

# Brandon: A Hub and Our Home

Report and Action Plan | July 2026



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

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# Vision for Brandon's Future

*Compiled from vision statements shared during Community Visit meetings and supported by the majority of participants at the Resource Meeting and an online survey. The statements represent some of the broad hopes that the majority of responding residents have for the long term good of the Brandon community.*

## Community members envision a future Brandon where:

- ❖ everyone feels a sense of belonging and has what they need to live a good life.
- ❖ people treat one another as friends and neighbors, regardless of political beliefs.
- ❖ there are parks, green spaces, and walking paths throughout town.
- ❖ the community invests in strong infrastructure and local organizations.
- ❖ there is music and spaces where people come together to share skills, music, participate, and gather.
- ❖ young people can find good jobs, buy homes, and choose to live here.
- ❖ traffic flows safely and smoothly.
- ❖ schools are strong and prepare students for successful lives.
- ❖ no one goes hungry and everyone has access to clean clothing and basic needs.
- ❖ the population is stable and includes many young families.
- ❖ safe, well-maintained walking and biking paths connect neighborhoods and Forest Dale.
- ❖ everyone can access safe and healthy housing, including homes that have been remediated if needed, and where students are educated about that.
- ❖ healthy communication is a community value.
- ❖ people feel connected to the land.
- ❖ Brandon is a leader in flood resilience and disaster preparedness.
- ❖ young people are engaged in community life and participate in events and meetings.
- ❖ the town is clean, free of litter, and there is a shared sense of pride among people who live here.
- ❖ Brandon is known for having the best water in the state.
- ❖ residents are connected to work opportunities, a train station, and affordable housing.
- ❖ the community is welcoming, inclusive, and diverse.
- ❖ Brandon is known as a place where people want to move, raise families, send their kids to school, and build their lives.
- ❖ there is a strong sense of community and people of all ages are encouraged to shape the future they want for Brandon.
- ❖ young people learn that they are valued members of the community and that everyone contributes.
- ❖ people have clear, accessible ways to stay informed, connect with one another, and find services and support.



# I. Introduction

Brandon is a place defined by character: close-knit neighborhoods, the curve of Route 7, the historic Forest Dale village, and the steady presence of the Neshobe River. As residents gathered throughout the Community Visit process, they spoke with pride about what makes Brandon special including strong schools, a vibrant downtown, natural areas, community organizations, neighbors who show up for one another, and a culture of volunteerism that runs deep. Many described Brandon as a “purple” town, a community where people with different ideological perspectives live side by side and work together. The Planning Group’s inclusion of “Beyond Downtown” as a forum topic reflected this geographic and civic diversity.

Across meetings, community members lifted up Brandon’s incredible assets such as its natural beauty, engaged youth, supportive neighbors, and thriving businesses. They also acknowledged challenges, from housing pressures to transportation needs to questions about long-term economic resilience. As priorities were shaped, residents listened closely to one another, working to understand needs across generations and neighborhoods. The process revealed a community ready to think boldly and collaboratively about its future.

Brandon has done this before. In 1999, hundreds of residents participated in a VCRD Community Visit and set priorities that helped shape the next two decades. As the 2026 Visit approached, many felt that Brandon was ready for a new era of involvement—one defined by fresh energy, shared purpose, and a commitment to building on past successes.

VCRD staff and Visiting Team members felt that energy immediately. They remarked on the pride people have in their town and the leadership that emerges from both formal roles and everyday actions. It is clear that Brandon has the people power, creativity, and determination to move forward together.

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Many action ideas were identified throughout this process, and can be found in the “Opportunities” section of this report, along with notes taken at the initial forums, including the two youth forums.

After thoughtful deliberation, and two rounds of voting, Brandon residents voted to form task forces around three priorities:

- **Open a Laundromat in Brandon**
- **Expand Trails and Safe Walking and Biking Routes Across Town**
- **Expand and Improve Housing**

The Vermont Council on Rural Development helps people build prosperous and resilient communities through democratic engagement, mobilizing resources, and collective action. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Brandon as it moves forward and to provide follow-up help to the Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Brandon projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Please call on us, and on Visiting Resource Team members (listed with contact information in the back of this report), when we can be of help.

\*\*\*\*\*

There are many people to thank for making the Brandon Community Visit possible.

We would like to thank the Brandon Selectboard, who invited this process, and provided the funding for the community dinner at the first meeting and for the town-wide mailing about the process.

We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of Planning Committee members who identified forum topics for discussion, developed the invitation process, and helped with outreach: Jesse Bilodeau, Patrick

Binder, Jordan Bresette, Brent Buehler, Bernie Carr, Ray Counter, Jeremy Disorda, Vicki Disorda, Erynn Doaner, Andy Doaner, Jill Doody, Roger Foster, Devon Fuller, Susan Gage, Jeff Haylon, Seth Hopkins, Ethan Kelleher, Ray Marcoux, Sandy Mayo, Bill Moore, Laura Peterson, Karen Rhodes, Barbara Scribner, Scott Scribner, Fiona Slattery, Patrick Snow, Aaron Tucker, and Ben Wimette.

Outreach is an essential component of a successful Community Visit, and many people helped make that happen. Thank you to Barbara Scribner for distributing flyers for the meetings, to Bill Moore and Aaron Tucker for helping hang banners in town, and to Janet Mondlak for helping with Front Porch Forum posts. Thank you to George Savela, Kay Simpkins, and Bill Moore for helping with the town-wide mailing. Thank you as well to the many other community leaders and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the event and make sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

We appreciate those who made the meetings at the multiple locations possible. For the kickoff event at Otter Valley, we appreciated the support of Principal Michael Ruppel, Abby Brodowski, Steven Keith, Jeffrey Hull, Jim Yager and the custodial staff. Thank you to Sue Gauge and volunteer crew that handled setup and cleanup for the dinner, and Erynn Doaner and the Mae's Place team for catering the dinner. Thank you to Kenny Cifone and Doug Ross for the music during the dinner. We appreciate The Bus providing free transportation to the event. We appreciate Principal Ruppel, Stephanie Hull, and Zachary Poynter for helping hold youth forums with students at Otter Valley.

For the second meeting at Town Hall, thank you to Robin Douglas for help in the use of Town Hall. We appreciated Morningside Bakery working with us to provide pizza for this community event- including delivery! Thank you to PEG-TV for their attendance, allowing the meeting to be fully hybrid.

For the third meeting, thank you to the staff at Neshobe School, especially to Shauna Lee and Jean Therrien helping with the use of their space.

We were able to offer childcare at all three of the meetings with the support of Sigourney Browdowski, Marion LaPorte, Emmy Rogers, and Sydney Rogers. Thank you to Abby Browdowski for her coordination of the childcare providers.

We appreciate the help of the UVM Office of Engagement and UVM Center for Rural Studies for producing a briefing profile of data points about Brandon for the VCRD Community Visit Team.

Thank you to Town Manager Seth Hopkins and Assistant Town Manager Bill Moore, who were important resources throughout the process.

Thanks must also go to the funders of VCRD's Community Visit Program who made this process possible: Heritage Family Credit Union, Northern Border Regional Commission, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Vermont Community Foundation, National Life Foundation, The Windham Foundation, and VCRD supporters and donors.

VCRD calls in support from state, federal and non-profit leaders to participate in the Community Visit Program. We are proud of the partners we get to work with, and our gratitude goes to the Visiting and Resource Team members that supported Brandon's first and last meetings. The full list of leaders, agencies, and organizations that offered their expertise is at the back of this report.

Getting things done is all about leadership and our deepest thanks go to those who step up to serve as chairs, coordinators and members of the local Task Forces. Their leadership will guide the work, keep momentum strong, and be appreciated by everyone who has participated so far and all who will continue the work ahead.

Brandon is well positioned to move their priorities forward. We are excited to support and celebrate the energy from these new initiatives and look forward to seeing the good things to come in Brandon!

## II. The Brandon: A Hub and Our Home Community Visit Process

VCRD's Community Visit program is a way for towns to engage and bring together their residents, set common goals and directions in a neutral and facilitated structure, and access resources that will help them take action on those goals. **Here is a snapshot of the 5-month process:**



### Planning Meeting: March 31, 2026

On March 31, 2026, 28 local community members met to plan for the launch of the Brandon Community Visit process. This group came up with a name for the process – Brandon: A Hub and Our Home – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics and an invitation process. Through calls, emails, flyers, banners, and lawn signs, this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Committee included: Jesse Bilodeau, Patrick Binder, Jordan Bresette, Brent Buehler, Bernie Carr, Ray Counter, Jeremy Disorda, Vicki Disorda, Erynn Doaner, Andy Doaner, Jill Doody, Roger Foster, Devon Fuller, Susan Gage, Jeff Haylon, Seth Hopkins, Ethan Kelleher, Ray Marcoux, Sandy Mayo, Bill Moore, Laura Peterson, Karen Rhodes, Barbara Scribner, Scott Scribner, Fiona Slattery, Patrick Snow, Aaron Tucker, and Ben Wimette.

### Step 1 ~ Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: April 30, 2026

Brandon: A Hub and Our Home kicked off with brainstorming forums held at Otter Valley Union Middle and High School. Over 120 participants shared assets, challenges, and ideas for action in forum topics chosen by the planning committee and attended the free community dinner. Forum topics included: Community Resources; Recreation and Community Engagement; Development, Housing, and Jobs; Beyond Downtown; Education; Infrastructure and Public Safety. Eleven visiting team members participated, learning more about Brandon and providing reflections to the community.

Visiting Team members included: Andy Barker, *Program Officer*, Vermont Community Foundation; Katie Buckley, *Director of Municipal Operations Support*, Vermont League of Cities & Towns; Meg Campbell, *Vice President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Sarah Furman, *Executive Director*, Chamber and Economic Development of the Rutland Region; Rowan Hawthorne, *Policy & Legislative Affairs Director*, VT Department of Labor; Kevin Lambert, *Director of Strategy*, VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development; Ken Linge, *Senior Loan Officer*, VT Bond Bank; Christopher Mattrick, *District Ranger*, Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forest; Jessica Nordhaus, *State Director*, Office of Congresswoman Balint; Claire Polfus, *Recreation Program Manager*, VT Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation; and Adam Sancic, *Field Director*, VT Agency of Human Services.

VCRD staff included: Lauren Brady, *Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator*; Margaret Gibson, *Operations Director*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Director*; Jessica Savage, *Director of Programs & Strategic Initiatives*; and Denise Smith, *Executive Director*.

## Step 2 ~ Community Meeting: May 27, 2026

After the kick-off, VCRD staff distilled the ideas brainstormed by the community in April into 20 key areas of action. On May 27, over 100 community members came together in the Town Hall and on Zoom to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After dialogue and a dot-voting exercise, the group prioritized three action ideas as key priorities: 1) **Open and Laundromat**, 2) **Expand Trails and Safe Walking and Biking Routes**, and 3) **Expand and Improve Housing**. Participants then signed up for task forces to move these priorities forward.

VCRD staff included: Margaret Gibson, *Operations Director*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Director*; Nick Parker, *Community Programs Associate*; Jessica Savage, *Director of Programs & Strategic Initiatives*; and Denise Smith, *Executive Director*.

