting the word out for events is divided. Including the businesses that serve the people.
- Makes people feel a little alienated from the community. Calendar of events not synched.
- Reputation of upper class, older generation. Outlets that come here, events tailored to that population. Equinox. Having better communication and bringing whole community together would be great. Concerts, bowling alley, certain stores.

- Locals don't go to the Equinox. They have massive spaces that could be used like the chili chow??
- A lot of locals go to Bennington and Rutland to get things they need. Make it easier to keep the money in the community. Walmart and Staples shouldn't come here because they don't match the character.
- In 20 years...
- Outlet stores will be part of it.
- Look at other communities that are similar, like Saratoga, Brattleboro, Burlington, and figure out how to incorporate some of it into Manchester. Have unique stores that make them fun. Sam's Outing Goods store. Make Manchester more authentic. Brattleboro coop, giant building, local food, it's hip. Every food you can think of. Locals come to display their soup or maple syrup. Actually doing it would be awesome. Kids could go study there, a sitting area to study. Bring guest speakers in which would draw people from surrounding areas in. Manchester is unique. It's not a ski town but it draws in skiers. Not a hiker but draws in hikers, etc.
- Coop could have everything into one place. A welcome center with maps, communication,
- Balance between skiing, outlet, hiking, maple syrup – have all of those. Can't have one dominate.
- Have a lot of smart people in this town that can get things done, but a lot of times they are at odds. Hard to come to consensus. i.e., the roundabout took 20 years. If could get everyone on the same page and working together we could really get a lot done.
- Calliope Café where the whole community would come, not just the 700 kids at BBA. Spiral does that, Perfect Wife has open mic night. Not known about. Need to do better with getting the word out.
- Riley rink is expanding for another entrance and more fields. They use to have concerts and big events there. With the expansion if the town can give them a reason to try that again could be a draw. Ideas to put in the gym to make it like a rec. center.
- During winter there's no gathering place.
- We need a Manchester Community Center.



VIII. Manchester Community Visit Participants

Paula Albertsson	Garrison Buxton	Michael and Carolina Ellenbogen	Janet Hurley
Dale Allen	Courtney Callo	Marie and Ray Ferrarin	Jen Hyatt
Keld Alstrup	Mary Cardel	Harvey Flaxman	Janice Izzi
Chris Ams	Martha Carey	Ellen Ford	Kathleen James
Gina Anzivino	Francie Carieri	Jessie Forrest	Jeannie Jenkins
Julia Arvin	Chrissy Carroccia	Dona Friedman	Sam Johnson
Anastasia Arvin-DiBlasio	Paul Carrocio	Robert Gasperetti	Sylvia Jolivet
Sally Asciutto	Amy Chamberlain	Joe Giolito	Mark Kaplan
Ginny Baier	Joe Charbonneau	Tria Giuliani	David Katz
Dylan Baker	Annette Chase	Jack Glade	Brian Keefe
Jacki Baker	Rabbi Michael Cohen	Jonathan Grant	Leslie Keefe
Lois Beardwood	Leslie Cole	John and Verlinda Griffin	Jan Kelley
Ivan Beattie	John Conte	Jennifer Grigsby	Rick Kelley
Jackie Bell-Sargood	Lucinda and Cliff Cooper	Steven and Debbi Grossfeld	Meg Kenny
Linda Benway	Michael Cooperman	Cynthia Gubb	Astri Kilburn
Elizabeth Berger	Kelsey Cottrell	Mia Gueth	Mike Kilburn
Carol Berry	Susan Cottrell	Cathy Hall	Dricka Kimball
Steve Berry	Barb Croft	Sheila Hall	Kim Kimball
Alan Bevoit	Tom Croutten	Bruce Hallett	Janet Kleinberg
Geno Bilka	Greg Cutler	Deb Hallett	Brian Knight
Ken Bina	Tina Cutler	Jim Hand	Brian Knight
Kim Bina	Matthew Daskal	Frank & Julie Hanes	Kim Kowanko
Fran Bisselle	Neil Davidoff	Eric Hangen	Greg Kristiansen
Larry Bittinger	Steven Dear	Kraig Hannum	Lee Krohn
Maria Bittinger	Beth Diamond	Robert Hartwell	Michele Kropp
Betsy Bleakie	Linda Benway and Diane Pouliot	Ben Hauben	Lisa Laberge
Mike Bobel	Fred Dieffenbad	Tricia Hayes	William Laberge
Christine Bongartz	Kathe Dillmann	Erynn Hazlett	Larry Landis
Seth Bongartz	Jim Doherty	Martha Heilemann	Robin Lane
Georgianne Bonifanti	Margaret Donovan	Rich Heilemann	Dana LaRose and Ron Dundon
Derek Boothby	Bill Drunsic	Will Helmetag	Carol Lattuga
Greg Boshart	Linda Drunsic	Margaret Hemnes	Rev. Claire Laughlin North
Tom Bourgeois	Stephen Drunsic	Amy Herrmann	Dianna Leazer
Chris Bowlen	Jamie Dufour	Wayne Herrmann	Karen Lee
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Juliette Britton	Patricia Dupree	Richard Hom	Amber Leslie
John Broderick	James Dykstra	Anne Hooser	Molly Leuschel
Lesley Brodie	Ellen Ecker Ogden	Arne Houser	Albert Levis
Roger Bruno	David Edry	Webber Hudson	Bonnie Levis
Joan Burns	Anharad Edson	Justin Hueckel	Oliver Levis
Nora Burns		Stevie Hunter	Alec Lewis
Steve Burzon			

