

# Plainfield Forward Summary

## Purpose and Context

The Town of Plainfield invited the Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) to facilitate a process to bring together the full diversity of Plainfield residents, organizations, business owners and partners in an open, inclusive dialogue to build connections, and identify actions for recovery and future efforts. The process took place from July through November, 2025.

Plainfield has experienced significant impacts from flooding in July 2023 and July 2024, affecting homes, roads, other infrastructure, and the village center. In response, residents contributed extensive volunteer time to emergency response, recovery efforts, and long-term planning. The floods exacerbated ongoing challenges related to housing availability, affordability, and town capacity. Plainfield Forward provided a facilitated process for residents to come together, share perspectives, and identify priorities and actions for the future.

The goal of the process was not to make decisions for the town, but to create space for broad participation, identify shared priorities, connect local efforts with regional and state resources, and prioritize and build on those local efforts already underway. This executive summary highlights how the process worked and the key outcomes that emerged.



**For the full report hard copies are available at the Town office or library or a digital copy at: <https://www.vtrural.org/plainfield-forward-report-and-action-plan-december-2025/>**

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## The Plainfield Forward Process

Plainfield Forward followed a three-step, publicly accessible process designed to encourage participation from a wide range of residents, organizations, and stakeholders. Outreach included flyers, lawn signs, emails, social media, personal invitations, as well as translated materials to reach Spanish-speaking residents. Throughout the process, accessibility considerations were incorporated as well as free childcare, transportation and food to reduce barriers to participation.

### **Planning and Preparation (June 2025)**

A local planning committee of 16 residents and town representatives met with VCRD to

design the process. This group helped name the initiative, shape meeting formats, identify discussion topics, and guide outreach efforts. Their work ensured that the process reflected local priorities and invited participation across the community.

### **Step 1: Community Kick-Off and Forums (July 28, 2025)**

More than 100 residents attended the opening Plainfield Forward event at The Creative Campus at Goddard. The forum was live streamed by ORCA media and a separate forum was held on Zoom. Participants shared perspectives on Plainfield’s strengths, challenges, and hopes for the future. Input was gathered through facilitated discussions, small-group conversations, and written feedback. State, regional, and nonprofit partners attended primarily to listen to the community.

### **Step 2: Community Prioritization (September 17, 2025)**

Based on input from the first meeting and follow-up surveys, VCRD synthesized ideas into 24 broad action areas. Over 80 residents then reviewed, discussed, and prioritized these ideas during a second public meeting. Through discussion and a dot-voting exercise, participants identified ten priority action areas, with two emerging as top priorities. Voting on priorities was also available virtually.



### **Step 3: Resource and Action Planning (October 16, 2025)**

At the final meeting, more than 50 residents worked in groups focused on the two top priorities: Create a Housing Strategy and Build a Resilience Hub. With support from facilitators and a visiting resource team, participants developed initial action steps, identified existing efforts to build on, and discussed potential resources and partnerships. From this point forward, the two groups will be meeting independently as community-led groups.

Across meetings and surveys, residents expressed a shared vision for Plainfield’s future. These visions provided the foundation for identifying priorities and guiding action planning. The list of visions for Plainfield’s future can be found in the full report.

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## **Key Outcomes and Priority Initiatives**

### **Top Two Community Priorities**

Through the prioritization process, residents identified two areas where coordinated effort was most urgently needed:

- 1. Create a Housing Strategy**
- 2. Create a Resilience Hub**

These priorities reflect both immediate post-flood needs and longer-term concerns about housing affordability, disaster preparedness, and community connection.

## Create a Housing Strategy

Residents identified housing as a critical issue affecting recovery, affordability, and the town's ability to retain and attract people of all ages. While several housing-related efforts are already underway in Plainfield, participants noted the absence of an overall housing strategy to coordinate these activities.



Prioritized work on the Housing Strategy include:

- Agreement to form and support a town-wide Housing Advisory Committee.
- Assess and gather past housing work; inventory housing stock, vacant and flood-damaged properties; and identify future housing needs with public input.
- Commitment to coordinating more closely among the Selectboard, Planning Commission, The Creative Campus at Goddard, and housing partners.

Initial action steps focus on organizing, gathering information, setting clear goals, and engaging the public.

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## Create a Resilience Hub



The Resilience Hub concept emerged as both a physical and organizational approach to strengthening Plainfield's ability to respond to emergencies while also supporting everyday community needs. Rather than centering on a single building, participants defined the Resilience Hub as a network of people, organizations, spaces, and systems. The goal is to better connect existing resources and fill gaps in communication, coordination, and access.

Prioritized work on the Resilience Hub includes:

- Formation of a core organizing team to coordinate next steps.
- Mapping existing community assets, services, and spaces.
- Exploring fiscal sponsorship and funding options.
- Developing shared values, roles, and operating norms.
- Improving communication systems and access to information.

The intended outcome is a flexible, community-led structure that strengthens Plainfield's social infrastructure, reduces strain on volunteers during crises, and increases overall resilience.

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## Additional Prioritized Action Areas

In addition to the top two priorities, residents identified eight other important areas for future work:

- Improve Accessibility
- Advance Brook Road Engagement
- Increase Town Staffing and Capacity
- Strengthen The Creative Campus and Town Connection
- Support Building Rehabilitation
- Address Route 2 Intersection
- Increase Bike and Pedestrian Safety
- Expand Housing Opportunities



These areas remain part of the Plainfield Forward report with initial action plans and resources outlined and may be advanced as capacity and resources allow.

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## Moving Forward

Plainfield Forward is a culmination of discussion that included young and old as well as new and longtime residents. While VCRD will continue to provide technical assistance and connections to resources as requested, the leadership and decision making comes from the community themselves.

Other towns in the Resilient Communities program have used the knowledge gained from these processes as a way to build upon existing progress as well as working to continue to define what is most important to their future.

Ways to stay informed and engaged with next steps:

**Housing:** For updates on the Plainfield Housing Advisory Committee visit: [plainfieldvt.gov/housing-advisory-committee](https://plainfieldvt.gov/housing-advisory-committee) or contact Dan Fingas at [selectboard5@plainfieldvt.gov](mailto:selectboard5@plainfieldvt.gov)

**Resilience Hub:** If you are interested in learning more and being a part of this effort, please fill out the Plainfield Resilience Hub Community Network (<https://forms.gle/EWf7rBFmo9FGkzPK7>). Or you can contact Olivia Turner ([olturner48@gmail.com](mailto:olturner48@gmail.com)) or Rae Carter ([raecarterempowr@gmail.com](mailto:raecarterempowr@gmail.com)) with questions or thoughts. More information on the next steps for this group can be found at: <https://bit.ly/plainfieldforward>