## Step 3 ~ Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: June 25, 2026

On June 25, over 45 community members along with facilitators and resource team members enjoyed pizza from Morningside Bakery and Brandon House of Pizza, and then worked together to develop action plans, identify resources, and form task force groups that will work in the months ahead to implement the priorities. From here forward, all Brandon: A Hub and Our Home action is focused at the local task force level.

Resource Team members included: Emma Allen, *Field Manager*, Let's Build Homes; Andrew Christiansen, *Co-Owner / Co-Founder*, King Street Laundry / Vermont Community Wash & Learn; Karen Duguay, *Downtown Coalition Coordinator*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Marcie Gallagher, *Complete Streets Specialist*, Local Motion; Jessica Hyman, *Education & Special Projects Manager*, CVOEO Housing Advocacy Programs; Lyle Jepson, *Commissioner*, VT Dept of Economic Development; Christopher Mattrick, *District Ranger*, Green Mtn & Finger Lakes National Forests; Devon Neary, *Executive Director*, Rutland Regional Planning Commission; Sarah Pelkey, *Economic Development Director*, Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region; Haley Pero, *Program Officer*, Vermont Community Foundation; Claire Polfus, *Recreation Program Manager*, VT Dept of Forests Parks & Recreation; and Benton Winrich, *Grants Management Specialist*, VT Dept of Housing & Community Development.

VCRD staff included: Lauren Brady, *Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator*, Laura Cavin Bailey, *Climate Economy Director* and Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Director*.



*The step 2 community meeting on May 27 was a hybrid session where people in the room and online participated in real time to champion and vote for their top priorities.*

### III. Brandon: A Hub and Our Home Priorities

Determined by Brandon residents at the Brandon: A Hub and Our Home Community Meeting on  
May 27, 2026

*Through thoughtful conversation about the future of their community, Brandon community members whittled down a list of 22 action ideas to these three priorities that offer opportunities to build on existing resources and strengthen the community. Residents then signed up for Task Forces to move them forward.*

#### **Brandon residents selected these priorities for future action:**

##### **► Open a Laundromat in Brandon**

A group could form to support the operation of a laundromat in Brandon. The group could talk with property owners, interview the previous owners of the laundromat, and explore community-supported or other operating models to bring this business to town.

##### **► Expand Trails and Safe Walking and Biking Routes Across Town**

Many residents point to challenges for those walking and biking in town, especially between downtown and Estabrook, Forest Dale, and the schools. A group could form to identify and expand safe routes for walking, biking, and scootering. They could work to connect separate networks of trails and improve usage of existing trails and routes with signage and kiosks. The group could extend and improve trails and sidewalks and improve the safety of road crossings. They could offer programming on bike safety, outdoor education, a free equipment library, and other resources. The group could also explore creating a Riverwalk.

##### **► Expand and Improve Housing**

A task force could form to improve housing availability and affordability in Brandon. This group could explore senior care housing, workforce housing, and housing for those experiencing homelessness. The group could consider creating a community housing trust, partnering with Habitat for Humanity, supporting those interested in creating accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and exploring new housing materials and innovations, such as modular housing. The group could also explore health and safety issues in existing housing and identify zoning and code improvements that could address those challenges.



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## **Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:**

*Along with the chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action that Brandon community members shared through community and student forums, and an online and print survey. Though these opportunities weren't chosen as priority projects through this process, community members may find the list useful as they look to expand on current projects or take on new ones.*

### **Improve Community Communications**

A group could work to improve community communications and broaden awareness of local events, resources, and services. The group could promote and maintain community bulletin boards, continue improving the online community calendar, build support for the online newspaper, and advertise community events more broadly. They could also develop simple guidance on where to find information for those who are new to the community.

### **Improve Transportation Options**

A group could work to improve transportation options within and beyond Brandon. Ideas include creating a phone tree for ridesharing or another ride request system, exploring the use of the town's electric vans, connecting to Rutland and other towns with bus and transit, improving bus shelters, expanding trails and paths in the community, bringing a train stop to Brandon, and more.

### **Enhance Recreation Facilities**

Community members appreciate Brandon's many recreational offerings, while also acknowledging the limitations of the facilities in town. Ideas shared by the community include a pool, skate park, bowling alley, roller skating rink, and improved playground and court options. A group could form to review current recreation facilities, identify what's missing, consider potential locations for new facilities or expansions, and create a list of the most viable ideas to pursue.

### **Expand Support for Volunteers**

A task force could work to strengthen volunteerism by developing resources for both current and prospective community volunteers. The group could share information and training, pair new volunteers with mentors on boards and committees, and offer workshops on practical tools – such as navigating conflict in public and mental health first aid.

### **Boost Local Businesses**

A group could form to support existing businesses in Brandon and to bring additional businesses to the community. Potential actions include exploring a small business incubator, coordinating pop-up stores, developing artist residencies, piloting a CSA-style subscription program to support local stores, and recruiting businesses that fill essential service gaps.

### **Increase Food Options and Access**

A task force could form to expand free and paid meal options in town. The group could support existing food access resources like the food shelf, expand community meals and potlucks, and create community garden sites. Residents also expressed interest in more restaurant options, and more local and global food options.

### **Create Community Gathering Spaces**

Community members expressed interest in developing or identifying spaces for the community to come together. A task force could map existing gathering spaces, explore the kinds of programming the community is interested in, and assess spaces – both new and existing – that could meet those needs. Ideas shared include spaces for intergenerational connection, artist collaboration, community classes, and other activities that bring people together across ages and interests.

### **Increase Community Skill Sharing and Learning**

A group could expand learning opportunities for all ages by strengthening mentorship, skill-sharing, and intergenerational connections. The group could explore models such as a community skill-share network, a “Community University” with resident-led workshops, and other ways for neighbors to teach, learn, and support one another.

### **Increase Community Safety**

Community members expressed a desire for strong, reliable public safety services and noted the importance of sustaining the local ambulance service, maintaining a visible and trusted community police presence, and improving recruitment and retention for essential public safety roles. A task force could explore ways to bolster and increase support for these services and promote community awareness of available programs. The group could also look at long term strategies to ensure Brandon has the staffing, equipment, and support systems needed to keep residents safe and prepared.

### **Create a Teen Centered Space**

A task force could partner with Brandon’s youth to identify a welcoming, safe, and centrally located space designed around their needs and interests. Programming ideas include open gym nights, music events, and makerspace hours. The group could also explore transportation solutions that help teens access after school and weekend activities.

### **Improve Road Safety and Parking**

A group could work to improve road safety and parking. Ideas to explore include traffic calming, short term parking options, and safety improvements for dangerous intersections.

### **Promote Local Energy Efficiency and Production**

Community members expressed interest in lowering energy costs, improving home efficiency, and expanding access to renewable energy. A task force could work with partners such as SolarFest, Green Mountain Power, Efficiency Vermont, and local landowners to explore a range of community scale energy efficiency and production solutions.

### **Boost Tourism and Visitation**

Residents see opportunities to strengthen Brandon’s tourism identity through trails, arts, food, and natural assets. A task force could form to develop a Brandon tourism plan that promotes Brandon as a hub for outdoor recreation, arts and culture, and local food. The group could support efforts to attract remote workers and new residents, build on existing work to bring conferences and events to Brandon, and strengthen marketing that highlights Brandon’s unique character and historic assets. The group could also explore creative lodging options – such as a “Town Airbnb” or small hostel – to welcome visitors and expand overnight stays.

### **Increase Support Between Neighbors**

A task force could form to strengthen the informal networks that help residents look out for one another. This group could map existing services and informal supports, identify gaps, and coordinate a simple referral system so neighbors know where to turn for help. By partnering with the library, senior center, food shelf, churches, and other local groups, the team could connect residents to trusted resources and make information easier to find. The group could also explore neighbor to neighbor models – such as a community resource liaison, mutual aid network, time banking, or phone trees – to build everyday support systems.

### **Expand School-Community Connection and Support**

A group could work to advance community and school connections. The group could explore ways to create volunteer opportunities for community members, expand shared spaces and programs for kids and families, and strengthen everyday connections between the school and community. The group could focus on improving support for the schools by helping the school share events, opportunities, and decision-making more widely, and encouraging community partners, such as emergency services, local organizations, and civic groups to collaborate more closely with the schools. The group could also work to expand childcare access in Brandon.

### **Maintain and Plan for Community Infrastructure**

Community members noted that key community assets – municipal buildings, water and sewer systems, schools, and other facilities – will need significant maintenance or upgrades now or in the future. A group could help plan for long-term, affordable stewardship of this infrastructure by researching capital planning options, funding strategies, and policies that support proactive upkeep. The group could also boost public understanding through community engagement and by sharing clear information about budgets, needs, and long-term planning.

Participants at the May 27 Community Meeting added two additional action ideas:

- **Increase Workforce Education and Development**
- **Create Health Education Curriculum Around Indoor Air Quality**



## IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, June 25, 2026

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

### ► Open a Laundromat in Brandon

A group could form to support the operation of a laundromat in Brandon. The group could talk with property owners, interview the previous owners of the laundromat, and explore community-supported or other operating models to bring this business to town.

Community Chair **TBD**

Facilitator **Alyssa Johnson**, *Community Visit Program Director*, VT Council on Rural Development

Resource Team Members **Andrew Christiansen**, *Co-Owner*, King Street Laundry & *Co-Founder*, Vermont Community Wash & Learn (<https://72kingstreetlaundry.com>).  
**Karen Duguay**, *Downtown Coalition Coordinator*, Preservation Trust of Vermont  
**Lyle Jepson**, *Commissioner*, Vermont Department of Economic Development  
**Haley Pero**, *Program Officer*, Vermont Community Foundation

Community Participants and Task Force Sign-ups Jan Coolidge, Tim Crossman, Jeff Dardozzi, Julie Demaree, Stanley Dill, Genevieve Duchesneau, David Fontaine, Laura King, Lyndon Martin, Kathy Mathis, Matthew Orchard, David Rose, Tricia Welch, and Jeff Weston

### Current status and overview of the issue today

- There was previously a laundromat in Brandon that closed.
- Dave's store looked at putting one in, but the sewer wouldn't support it.
- Brandon has expensive water and sewer rates.
- There is a potential investor looking to buy a property for a laundromat, and currently working on financing.
- Examples of successful laundromat models in other areas:
- Example from Burlington, as shared by Andrew
  - A combination of King St Laundromat and VT Community Wash and Learn
  - Supportive community spaces
  - Open 13 hours a day, with 14 washers and 10 dryers
  - Not a staffed facility, but do have a security system/intercom
  - Make sure it could be coin operated for equal access
    - Use a Pay Range app
- Suds and dud in Burlington. There have been combinations with tanning, UHaul, Salon, being close to a grocery store can be really beneficial for a laundromat business.
- Stafford General Store is a multi-use community space owned by a community trust.
- Wash/dry/fold is one of the fastest growing segments post-pandemic.

## Priority Action Steps

1. Contact previous owners for detailed information about the prior operation and why it ceased to exist. The number of turns is the industry metric for usage. Also research the water/server rate info.
2. Contact churches, schools, towns, Brandon training school properties and other locations that might be involved or interested in providing laundry services.
3. Use info from first two steps and research on surrounding area for a market study. SCORE could potentially help with this.
4. Based on the information from the research and market study, consider if a non-profit, for-profit or combination of operating models makes the most sense.
5. Consider community communication about the work and conclusions so far.