Marilyn Lewis	Tammy Mosher	Daniel Scarnecchia	Heidi Underwood
Rose Lewis	Marion Mueller	Steven Schlusell	Fran Van Siclan
Linda Limoges	Bradley Myerson	Greg Sciesika	Gary Van Siclen
Micki Lisman	Pam Nichols	Christine Scott	Dave Vande Water
Stan Lisman	Rick Nichols	Paul Scott	Jay Venable
Lani Lovisa	Steven Nichols	Joyce Scribner	Robin and Amy Verner
Andrea Luchini	Rev. Claire North	Andy Shaw	Fern Wagner
Doug Lyman	Rabbi David Novak	William C. Shouldice IV	Joe Wagner
Lauri Lyman	Sharon O'Connor	Shari Siegel	Erick Walker
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Mariah Macfarlane	John O'Keefe	Steven Sinding	Beth Wallace
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Berta Maginniss	Stella On	Joy Slusarek	Andrew Weill
Richard Malley	Eliot Orton	Dick Smith	Jennifer Weinstein
Ron Mancini	Gina Owens	Lisa Souls	Beth Whitaker
Alexa Manning	Eric and Kate Pace	Piotr Sowulewski	Jane Whitney
Mike Manning	Gloria Palmer	James Sparkman	Helen Whyte
Susan Marmer	Kenneth Palmer	Linda Spence	Ron Wilcox
Sandra Marsh-Koffman	Jason Pergament	Robert Stannard	Marge Willbur
Kathy Martin	Stanley Peterson	Shalom Stephens	George Williams
Karen Mayberry	Aliza Pickering	Catherine Stewart	Jeff Williams
Matt Mayberry	Ann Pierce	Ruth Stewart	Kathy Williams
Kate McClafferty	Sue Pierce	Shane Sweet	Marc Williams
Emmy and Joe McCusker	Anne Pince	Amy Swinarton	Pamela Williams
John McNerney	Joan Pine	Theo Talcott	Amy Wilson
Andrew McKeever	Stacy Pobatschnig	Mark Tashjian	Jackie Wilson
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Sarah Merrill	Andy Reed		
Steve Metcalfe	Tammie Reilly		
Christine Miles	Tammie Reilly		
Joe Miles	Michael Reyes		
Mary Miller Lee	Wilbur Rice		
Russell Mills	Jim Robinson		
Sally Mole	Muriel Roeth		
Paul Molinelli	Jan Rogers		
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Pauline Moore	Susan Romano		
Scott Morell	David Rose		
Kristen Morey	Suzanne Rose		
Barbara Morrow	Ariel Rudiakov		
Christopher Morrow	Liz Ruffa		
Ed Morrow	Robin Ryan		

*Brian Keefe opened the April 11th Community Meeting
with this poem by Al Moulton, 1959:*

WHO IS THEY?

**Who is they? Why they is we!
We are the ones that can build our town,
Or we are the ones that can let it down.
We are the ones who can make it grow,
Or we are the ones who can let it go.
It is up to us if our town is going to boom,
Or we can sit back and seal its doom.
WHO IS THEY? Well I'll tell you,
We is they and they is you!**

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