## Other Potential Action Ideas

- Synergy with other community uses could be really valuable for a laundromat. When it is farther way, it can be more difficult to access. What about a walking trail at the laundromat, or a playground
- Consider the health center or a senior center as a potential partner.
- Would it be possible to have a network of machines in town, rather than one consolidated location.

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*These recommendations for other potential actions and resources to consider were shared by Visiting Resource Team members representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, and encompass their experience, past success and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.*

## Action Step Recommendations

- Energy and utility costs are among the largest ongoing expenses for laundromats. Investments in energy-efficient equipment, building systems, and renewable energy can reduce operating costs and improve long-term financial sustainability. Energy improvements may also make the facility more resilient and attractive as a community asset. See specific potential funding sources below.
- Laundromats are highly water-dependent businesses. Reducing water consumption, improving wastewater management, or modernizing utility infrastructure can lower operating expenses while supporting sustainability goals.
- Major building renovations may improve safety, accessibility, energy performance, customer experience, and the overall appearance of the downtown area. Renovation funding could help transform the laundromat into a long-term community asset while supporting economic development and revitalization goals.
- The laundromat could serve as more than a laundry facility by functioning as a community gathering space, cultural venue, or location for local art exhibitions and events. Integrating arts and community programming can strengthen downtown vitality, increase public engagement, and create a more welcoming and vibrant community space. Community partnerships can provide technical assistance, planning support, community engagement expertise, and access to additional funding sources.

## Technical Assistance / Peer Connection Recommendations

- The following organizations offer advising, technical assistance, workshops, and other resources for prospective business owners:
  - Vermont Small Business Development Center: <https://www.vtsbdc.org/>
  - SCORE: <https://www.score.org/vt/>
  - Center for Women and Enterprise: <https://cweonline.org/our-centers/cwe-vermont>

- Preservation Trust of Vermont is a leader in the Community Supported Enterprise model. Learn more at <https://ptvermont.org/our-work/cse/> and contact Resource Team member Karen Dugay at [karen@ptvermont.org](mailto:karen@ptvermont.org).
- The Strafford Community Trust is an example of a general store operating using the Community Supported Enterprise model. Learn more at <https://www.straffordcommunitytrust.org/> and contact [info@straffordcommunitytrust.org](mailto:info@straffordcommunitytrust.org).

## Resources and Potential Funding Sources

- Efficiency Vermont offers energy assessments for businesses, financing, rebates, and other programs. Learn more at <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/services>.
- Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) helps Vermont businesses finance renewable energy and energy efficiency projects up to \$6 million. Funds must be used for projects directly related to renewable energy generation, energy efficiency improvements, or energy technology. Learn more at <https://www.veda.org/financing-options/vermont-commercial-financing/commercial-energy-loan-program/>.
- USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) provides loan financing for renewable energy systems or energy efficiency improvements. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency-improvement-guaranteed-loans>.
- The Building Communities Grants provide competitive grants for capital costs associated with major maintenance, renovation, or planning related to development of expected to create or retain job opportunities. Requires application from regional economic development organization. Learn more at <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants> and contact Visiting Team members Sarah Pelkey at [sarah@rutlandeconomy.com](mailto:sarah@rutlandeconomy.com).
- Downtown and Village Center Tax Credits are Federal and state tax credits help stimulate investment and create jobs. Projects must be in designated downtown or village centers and improve building safety, attract new business, or create jobs. Funding is also available for flood mitigation and exterior façade improvements. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits>.
- The Northern Border Regional Commission Catalyst Program Supports a broad range of initiatives focused on expanding infrastructure, revitalizing communities, and promoting economic development: <https://www.nbrc.gov/>.
- Town of Brandon has a Loan Fund. The application is available at: <https://www.brandonvermont.gov/DocumentCenter/View/248/Revolving-Loan-Fund-PDF>.
- Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region has a Loan Fund. Learn more at <https://rutlandvermont.com/lending/>.
- The Vermont Community Loan Fund offers financing with built-in business advising. Learn more at <https://www.investinvermont.org/business-resource-center>
- Vermont Arts Council Grants Animating Infrastructure Grants - Grants support community projects that integrate public art into community infrastructure, including buildings. Learn more at <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/find-a-grant/organizations/animating-infrastructure/> and contact Michele Bailey at [m Bailey@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:m Bailey@vermontartscouncil.org) or 802-402-4614.
- Arts Project Grants - Grants support community-based projects that provide equal and abundant access to the arts. <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/find-a-grant/organizations/arts-project/> and contact Michele Bailey at [m Bailey@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:m Bailey@vermontartscouncil.org) or 802-402-4614.
- Vermont Community Foundation has a variety of grant programs that may be relevant. Contact Resource Team member Haley Pero at [hpero@vermontcf.org](mailto:hpero@vermontcf.org) for information about:
  - Spark Grant program: <https://vermontcf.org/funds/spark/>.
  - Walter Cerf Community Fund: <https://vermontcf.org/funds/the-walter-cerf-community-fund/>.
  - Regional and Local Initiatives (RALI) grant: <https://vermontcf.org/funds/regional-and-local-impact/>.

- Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region is another important partner who can help the group. Learn more at <https://rutlandvermont.com/> and contact Resource Team member Sarah Pelkey at [sarah@rutlandeconomy.com](mailto:sarah@rutlandeconomy.com).
- USDA Rural Development (USDA-RD) – Rural Business Development Grants may be applicable for a community trust or nonprofit business ownership: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants-8#>.
- USDA Rural Development – Community Facilities grants and loan program may be relevant for capital improvements: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program-14>.
- VT Community Development Program Planning and implementation grants could be relevant if serving seniors, renters, etc.: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>.
- The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has a Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) may be able to help pay for grant writers once you've identified funding sources. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at [mariah@vhcb.org](mailto:mariah@vhcb.org) or 802-828-1098.
- VCRD is happy to write letters of support for grant applications. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org) or 802-222-6896.
- VT League of Cities and Towns and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission both have searchable funding directories of funding opportunities organized by topic and project type by topic. See <https://www.vlct.org/resource/open-funding-opportunities> and <https://www.ccrpcvt.org/funding-opportunities/>.



## Expand Trails and Safe Walking and Biking Routes Across Town

Many residents point to challenges for those walking and biking in town, especially between downtown and Estabrook, Forest Dale, and the schools. A group could form to identify and expand safe routes for walking, biking, and scootering. They could work to connect separate networks of trails and improve usage of existing trails and routes with signage and kiosks. The group could extend and improve trails and sidewalks and improve the safety of road crossings. They could offer programming on bike safety, outdoor education, a free equipment library, and other resources. The group could also explore creating a Riverwalk.

Community Co-Chairs **Jim Leary** and **Cindy Cohen**

Facilitator **Lauren Brady**, *Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator*, VT Council on Rural Development

Resource Team Members **Marcie Gallagher**, *Complete Streets Specialist*, Local Motion  
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**Sarah Pelkey**, *Economic Development Director*, Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region  
**Claire Polfus**, *Recreation Program Manager*, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

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### Current status and overview of the issue today

- There are hiking and walking trails behind Otter Valley High School.
  - Land owned by the School District and governed by the Hawk Hill Committee of the School Board.
  - Parking is at the High School.
  - Has historic marker at the June Cemetery.
  - Also connects to the Old Brandon Rd and from there to Carver Street.
- There used to be a trail connecting town to the Long Trail.
- Forest Dale Shared Use Path Scoping Study completed June 2026 for the Town of Brandon. See <https://mtslhmp2024.my.canva.site/forestdalesharedusepath>.
- The path would be really important to folks wanting to get groceries, go to school, commute to work downtown or in industry in Forest Dale, but there are worries in town about the total price tag.
- Estabrook trails in Park Village.
- Question about whether the Solar Fest lands out on Champlain Street have trails or not.
- Leicester Hollow Minnie Baker trails connect to Moosalamoo National Recreation Area.
- Pent Road next to Sanderson Bridge.
- Bicyclists have to walk through town. Sidewalks are right on the road with no buffer, people worry about kids in these situations.
- Park Street is one of the safer ways for bicyclists to get through part of town.
- Brandon has a Town Forest, but it's far away, possibly surrounded by private land, and very hard to access.
- Pedestrians worry about cars going fast through neighborhoods, not stopping at crosswalks, not yielding and making space for pedestrians walking along the roads.

- Route 53 in Forest Dale doesn't have sidewalks, but lots of people walk in the village.
- Lots of kids ride electric scooters, bikes, and skateboards on the sidewalks and in the roads. People worry that they aren't safe and they don't have a better place to use these and have fun.
- Worry about safety of ATVs and UTVs on town roads.
- Dangerous to walk from the Motor Lodge on Route 7 to Downtown.
- Have skiing and snowshoeing at the golf course in winter.
- The American Legion is developing a trail and frisbee golf course.

## Priority Action Steps

1. Discuss and outline values (e.g. prioritize safety) at first meeting so the group has a "North Star" and knows how they want to work together.
2. Explore options for the Carver & Syndicate Street Plot.
  - Cleanup the illegal dumping site.
  - Host activities like birding, historic walks, river access, and more.
  - Plan for signage and accessible trail(s).
3. Gather and share info about existing trails and parking.
  - Gather info about existing recreation spaces (trails, parks, courts, etc.), historic sites, parking options, groups working on trails and pedestrian routes.
  - Make a map or brochure about sites.
  - Share public info and map somewhere like VT Trail Finder, All Trails, etc. and promote on Town website, Front Porch Forum, and at community hubs or events.
4. Look at the Forest Dale Shared Use Path Scoping Study completed June 2026 for the Town of Brandon (see <https://mtslhmp2024.my.canva.site/forestdalesharedusepath>) and possibly tackle small chunks.
  - Consider which chunks would be highest priority for the community (biggest safety payoff, low cost, easy access, or other reasons).
  - Work with Resource Team contacts below to sort out possible demonstration sites and funding opportunities.
5. Explore a pedestrian/bicycle route behind the north side of downtown businesses.
6. Explore a pedestrian/bicycle path from downtown to the Motor Lodge on Route 7.

## Other Potential Action Ideas

- Sidewalks and bike paths in downtown or village centers along roads could have bollards to separate cars from pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Put up signage and brochures/maps like we used to have at Hawk Hill for the recreational trails so people know how to find them.
- Build a skatepark, pump track, or improve existing parks so that kids can skate and play safely. Could be by the dog park? Or by Estabrook?
- Host History Walks; clean-up sites and design a tour and map of historic sites throughout Brandon and Forest Dale. Promote the historic sites online. Work with the Brandon Historic Preservation Commission and the VT Division for Historic Preservation.
- Sidewalks in Forest Dale, especially along Route 53.
- Learn more about the Town Forest, the history, how to access, maybe approach neighbors about access or recreation on Town Forest property, etc.
- Develop trail heads for existing trails.

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*These recommendations for other potential actions and resources to consider were shared by community members and Visiting Resource Team members representing a wide array of professionals from across the state. They encompass past experiences, successes, and consideration of Brandon's unique assets and needs.*

### Action Step Recommendations

- Partner with existing groups to support building community excitement and participation, or sustaining trail maintenance and making progress on big projects.
- Partner with Town's Brandon Recreation and the local Schools for youth involvement - for example, input on what's important or trail clean up and clearing.
- Conduct a survey of community members early in your work: knowing what your neighbors want from a trail network makes your efforts much better and easier for them to support! You can find examples of trail surveys with your peers in other towns: see below for specific ideas or contact Sharon Plumb at the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council: [sharon@vermonttgc.org](mailto:sharon@vermonttgc.org).
- In determining your group's vision and values, consider questions like: are we focused on trails and safe walking routes primarily for Brandon residents or for visitors or both? How will we remain connected to what the community wants and needs? Similar groups around the state could be a resource for examples of vision and values statements: contact VCRD for connections.
- Trail assessments, trail standards and trail building and maintenance practices are skills that can be learned and in some cases are best done by a professional. Consider what skills your group already has, and which ones you need. Identify skills that might require a professional to lead such as trail design and trail building. You can find best practices and examples as well as where to find trail professionals at <https://vermonttgc.org/design-build-and-maintenance/>, as well as <https://www.americantrails.org/resources> and <https://www.trailbuilders.org/>.

### Technical Assistance / Peer Connection Recommendations

- Local partners include Downtown Brandon Alliance, Brandon Chamber of Commerce, Town Economic Development and Brandon Recreation staff, Green Up Day, Birding group, and the American Legion.
- There are a number of trail developments in the area that could be useful for peer connections:
  - Middlebury – <https://www.maltvt.org/trails>.
  - Ridgeline trails in Rochester – see <https://www.ridgelineoutdoorcollective.org/> and contact [info@Ridgelineoutdoorcollective.org](mailto:info@Ridgelineoutdoorcollective.org).
  - Brandon Gap Backcountry Recreation Area – <https://catamounttrail.org/bc-zones/brandon-gap-backcountry-recreation-area/>.
  - Poultney – <https://slatevalleytrails.org/>.
  - Randolph – <https://www.ridgelineoutdoorcollective.org/randolph-trails/>.
  - Chester – <https://www.chestervt.gov/recreation.html>.
- There are skatepark examples in Bennington, Middlebury, Bristol, Montpelier, Bradford. The Vermont Council on Rural Development can put the group in touch with any of these communities. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org).
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission is an important partner for technical assistance and support with grant programs, especially for transportation planning such as walking and biking routes. Learn more at <https://www.rutlandrpc.org/> and contact transportation program manager Ethan Pepin at [ethan@rutlandrpc.org](mailto:ethan@rutlandrpc.org).
- Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region is another important partner who can help the group in the early stages of either planning for safe routes or for trail mapping or development. Learn more at <https://rutlandvermont.com/> and contact Resource Team member Sarah Pelkey at [sarah@rutlandeconomy.com](mailto:sarah@rutlandeconomy.com).

- VOREC can help connect to funding programs and can help better understand local assets. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/VOREC> and contact Jackie Dagger, VOREC Program Manager, at 802-636-7410, [jackie.dagger@vermont.gov](mailto:jackie.dagger@vermont.gov) and/or Visiting Team member Sarah Pelkey at [sarah@rutlandeconomy.com](mailto:sarah@rutlandeconomy.com)
- VT River Conservancy is a contact for river access points like Carver Street site. Learn more at <https://vermontriverconservancy.org/>.
- Local Motion can support walk/bike audits and safe routes to school work. Learn more at <https://www.localmotion.org/> and contact Resource Team Member Marcie Gallagher at [marcie@localmotion.org](mailto:marcie@localmotion.org)
- Vermont Trail Finder is a resource for sharing community trails. Learn more at <https://www.trailfinder.info/>.
- AARP offers pop-up demonstrations, walk/bike audits, and other support. Learn more at <https://www.aarp.org/states/vermont/> and contact Kelly Stoddard Poor at 802-951-1313 and [kstoddardpoor@aarp.org](mailto:kstoddardpoor@aarp.org).
- VT Trails & Greenways Council hosts a Trail Accessibility Hub: <https://vermonttgc.org/trail-accessibility-hub/>. VT Adaptive is also a resource regarding accessible recreation. Learn more at <https://www.vermontadaptive.org/>
- VT Trails & Greenways Council hosts a Trail Accessibility Hub: <https://vermonttgc.org/trail-accessibility-hub/>. The Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (trail development and maintenance focus) and the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association (municipal recreation focus) co-host the Vermont Conference on Recreation and Trails Symposium together every fall. Contact Sharon Plumb at [sharon@vermonttgc.org](mailto:sharon@vermonttgc.org), and see <https://www.vrpa.org/Conference-Overview> for information about the annual conference.
- Partners for multi-use trails, and connecting to resource providers include:
  - VT Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) - <https://vtvast.org/>.
  - Catamount Trails Association - <https://catamounttrail.org/>.
  - VT Mountain Bike Association (VMBA) - <https://vmba.org/>.
  - VT Horse Council - <https://vthorsecouncil.org/>.
  - VT ATV Sportsman's Association (VASA)- <https://www.vtvasa.org/>.
- Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forest is partner. Learn more at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r09/gmfl> and contact District Ranger & Visiting Team member Christopher Mattrick at [christopher.mattrick@usda.gov](mailto:christopher.mattrick@usda.gov)
- EPA Recreation Economy for Rural Communities program can provide technical assistance for developing a recreation economy. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities>.
- National Park Service Rivers, Trails, & Conservation Assistance can provide technical support. Learn more at <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/apply.htm> and contact Helen Mahan at [NER\\_RTCA@nps.gov](mailto:NER_RTCA@nps.gov).
- There are a number of national organizations that offer potential model resources including:
  - America Walks - <https://americawalks.org/>.
  - Better Block - <https://www.betterblock.org/>.
  - Institute for Human Centered Design - <https://humancentereddesign.org/services/education>.
  - People for Bikes - Quick Builds for Better Streets: A New Project Delivery Model for U.S Cities: <https://www.peopleforbikes.org/reports/quick-builds-for-better-streets-a-new-project-delivery>.
- Green Mountain Club is the steward of the Long Trail and may be useful for connections to the trail. Learn more at <https://www.greenmountainclub.org/>.
- The Northern Forest Canoe Trail has resources including a trip planner. Learn more at <https://www.northernforestcanoetrail.org/>.
- VT Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) may be a resource for trail building and maintenance. Learn more at <https://www.vycc.org/>.
- Other statewide organizations that may have pertinent resources include:
  - VT Urban and Community Forestry Program <https://vtcommunityforestry.org/>.
  - The Trust for Public Land - <https://www.tpl.org/state/vermont>.
  - Vermont Land Trust - <https://vlt.org/>.

## Resources and Potential Funding Sources

- VCRD's Community Leadership in Action Guide contains a chapter called "Advance Outdoor Recreation and Trails" with ideas and resources relevant to this topic: <https://www.vtrural.org/guide/>.
- VCRD is happy to write letters of support for grant applications, and may have some modest seed funding to support task force work. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org) or 802-222-6896.
- AARP offers funding through its Community Challenge grants: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/>.
- Vermont Community Foundation has a variety of grant programs that may be relevant. Contact Resource Team member Haley Pero at [hpero@vermontcf.org](mailto:hpero@vermontcf.org) for information about:
  - Spark Grant program: <https://vermontcf.org/funds/spark/>.
  - Walter Cerf Community Fund : <https://vermontcf.org/funds/the-walter-cerf-community-fund/>.
  - Regional and Local Initiatives (RALI) grant: <https://vermontcf.org/funds/regional-and-local-impact/>.
- The Vermont Natural Resources Council has small grants that can help with community engagement. Learn more at: <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-smart-growth/>.
- Better Connections Program is designed to support transportation-specific planning. Learn more at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>.
- Municipal Planning Grants and Vermont Community Development Program are more general planning resources. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant> and <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>.
- Partnerships with local businesses that will benefit from the Forest Dale Connector or the recreational trails may be a potential source of local funding.
- The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has a Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) which may be able to help pay for grant writers once you've identified funding sources. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at [mariah@vhcb.org](mailto:mariah@vhcb.org) or 802-828-1098.
- The Vermont Recreation Trails Program will fund trail heads and trails on Class IV roads. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreational-trails-program> and contact Visiting Team Member Claire Polfus at [claire.polfus@vermont.gov](mailto:claire.polfus@vermont.gov) and 802-505-5372.
- Land and Water Conservation Fund supports the development of public outdoor recreation opportunities across Vermont, with a focus on creating parks and open spaces, enhancing recreation areas and facilities, and protecting wilderness areas and forests. Applications require a 50% match. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/land-and-water-conservation-fund> and contact Visiting Team Member Claire Polfus.
- VT League of Cities and Towns and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission both have searchable funding directories by topic. See <https://www.vlct.org/resource/open-funding-opportunities> and <https://www.ccrpcvt.org/funding-opportunities/>.
- Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) has a variety of grant programs that may be relevant for bike/pedestrian, trail, and/or other infrastructure development. The Catalyst Program Supports a broad range of initiatives focused on expanding infrastructure, revitalizing communities, and promoting economic development. Timber For Transit utilizes timber and composites in projects that support transportation and transportation infrastructure. Learn more <https://www.nbrc.gov/>
- The State of Vermont Buildings and General Services Communities Grant program has Recreation Facilities Grants that provides matching funds for shovel-ready projects. Learn more at <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>.
- The VTrans Transportation Alternative Program provides funding for projects that meet the Federal Highway definition of transportation alternatives including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, trails that serve a transportation purpose, safe routes to school projects, and more. They also offer a number of design guidance documents. Learn more at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt>.

- VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program provides funds for scoping, design and construction of bike and pedestrian facilities including sidewalks, bike paths and associated facilities. In addition, they have curated design standards which communities can use to support their projects. Learn more at: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped>.
- The Downtown Transportation Fund can support improvements in a designated downtown area. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/downtown-transportation-fund>.
- VT Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has some public outdoor recreation grants. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/conservation/conservation-applications-funding-programs/>.
- USDA Rural Development has a variety of grant and loan programs. Rural Business Development Grants may be relevant: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programsservices/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants-8#>. Contact Ken Yearman, at [bpvtnh.inquiry@usda.gov](mailto:bpvtnh.inquiry@usda.gov) and (802) 828-6083.



## ► Expand and Improve Housing

A task force could form to improve housing availability and affordability in Brandon. This group could explore senior care housing, workforce housing, and housing for those experiencing homelessness. The group could consider creating a community housing trust, partnering with Habitat for Humanity, supporting those interested in creating accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and exploring new housing materials and innovations, such as modular housing. The group could also explore health and safety issues in existing housing and identify zoning and code improvements that could address those challenges.

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Facilitator **Laura Cavin Bailey**, *Climate Economy Program Director*, VT Council on Rural Development

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**Jess Hyman**, *Education & Special Projects Manager*, Housing Advocacy Programs, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)

**Devon Neary**, *Executive Director*, Rutland Regional Planning Commission

**Benton Winrich**, *Grants Management Specialist*, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development

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### Current context and overview of the issue today

- Act 181 allows infill housing on 1/5 acre, and town growth areas would be exempt from Act 250 for downtown for up to 50 units (Tier 1B).
- Building conversions into apartments in Park Village: DRB 6/25/26, approved the plan for 22 more apartments to be renovated in Park Village area (Historic Brandon Training School).
- New residential cohousing for artists at the historic high school with education component (Welcome, LLC builders and reBHS <https://rebhsvt.org/>).
- Underutilized sewer and water in the village (Otter Valley high school is not on town water/sewer and discussing possible connection).
- Roofs over Rutland program is an example for low-interest loans.
- FEMA buyouts happening now and one building will be moved out of flood zone (and out of town for reuse).
- Share your house program in Middlebury that is very successful (Homeshare VT).
- Old housing stock.
- Advocacy for available and affordable housing.
- Advocacy groundswell for safe, healthy homes.
- Different versions of what “affordability” means.
- Ways to find housing now: Facebook Marketplace, Front Porch Forum, Zillow, word of mouth, Furnished Finders.
- Cornerstone Housing: some units in Park Village area.
- Homeless Prevention Center: Outreach, placements, connections with vouchers, services.
- Question: Number of short-term rentals? Some research by individuals via AirBnB and VBRO websites, but not exhaustive (Short Term Rentals (STRs) pay 1% local option tax).

- Short term rentals prevent long-term rentals.
- Stowe, Warren and other towns have a short term rental registries.
- STRs crippled traditional Bed and Breakfasts, which have to pay full taxes, be inspected, licensed, etc.
- Annual rental fees, inspections.
- Video by David Fontaine: The Air We Live In (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-ZSI9utX8c>).
- Brandon Land Use Ordinance updated in 2024 with technical assistance by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission. It's good, but it could be better.
- Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) did region wide housing need, Rutland County has the largest challenge in VT but shows opportunities. There is a smaller scale and more specific study in Brandon, shows where needs and price points are. There is a market, need to meet it.
- New era of loss of units. Each year 43 lost in Rutland County, need to be proactive and get developers and get folks making more units. Active matchmaking and participation is a role needed.
- No housing commissions in Rutland country.
- Revolving Loan in Addison County used ARPA seed money to create with low interest – has produced 10 units.

## Priority Action Steps

1. Identify, organize and research the topics blocking housing access/development.
2. Review existing zoning & regulations in Brandon (for example, ADU size, subdivisions, lot sizes, safety).
3. Investigate ownership models & possible sites in town to expand condo development.
4. Establish a revolving loan fund for housing.
5. Identifying topics for education & communication around housing issues (for example the definition of "affordability").
6. Develop a centralized housing resource hub: Identify resources and have a housing development navigator/counselor to help home/land owners (perhaps connected to economic development position).

## Other Potential Action Ideas

- 802 Homes – streamlined design and permitting with template designs
- Importance of habitability (in addition to availability and affordability)
- Funding
  - Establish a revolving loan fund for housing renovation/remediation (already established for business development)
  - Community Housing Trust
- Sites/land
  - Development by the country club was supposed to include more condos – possibly expand? Some group members know residents and could begin conversations.
  - Park Village – 22-unit housing proposal approved by DRB 6/25/26
  - Identify other available sites of town owned land, or other parcels
- Improve communication about available housing and programs
  - Homeshare education and communication
  - Identify local Habitat for Humanity chapters and develop a relationship
  - Identify other housing entities that have existing materials.
- Develop a town-run listing of available units or sharing opportunities so the information is located in one place.
- Develop trades (builders, etc.)

- Implement short term rental (STR) licenses, regulation, and tax as businesses
- STR registry with registration fee.
- More protection/education for landlords (to protect against “squatters”).
- Support Auxiliary Dwelling Units (ADU) development since all Vermont residential zoning allows to have ADUs.
- Hub/coop to support new landlords to help with sharing space.
- Create a central clearing house for info about landlord/tenant rights, housing development options, etc.
- Consult with town’s Economic Development Director on overlap or efforts of the town.
- Incentivize building smaller homes and splitting up homes into multiple units
- Add condos (smaller homes, less responsibilities, which enables people to downsize and stay in the community).
- Look at modular homes with interconnecting pieces to expand/contract with household needs (shipping containers “cargotecture”, manufactured homes, etc.)
- Tour local container renovation and modular home on Pearl St.; talk to builder
- Expand manufactured housing availability, explore:
  - Wheelpad in Wilmington <https://www.wheelpad.com/>
  - Beans Homes in Pittsford <https://www.beanshomes.com/>
  - Huntington Homes in East Montpelier <https://huntingtonhomesvt.com/>
  - Identify others
- Policy to address regulatory hurdles of coordinated (co-op?) ownership
- Gather examples of alternative land ownership models
  - Ten Stones (Charlotte) model with cluster development and shared open space, gardens, etc.
  - Bristol Co-housing (but not affordable)
  - Hartford Co-housing
- Look at Sudbury’s design guidelines (w/cluster development emphasis)
- Review zoning and other housing policy (including from a health/safety perspective) and advocate for policy change as needed
- Look at subdivision rules outside of Tier 1B
- Connect people looking to expand housing and the arts to the reBHS project
- Talk to Living Structures.org
- Centralized housing resource hub: Identify resources and have a housing development navigator/counselor to help home/land owners (perhaps connected to economic development position)
- Identify research/information needs that are blocking action
- Include low-income groups in conversations and decision making.

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

*These recommendations for other potential actions and resources to consider were shared by community members and Visiting Resource Team members representing a wide array of professionals from across the state. They encompass past experiences, successes, and consideration of Brandon’s unique assets and needs.*

## Action Recommendations

- Consider who’s missing, who’s voices are not being heard, who would want to be talking about these issues and who’s expertise is not here?
- Determine what already exists in town using sources such as Housingdata.org, Planning commission data and Brandon housing plan from 2024.
- What’s available in town and who owns empty lots? List and map those.

- Identify town owned land and if there is any ability to build on them.
- Attend DRB meetings. Community voices often shut down project ideas. Think about how to voice your support for housing projects and support those efforts underway.
- Start with low hanging fruit of zoning changes.
- Planning Commissions role in zoning ordinances is technical and laborious and often done in a vacuum. It is helpful to that process is to show up or comment ideas. The Commission wants to know what people need in a Land Use Ordinance.
- For zoning, look at water and wastewater areas currently served and increase density within that area.
- Town led loan fund for housing could have a similar set up to businesses already in place. The group could learn about local Housing Trust Funds to better understand their uses, governance structures, revenue sources. Montpelier Housing Trust Fund is one such example. Learn more at <https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1088/Montpelier-Housing-Trust-Fund>

## Technical Assistance / Peer Connection Recommendations

- There are many other local housing groups in Vermont. Resource Team member Jess Hyman can connect your group to others: contact her at [jhyman@cvoeo.org](mailto:jhyman@cvoeo.org).
- The Waterbury Housing Task Force has a number of local programs to support housing. See <https://www.waterburyvt.com/boards/housing-task-force> and contact [housing@waterburyvt.com](mailto:housing@waterburyvt.com)
- Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO) offers renter and landlord education, fair housing training, and consultation for housing committees. See the renter and landlord education publications at the links below, and reach out to Jess Hyman with questions at [jhyman@cvoeo.org](mailto:jhyman@cvoeo.org)
  - <https://www.cvoeo.org/calendar/renters-workshops-72>
  - <https://www.cvoeo.org/renters-workshops/fair-housing-training-for-the-general-public-648>
  - <https://www.cvoeo.org/fair-housing-training-for-landlords>
  - [https://www.cvoeo.org/client\\_media/files/HAP/Definitive\\_Guide\\_To\\_Renting\\_In\\_Vermont-2023-web.pdf](https://www.cvoeo.org/client_media/files/HAP/Definitive_Guide_To_Renting_In_Vermont-2023-web.pdf)
- VT Landlord Association has a number of resources and training for landlords: <https://www.vtlandlord.com/>
- Land Access & Opportunity Board is involved with a statewide landbank, proposed housing navigators and the Homes for All initiative. They could be a resource for existing plots of land. Learn more at <https://www.landaccessvt.org/>
- Cornerstone Housing Partners is an important contact for housing development, and already has involvement in Brandon. Learn more at <https://cornerstonehousingpartners.org/> and contact Angus Chaney [angus@hpcvt.org](mailto:angus@hpcvt.org).
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission is an important partner for technical assistance. Learn more at <https://www.rutlandrpc.org/> and contact Resource Team member and Executive Director Devon Neary at [devon@rutlandrpc.org](mailto:devon@rutlandrpc.org). They also have a housing Resource Guide: <https://www.rutlandrpc.org/bulletin-board/rutland-region-housing-resource-guide-version-2/>.
- Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) has community and housing data, resources for housing committees, and hosts the Housing Ready Toolkit. See <https://housingdata.org/> for housing related data and contact Nathan Lantieri, Housing Research Coordinator, at [NLantieri@vhfa.org](mailto:NLantieri@vhfa.org) for help using the site.
- Visit the Housing Resource Toolbox for planning, policy, and housing committee info/resources: <https://housingdata.org/toolbox>.
- Addison County Regional Planning Commission has ADU manual that's a great guide. See <https://acrpc.org/2023/07/acrpc-resource-guide-to-accessory-dwelling-units/>.
- Let's Build Homes is new non-profit advocacy organization with a central belief that there is not enough housing in VT and more is needed. They will have model zoning available in next few months for towns to model their own. Learn more at <https://www.letsbuildhomes.org/> and contact Visiting Team member Emma Allen at [emma@letsbuildhomes.org](mailto:emma@letsbuildhomes.org).

- Strong Towns has technical resources including model zoning information: <https://www.strongtowns.org/housingready>.
- Agency of Human Services is an important partner for those whose basic needs aren't being met. Contact Visiting Team member and Field Director at [Adam.Sancic@vermont.gov](mailto:Adam.Sancic@vermont.gov).
- Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County Energy Navigator Program can provide free support for weatherization. Contact Community Outreach Coordinator Nicole Borgione at [nicole@energynavigators.org](mailto:nicole@energynavigators.org).

## Resources and Potential Funding Sources

- VCRD's Community Leadership in Action Guide contains a chapter called "Improve and Develop Housing" with ideas and resources relevant to this topic: <https://www.vtrural.org/guide/>.
- VCRD is happy to write letters of support for grant applications, and may have some modest seed funding to support task force work. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org) or 802-222-6896.
- Rutland Regional Planning Commission is an important partner for technical assistance. Learn more at <https://www.rutlandrpc.org/> and contact Resource Team member and Executive Director Devon Neary at [devon@rutlandrpc.org](mailto:devon@rutlandrpc.org). The regional plan may also be relevant: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5018a6bc74d34a59aca763981e78355a>.
- VT Dept of Housing & Community Development has a number of programs to support housing including VHIP, 802 Homes, Homes for All. Learn more below and at <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing> and contact Resource Team member at Benton Winrich [benton.winrich@vermont.gov](mailto:benton.winrich@vermont.gov) for info/resources.
- Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) is a funding program administered through homeownership centers – Cornerstone being the local one – that incentivizes unit creation up to \$50,000 per unit of housing created. It allows rental rehab or new units and uses HUD fair market value to balance rent. Vermont Housing Improvement Program 2.0 (VHIP 2.0) is a resource that provides forgivable loans for a variety of projects that support housing rehabilitation and creation. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/vhip>. The program could also be a potential model for structuring affordability definition and program. Waterbury is an example of a community that has launched a modified version of this program locally – see <https://www.waterburyvt.com/boards/housing-task-force/adu-program>.
- 802 Homes catalogue to be available at the end of 2026 with 10 designs ranging from smaller age in place 800-1000 sf to triplex/sixplex units. Stick built and modular designs. See <https://accd.vermont.gov/current-initiatives/homesforall/802homes>.
- The Homes for All program includes:
  - Homes for All toolkit: meant for communities to begin exploring the idea of infill development and missing middle housing in their towns. The Homes for All toolkit can assist a potential housing task force with a plan forward to supporting housing development. See <https://accd.vermont.gov/current-initiatives/homesforall/toolkit>.
  - A series of small-scale developer training courses designed to assist and educate Vermonters interested in developing housing in their communities. The developer training program is broken into three levels:
    - The first level is the Small-scale development 101 workshops, which are standalone one-day, in-person events that are meant to provide an introduction to small-scale development. DHCD will be running this workshop four times, including Lyndon in September.
    - The second level is the Homebuilders Bootcamp, this is a 6-week online course designed to help developers work through their own projects and tackle issues like site plans, Pro formas, and pitching your project to lenders.
    - The last level is 1-on-1 technical assistance which is provided by Helm Construction Solutions. Technical assistance will be administered through an application process and offer up to 20 hours of technical assistance for a specific project.
    - Learn more about all these offerings at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/current-initiatives/homesforall/training>.

- Statewide housing needs assessment: <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/plans-data-rules/needs-assessment>.
- VT Dept Housing & Community Development has a listing of housing organizations and agencies: <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/partners/housing-organizations>.
- VLCT has a resource titled “Funding Opportunities for Enabling Housing Development”: <https://www.vlct.org/resource/funding-opportunities-enabling-housing-development>.
- VLCT has a Grants & Funding Chat/Webinar on Housing from 12/2/2025: <https://www.vlct.org/resource/grants-funding-chat-recordings-and-resources>.
- Vermont Community Foundation has a variety of grant programs that may be relevant. Contact Resource Team member Haley Pero at [hpero@vermontcf.org](mailto:hpero@vermontcf.org) for information about:
  - Spark Grant program: <https://vermontcf.org/funds/spark/>
  - Walter Cerf Community Fund: <https://vermontcf.org/funds/the-walter-cerf-community-fund/>
  - Regional and Local Initiatives (RALI) grant: <https://vermontcf.org/funds/regional-and-local-impact/>
- Efficiency Vermont Efficiency Vermont offers energy assessments for businesses, financing, rebates, and other programs. Learn more at <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/services>.
- Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) has a variety of funding resources and programs related to housing, including lead paint mitigation. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/housing/housing-funding-programs/> and <https://vhcb.org/housing/healthy-lead-safe-homes/>
- Habitat for Humanity: <https://rutlandhabitat.com/>
- HomeShareVT: <https://www.homesharevermont.org/>
- Housing and Homelessness Alliance of VT (HHAV): Advocacy info, statewide housing connections, Local Housing Coalition coordination <https://helpingtohousevt.org/>
- The Community and Housing Infrastructure Program (CHIP) is a statewide tax increment financing tool designed to help Vermont communities unlock housing opportunities by investing in critical public infrastructure. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/vepc/chip>
  - If the Town of Brandon chooses to pursue CHIP, the VT League of Cities & Towns can provide technical assistance. Learn more at <https://www.vlct.org/technical-assistance/chip-vt-building-local-capacity-housing-and-infrastructure>.
  - Chamber & Economic Dev. of the Rutland Region may be able to support CHIP Technical Assistance for developers. Contact Visiting Team member Sarah Furman at [sarah.furman@rutlandeconomy.com](mailto:sarah.furman@rutlandeconomy.com)
- USDA Rural Development has a variety of potential funding sources relevant to housing including Housing Repair Loans & Grants. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/vt-nh>.
- The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has a Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) which may be able to help pay for grant writers once you’ve identified a funding source. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at [mariah@vhcb.org](mailto:mariah@vhcb.org) or 802-828-1098.
- Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) has a variety of grant programs that may be relevant. The Catalyst Program Supports a broad range of initiatives focused on expanding infrastructure, revitalizing communities, and promoting economic development. Learn more <https://www.nbrc.gov/>
- Vermont Community Loan Fund offers funding related to housing: <https://www.investinvermont.org/affordable-housing-loans>

# Brandon Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 120 Brandon community members and the VCRD Visiting Team on April 30, 2026, a Zoom forum, two youth forums, and through a paper and online survey.

*Although the prioritization work of the Brandon: A Hub and Our Home Community Visit process 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.*

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## Community Resources

Visiting Team: Jessica Savage (FACILITATOR), Meg Campbell (SCRIBE), Andy Barker, Jessica Nordhaus, Adam Sancic

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Brandon Area food Shelf. I don't think it is used enough.
- Brandon Area Toy Project: helps families get food and gifts around holidays.
- Nifty Thrifty Thrift Shop: run by volunteers, give lots back to the community. People come in and ask about Community Resources. Have a bulletin board too. All kinds of flyers on there! 10-2 Monday through Saturday.
- Bulletin boards at grocery store and bank. Town is considering electronic bulletin board.
- ReBHS (Revitalize Brandon High School) is working on the bulletin board – Organization responding to community needs and coming up with creative ways to adapt to those needs. Toolship/toolshed outside of library! Developed a way to have 24 hour a day 7 day access with electronic access. Also repair fairs in town.
- Energy committee.
- Library is an amazing resource.
- Restorative Justice committee.
- Library is a huge resource – showed us that Brandon has a rich and deep financial resource in that they accomplished a \$3m renovation, with another \$1 million to happen this summer. Large portion of individuals donated.
- ReBHS – ownership of building – currently owned by Welcome LLC. Previously a single owner. In the past year there have been new investors. Committed to having nonprofit tenants. In order to get the project going faster worked better to keep under the LLC ownership now while getting the programming going.
- Access to nature and hiking trails. Hike a week for the last year – never gone on the same one and never gone more than 20 minutes.
- Solar fest in town, developing a center for people to be inspired and more energy efficient.
- Energy Committee done a lot in town.
- Senior Center in Forest Dale. Bone builders twice a week and its free!
- The dog park! Great place to meet neighbors.
- Rec Department is great– free or minimal charge to attend!
- Front Porch Forum.

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### What are the Challenges?

- Transportation. If you don't have your own vehicle, limited public transportation. Train doesn't stop here. Don't have good hire-able car service. Big need.
- Young people riding bikes or skateboards on highway because you can't ride on sidewalks. Gets precarious in town. People in cars don't notice. Need more signage.
- Challenge of where to get resources...if we have an electronic one, we need to communicate about it. Communication about where to get resources.
- Laundromat (lack of). Not having in town. Doing hospice care. Couldn't take hours to get laundry done. Big issue.
- 2-3 years since we have had any free dental or health clinics in Brandon. Even if they aren't particularly well attended, they are essential.
- Food shelf front lines – dealing with people in crisis – social work/education work/be present with individuals in crisis.
- Even low-income housing units don't have enough washing machines and dryers.
- Bedbugs are huge issues in affordable housing units! Bedbugs are psychologically draining.
- Mold issue in the low income housing units. Making sure the housing is safe, healthy environment.
- No urgent care in Brandon. Great rescue squad. Have healthcare. But don't have urgent care! What do you do?
- Getting volunteers for nonprofit. People who do this are very burdened by all of their volunteer work – limited capacity, need more volunteers.
- Emergency Housing for single moms.
- People who came through the food shelf were women or trans people.
- Mental health caregiving is a challenge.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Community Resource Liaison in every town. “Overseer of the Poor” – used to have! Get resources to the people who need them. Who knows who is doing what and how to connect them with people who have needs.
- Need a woman’s shelter
- Need a meeting house to get general information about – community drop-in outreach. Come in with a health, housing, isolation issue.
- Capitalize on the water resource! Water will be the biggest commodity there is and will be the next thing that wars will be fought about. Use water as a resource! Ship it to where they need it! Monetize it! Tank loads! Movement of water without pipelines.
- Meet the needs of elderly in town. The Senior Center needs more funding and programs.
- Ways to use water locally. Laundromat! Work better with the environment.
- Open a laundromat in town in Pilates building on Rossiter street. Need to meet the basic needs of our citizens.
- Get a community advocate to push for things like dementia support group
- Advocate and find a person to run a dementia support group. Reach out to library, senior center, church for space. Follow up with Council on Aging. Weekly commitment.
- Bike repair clinics people might also be willing to do bike safety courses. Library might be interested in hosting. Police used to come do bike safety at grade school. Still happening (more can be done).
- Insure town’s electric vans for volunteers to drive people to doctor’s appointments and laundromat.
- RSVP could give people rides, but drivers need to be monitored/cleared. Explore volunteer transportation service with well trained and vetted volunteers! And accessible vehicles!
- Phone tree for women who had doctor’s appointments and don’t have transportation.
- Make sure bulletin boards are known about and up-to-date. Maybe a committee does this.
- More connected bike trails to Pittsford, Rutland, Middlebury, Dirt Bike Trails.
- Time bank where people can volunteer services and get services for an amount of time.
- Community bartering program.
- Find out if area colleges can provide students to help with different initiatives to address above problems.
- Offer mental health first aid trainings for anyone on the front lines dealing with Brandon’s most needy. Community Health worker training.
- Community resources to help fund trainings.
- Small women’s funding group to help with area issues.

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## Recreation and Community Engagement

Visiting Team: Denise Smith (FACILITATOR), Alyssa Johnson (SCRIBE), Katie Buckley, Christopher Mattrick, Claire Polfus

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have an amazing rec director (Bill Moore) who has changed the rec department immensely and built it up. Amazing offerings especially with one part time staff person.
- Decent community engagement existing in terms of teaching offers: Akido offerings from a community member who is black belt.
- Brandon Inn, Red Clover, Sister Wicked, Cintas, Solar Fest. Ana Guigui from the Berklee School of Music comes up Fridays and Saturdays and at the Brandon Inn.
- After hours Saturday at Cintas thrift shop. Music as a positive tool for bringing people together.
- Venues for many things: Elementary school, Town Hall, Library. A lot of different venues in town for things to happen.
- The Library. The staff is really outgoing and they have a variety of programs they do throughout the week. Every month is different. Try to include a variety of age groups. A wonderful job thinking up new programs.
- Christmas decoration competition.
- Flower garden tours during the summer.
- Silent auction at the Town Hall.
- Invite folks together to decorate: put a call out for people to plant in flower pots through the Downtown Brandon Alliance.
- People plant flowers, put up lights, winter Village. A lot of people live in Brandon but don’t come downtown. A lot of people are surprised and amazed when they come downtown because there is so much going on with music, shops, concerts behind the Inn on Wednesday nights in the summer.
- Lovely network of trails on Hog Hill that people can take advantage to walk and bike.
- In the winter, people can go out on the Neshobe golf course and walk and ski.
- Woman in town who has organized gardeners to take advantage of parks in the community. Makes the town look beautiful.
- Lost the newspaper, but getting another one back online.
- Front Porch Forum: people share stuff on that all of the time.
- The Town has recently launched a community calendar online that they are hoping to grow.
- There’s a tier of folks who have retired or are a little longer: the upgrades on route 7, the Library and other major upgrades. There is time now for younger people who move in with kids to take this on.
- Artists and writers I know, people who volunteer on boards and how responsive they are. You can get a hold of folks pretty quickly.
- There’s a Facebook page: Brandon buzz.

- Brandon Chamber of Commerce has tabled events and organize a lot of things in town, and a newsletter that goes out to everyone in town, not just members.
- You can become a member of the chamber without being a business.
- There are a lot fewer business in town. Now retired folks showing up to run things like an auction that raises tens of thousands of dollars.
- A lot of artists and writers in town: music and poetry open mics in town. That creative community of folks does a lot for both topics.
- The fourth of July: we have an awesome party and street dance, the best cross section of Brandon. People come from away.
- People come from Moosalamoo.
- “Brandon punches above its weight” a small place that does a lot of cool stuff.
- We live right by the state forest, the mountains and the trees.
- Just a few minutes to the top of the Brandon Gap.
- Branbury State Park.
- Ponds and lakes where people swim.
- Rec program for young school.
- For middle and high school, sports are mostly through the school. Theater and sports at high school and a new debate and robotics coming.
- So much going on at the library for little kids.
- There’s an organization and some people in town working to develop a walking trail from downtown Brandon to Forest Dale.

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## What are the Challenges?

- Unlike Pittsford to the south that has indoor swimming.
- Have to be more independent when you are older.
- No walking trails or biking trails.
- Really difficult for people to walk safely in town.
- People travel to come to Park Street to walk on those sidewalks. If you want to walk four miles there’s no way to do that in a protected way.
- While there has been exploration of a path, all of the land permits and permissions that are needed are really challenging and will have to go across private land. 13 million dollars right now. Folks have resisted the project.
- There was a group organizing to build a rec center at the school. Taxes are really high and uncomfortable for folks in town. Finding ways to do it without further hurting people who are barely hanging on to their housing is a really hard needle to thread. A town where we really value the socioeconomic diversity of folks who are here. Finding ways to do that that are accessible.
- For young adults and teenagers, there isn’t a place to gather. No bowling alley, movie theater, place for them to gather. For fun and in their free time, there isn’t space to gather.
- No space for nocturnal teens.
- Vision team meeting for the school: the school is used all hours of the weekend for sports, theater...and some community stuff. Teachers can’t staff it after school for completion club, homework club. Ripe opportunity for partnership with the school, but teachers are probably not the pool of folks to pull from.
- School could be a great option for kids to meet at but no easy way for kids to get here unless they have a license: can’t bike, no public transportation.
- I have a 13-year-old who loves his electric scooter, but they are a challenge on the sidewalks because they can’t be on Route 7: ways to do that.
- A place for kids to go electric scooter: “take it up to the park.”
- Difficult for kids to get to the school: my kids are not crossing the street, but feel the same way about Estabrook: kind of at the highway, wish it would be easier for kids to get to: sidewalk is on the.
- Summer camps for kids. Because we don’t have a swimming place, it is hard for our recreation to be competitive with Middlebury and Pittsford, both of which can offer that.
- Town is eager to keep young working families and having affordable things that they are excited about is really important. If our rec department had the facilities to offer that, it would be tremendous.
- Winter activities for the kids: hockey or ice skating lessons and activities for kids.
- Nicely located between Rutland and Middlebury, so a lot of nice activities if you can drive 30 min. That drive is prohibitive timing and cost wise. You have the activity and the added cost of the activity and the timing. Having things available in town makes them so much more realistic for many families.
- It’s really hard to be on Boards when you are younger and raising kids. There have been difficulties for folks in public positions where they have been treated quite badly. People do not want to continue to serve in roles when they receive the ire of your community.
- I was on Selectboard, and really enjoyed the work and the relationships. I wound up leaving after a year for two reasons: the reason that caused more heartache was feeling stuck: do I want my kids to see my treated badly and sign up for more. Nasty editorials and things that weren’t true. Had this horrible challenge of setting an example of things that are tough or that you don’t want to let yourself be treated like that. Wanted time constraint to be the main driver of the decision.
- July 4th planning committee is holding festivities on July 3rd this year and people are so mad about that: it’s absurd how mad they are. Folks don’t want to be part of decision making but have a lot to say: downsize FPF and Facebook.
- New school board member: budget failed at town meeting and first revote was successful. Those social media venues tip people: have worked in tech policy for a while. Venues encourage a particular conversation, which can be much more challenging. Lack a place for face to face engagement.
- Not that many people or resources to provide many different things: wanted a club but wasn’t enough engagement in the subject. Had to go to Rutland or another area.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Teen centered space: spend a lot of time here, need a space that is their own.
- Job board for kids to look at during the summer for a day, a weekend, at someone's house cleaning, doing a lawn.
- A community garden space where anyone can go and have a garden.
- Work on getting a town newspaper again. My kids love it when they are in the newspaper.
- Some of the issues I see in town: We moved from Jersey. Keeping people engaged: once you get going. WE have people in town who put the money out to build places for people to build, like the gym. Had a chat with the owners and they are only at 50% of what they need to stay engaged. Private gym: Medicaid and other places won't pay membership because not associated with a hospital. At the beginning saw a lot of people but thinning out.
- Very large room with floor mats: Andy might love to hear from parents of young kids to hear about what families might do. Give people a ball and let them be busy for a while. Find Andy.
- When people are in a public facing volunteer position, that some sort of training be provided on how to handle it. I have a public facing jobs and know there are strategies to handle it at a Selectboard meeting. Maybe someone can teach that. Maybe you need a referee: how are.
- I look at Brandon as the center of a wheel for outlying geographic communities. Some strategic planning about how to connect: getting a bus route from Rutland on how to connect. Transportation linkage. Estabrook, Otter Valley Brandon and other places that could be on a trail.
- The Trail Around Middlebury trail in Middlebury is remarkable. Over 20 years, could you build out trails to connect to Neshobe and other places. They would need a long term plan and public fundraising. Do that over a long period of time with a group of people.
- Hawk hill hiking trails: connecting end of Carver St without Route 7. Underutilized and under resourced. Need more signage. Mark for new users! Let the public know when they can use it.
- Setting some rules up for kids and adults to chair: you need to walk your bike between the Town Office and the Brandon Inn. I feel comfortable telling kids, but having some signs up so they have some ideas about what rules they should be following so they can make an informed choice.
- Another place to bike is Seminary Hill.
- Can bike from Town to Hawk Hill?
- Roster Hill: place at the end is for sale. Someone renovated it for the town? Could we rent it, buy it. Three giant rooms, cooking facilities. Boys and Girls club had used it historically, sometime AA.
- We need a community center! Community garden space, pool, free pile like the Shrewsbury dump.
- So many of the ideas end up landing on a town or school budget, which have barely been passing. There is a lot that we can do as individuals (from my experience running a church) that can bring an uplift to the culture. Community garden: out church would call the property we are on Hope Center: we have 31 acres that we could make available for community gardens. Could make that available without having to make it a burden for the community at large. Outpouring of generosity and personal engagement.
- Senior Citizens who are retired have things to do during the day, and are there strategies for places that could serve teenagers and work to develop those relationships. My kid can go to the store alone because they might run into people they know.
- We have very generous businesses in town. A huge things to consider when organizing.
- Cotswolds Way/public footpaths in England are across private land in a fenced path with an established protocol around closing gates. Were able to walk village to village and stay in the inns. For big dream of walking paths was really cool and would be incredible if Vermont could have some opportunities like that. You're often on small roads and paths more than in mountains.
- Amazing building in town that is empty right now. Everyone dreams of it being their own house: standalone building by the waterfall. Town AirBnB and whatever money it made funded Hog Hill Trails, library budget for the year. Whoever rented it out, it could have Brandon imagery everywhere. "You're a citizen for the week".
- Kids not wanting to stay here: spaces in the town. In North Carolina, rented out the cafeterias to everyone. Had to hire the janitor for the night. Had weddings and other events right there.
- Town AirBnB but for used clothing (Nifty Thrifty) \*\*sparkle fingers for nifty thrifty\*.
- Nifty Thrifty: make it a community space to take away stigma and make it connected. Could be an old house to be that kind of thing.
- The Old High School: has been vacant for a number of years. Now under new ownership, a new nonprofit owns the building. Inside has been completely gutted. A portion of the basement has been renovated for a workshop. Repointing windows. Listening to what everyone is saying about the buildings. Listening to people's ideas.
- Get free music or free concerts in any of these places: Nick would be happy to play. Offer free music: a good draw or fundraiser.
- Artist residencies and places artists can come and stay. A lot of artists and people with experience in that realm (they can stay in the Town AirBnB).
- A lot of room for what Molly started at the library around equipment rental. In Norway, you can borrow anything at any point. A community library of cross county skis for every level for places that would be well utilized. Rich knowledge in the community for Chittenden Brook and back country ski area. Sometimes people can't do things in their backyard because they don't know they are there. Kids who wouldn't know how to do this. Learn skateboarding, cross country skiing at Neshobe. The library has 2 bikes and 4 pairs of snowshoes. Can be managed and maintained collectively.

- Adding things to downtown and considering parking and considering that as a constraint: where is everyone going to park. Improve parking downtown.
- Add multi-layer parking garage downtown.
- “This exists but people don’t know about it” : don’t know musicians are playing that night. Grew up in Brandon and moved back. Gives me a lot of sympathy for people who move here and might not have family connections to tap into people.
- I joined a Board, and they gave me a mentor. I’m a new resident my interests are gardening, birdwatching, etc. and have someone here that would love to connect you with people who are doing those things.
- Shared equipment stuff: really cheap instruments, recording studio for kids AND adults. Maybe also a teen center.
- New resident: getting info slowly. Info is pretty slim and have to come to come things like this and scroll on FPF and Facebook. Have a two-year-old but don’t know what to do exactly.
- People can subscribe and do joinery: makerspace?
- Places where artists can go and build and create e together: sculptures, painting etc. Brandon Artist Guild is wonderful, but give people a place they can go and get counsel.
- Learning to join the community: road map on the town website. Going to Selectboard meetings is a great strategy to meet people if you go and introduce yourselves.
- Branbury Parks: people who are experts in nature and history. Elicit their attention. Saturday morning event and look at flowers and dead trees. A lot going on with dead trees.
- Interested in starting a movement where Brandon could come and have conferences and restaurants and support systems that you would need to have a conference in a town. Support the Chamber in that work.
- 65% of the community hunts and fishes: the way into a group of people that can be at conflict is through the natural environment (hunting/fishing/taxidermy).

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### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Heard so much great stuff about what is happening in town. During the brainstorming, I got to a list of 23 things. None of them felt not doable in some way, shape or form. Everything else is possible if you organize and community. Signage, direction, communication infused in your ideas to get a lot done. You have great resources, great community members, and a full room on this topic. Look forward to sharing in this process.
  - Brandon has a little Green Mountain Forest “with a lot of sex appeal.” I was amazed by was the sheer volume of things going on, only exceeded by the sheer volumes of things that could go on. Agree that many seem feasible. A couple seemed similar to other ideas. Perhaps Brandon could have “A TAB to rival the TAM.” I also mangle Moosalamoo, Chittenden Brook. Ways to connect people in the town to those places spiritually and physically could be something to strive for. The challenges is connections: from the town to the school, trails but not interconnected, public bus route. Expand Tri Valley Transit.
- Connection of people: how do we respectfully engage people when we have a different offering. The Stable Inn hostel model from Rochester could be worth exploring for a “Town AirBnb” as it takes limited management, as people can check in online.
- Struck by the resources you have here. We recently through a statewide recreation planning and talked to people focus groups. The state developed a priority action to build recreation connected to where people live, learn, and work. The things you talk about are shared by many communities across the state. That’s good news: if you are interested in that, there is movement in funding agencies to fund those things. And underutilized funds to do those things. You don’t have to do it alone. The TAM started with one section. Start with Hawk Mountain. Really easy to see successful thing and think you have to do it all at once. Bring it all at once. Trail from Brandon to Forest Dale. Get to Mini-Baker and you to get to all of Mooslamoo. Can get there right now but not marked.

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## Development, Housing, and Jobs

Visiting Team: Lauren Brady (FACILITATOR), Sarah Furman, Rowan Hawthorne, Kevin Lambert (SCRIBE), Ken Linge

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- There is a tremendous sense of community and a vibrant commercial district, and the town experiences very little sprawl.
- The town is highly walkable.
- The artists’ guild and the arts community in general are major strengths.
- The town is well located in the heart of the state for tourism and is surrounded by natural attractions and good hiking.
- The festive holiday celebrations reflect a strong community response to residents’ ideas, and after decades of minimal decorations, the holiday spirit has returned.
- The town is very welcoming, and people readily engage with others and offer help or directions.
- The community provides a safe space for residents and visitors.
- The town has several very good restaurants, at least three of which are considered important to community life.
- The electric motor was invented here, and the town has a notable legacy in abolitionism, science, and technology.
- The town is a great place to raise children, supported by a healthy local theater department and high school.
- The free public library and the Brandon Museum are valued community assets.
- The recently renovated library is a rock solid, wonderful place to bring children.

- The town has been described as a “sleeping beauty” that is waking up while remaining beautiful.
- Solarfest is held in the community.
- Having education from elementary school through 12th grade in one community is considered a major asset.
- The town’s history is impressive, with three historic districts listed on the National Register: Downtown, Pearl Street, and Church/Rossier Street.
- Local breweries are excellent and well regarded.
- The archeological site on the edge of town contains great artifacts and has produced interesting finds.
- The selectboard is well represented and engaged in the community.
- The town has excellent water quality, which even contributes to good beer.
- Lodging establishments do not rely on bottled water.
- The town has a vibrant music scene.
- The historic ironworks site is an important cultural asset.
- Volunteerism is tremendous, exemplified by the FlowerPot Program that beautifies downtown streets.
- Business owners volunteer extensively in the PTO, schools, and sports, and the community mobilizes quickly when someone is in need.
- The Brandon Chamber is a strong local institution.
- The senior center is a beautiful, well run facility.

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### **What are the Challenges?**

- The town used to have more businesses and retail stores, and many residents would like to see new businesses that generate excitement.
- The community needs more housing to fill available jobs, creating a Catch 22 where jobs cannot be filled because people have nowhere to live.
- Residents worry about education, particularly the physical condition of the school building, which was constructed in 1961.
- Anti foliant chemicals such as Roundup are being sprayed widely, raising environmental concerns.
- The inability to conduct prescribed burns must be addressed, especially after the Ripton fire, and residents want healthier outdoor spaces in the future.
- There is a need for greater recognition of Abenaki place names, history, and cultural influence.
- The proposed statewide consolidation of schools is a concern.
- The cemetery of original settlers, including the Jude family, has been abandoned and vandalized.
- The tax base relies heavily on residents rather than businesses, and many believe it must be expanded to include more commercial activity.
- Approximately 25% of residents live in poverty, creating a significant need for affordable housing.
- There are no appropriately sized homes available for families moving from starter homes to more permanent housing.
- The community is underestimating the effects of toxic mold in older homes, which affects health, building conditions, and finances, and many homes are uninhabitable as a result.
- The town needs more public education about mold, air quality, and related health issues.
- The future of the part time police department is uncertain, and residents want to explore options to improve public safety.
- The loss of the local newspaper has weakened community communication, and although an online presence exists, it needs to be strengthened.
- Daycare centers are being lost to Pittsford, creating a major childcare gap.
- Assisted living options are insufficient for community needs.
- There are too many trucks on the road, and a rail line could help reduce traffic.
- NIMBY attitudes create obstacles to needed development and improvements.
- There are not enough safe places for children or adults to ride bicycles.
- Access to local risk capital is a major concern.
- The community struggles with capital accumulation rather than aggregation through entrepreneurial development.
- The internet has made it difficult for small stores to remain financially viable.
- Declining brick and mortar spending has led to the loss of specialty stores.
- The five mile stretch through town creates traffic challenges that limit pedestrian access and choke off the flow of customers to stores.
- Communication is easily lost without a small local newspaper.
- Daycare centers continue to be lost to Pittsford.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- Capital aggregation through entrepreneurial development offers a better solution than relying on local capital accumulation.
- The town needs more walk in stores where people can buy clothing, food, and furniture.
- Although Hannaford is a strong asset, the town could benefit from another grocery store or a co-op.
- Small stores must become more competitive with online shopping.
- A local “CSA style” program, where residents pre purchase credit to spend at local stores, could strengthen the local economy.
- The community could consider changing unappealing place names that were assigned without understanding the land or culture.
- A roundabout or increased parking capacity, possibly including a parking garage, could help relieve traffic congestion.
- The statewide Save Main Street program suggests that small town retail must evolve, and offering unique experiences could help stores remain viable.
- The town could support an ADU launch and provide more resources for prospective landlords.
- A coaching program for young entrepreneurs could help transfer skills and encourage new business creation.

- Supporting downtown businesses, including the local bookstore, is essential.
- Public education about mold and air quality, along with partnerships with qualified experts, could improve health and safety.
- Expanding libraries and thrift stores would encourage reuse and sharing of goods.
- A small business incubator would provide low risk support for new ventures.
- Multi use business spaces could help local craftspeople sell their goods.
- A Community Housing Trust could ensure long term housing affordability.
- Cornerstone's rental and homebuying programs could help more residents access stable housing.
- The town could strengthen its recreation and tourism economy by leveraging natural resources.
- Reestablishing the local newspaper would improve communication.
- Community potlucks could help residents connect and allow children to play together.
- Creating a public recreation area for children would reduce screen time and promote outdoor activity.
- Bringing back the dance festival at the Brandon Inn would encourage community engagement.
- Increasing tourism would bring economic benefits to the town and its businesses.
- Improving access to the Long Trail and hosting events or competitions could attract more visitors.
- A job fair in Central Park could connect residents with employers.
- Creating and incentivizing more service opportunities, such as pet care or in home pet services, would meet local needs.
- A service to vet local service providers would help residents identify reliable options.
- Increasing the number of indoor environmental professionals or establishing a town authority could improve public safety.
- Scholarships for trades, such as those offered by Mike Roe, could support students pursuing vocational careers.
- A comprehensive study of housing, jobs, and services would help address interconnected challenges.
- Organizations like Resource Vermont and Front Porch Forum can help residents find needed services.
- An anti-poverty initiative could build on the idea that the town already has enough resources to support everyone.
- The community could market itself as an attractive place for remote workers by leveraging its beauty and strong sense of community.
- Updating Vermont's residential and commercial energy standards and improving zoning codes would enhance safety and resilience.

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### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The team was impressed by the community's strong spirit and collaboration.
- They observed that residents tend to be debt averse, which can be a strength.
- They believe the community has greater capacity for local investment across both public and private sectors.
- They noted that service is a meaningful way to give back and is closely connected to housing and employment.
- They recognized the area's amazing natural resources, which will be important for attracting jobs and skills.
- They saw an opportunity to welcome visitors in ways that make them want to stay and become part of the community.
- They noted that Brandon has strong infrastructure and physical assets.
- They were struck by the conceptual ideas residents have for organizing, gathering, sharing, and improving the community.

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## Beyond Downtown

Visiting Team: Katie Buckley (FACILITATOR), Meg Campbell (SCRIBE),

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Amazing trails that have been created on the mountain and for backcountry skiing and hiking.
- Branbury beach.
- Senior Center.
- Estabrook.
- Miles and miles of dirt roads for biking, walking, ATVs.
- Hog hill behind the school.
- "Old Brandon" – part of Hawk Hill, original cemetery.
- Large golf course, skiing, sledding.
- Solarfest has 80 acre parcel for walking trails and solar installation, off Steinberg road.
- Moosalamoo National Recreation Area.
- Leicester Hollow Trailhead.
- Clean water.
- Good road department that takes good care of roads.
- Over 200 acre town forest above Basin Road, former water supply – Brandon, Chittenden, Goshen.
- Historic Iron Forge in Forestdale – owned by the state, historic site.
- Unique geology and has been studied since the 1800s – hogback, paintworks in Forest Dale, fossilized roots, lots written about it.
- Basin Bluegrass festival in July.
- Estabrook field – made apartments from the old Brandon Training School – got repurposed.
- A lot of agriculture that happens in the surrounding areas.
- Minnie Baker Trail in Brandon.

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## What are the Challenges?

- No sidewalks in Forest Dale, or other areas outside downtown.
- Not enough bike trails, and not a good way to get from downtown to schools and other satellite areas, also out to Park Village.
- Lots of conserved land, VLT, Nature Conservancy, a lot of land is privately owned and access is limited.
- Preserving historic sites that are outside downtown Brandon like Forestdale – maintaining the historic assets.
- Through traffic on Route 7.
- Park became smaller, gained little parks, gained sidewalks and streets.
- Transportation from Park Village to grocery store – difficult to get back and forth.
- Limestone processing in Florence – trucks go back and forth on Route 7 – huge and terrifying. They don't use railroad. Issue.
- Traffic with OMYA...no railroad because of Middlebury...need to work with Middlebury.
- Aging population, isolation of elderly.
- Littering and dumping of garbage, furniture, diapers, etc.
- Lovely dirt roads in Brandon that are used as dumps – Syndicate road is one. Cost of garbage disposal is a problem.
- Housing construction maxes municipal services.
- Townhouse development and there is a lot of interest but very little availability.
- A lot of talk about town-wide online calendar. It's live! Housed on Brandon.org site. Live as of two weeks ago.
- Carpooling and rural transportation challenges.
- Elementary school is outside of town. No way to get from in town to school so that it could be accessible to everyone – connectivity.
- Really awesome trails but people don't realize that you can access Hawk Hill trails from downtown Brandon. People don't know that they could do it – awareness.
- Limited parking at Hawk Hill.
- Neshobe Elementary School – busses and parents coming to pick up kids, and general store, pedestrians...safety at school release time and drop-off.

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## Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Improve parking at Hawk Hill.
- Well-manicured trail system from Brandon to Middlebury for tourists and more. Or Brandon to Pittsford.
- Next door in Rochester is the Ridgeline Outdoor Collective – on National Forest Land – Rochester is monetizing that. Think of Brandon as one of the home bases for the trails and claiming them and monetizing (cafes, inns, etc.).
- Town owns a piece of land that floods at the beginning of Wheeler Road – build a natural swimming pool modelled after Pittsford Rec pool! And Proctor!
- Behind the American Legion building – reinvigorate building trails and recreation area – conduit for getting to further places.
- There has been an uptake in indoor roller skating. Build a roller skating rink! Has had some at Neshobe. Maybe more advertisements.
- Laundromat – how to make that happen for people who don't have a laundry facility at home.
- Develop areas outside of downtown but no utilities and difficult to get back and forth – need a new water facility to provide water and septic for new development.
- Carver Street/Syndicate Road – close down and use for horseback riding, bicycling, skiing, etc.
- Form a conservation Commission for the public to be better informed about outdoors, trails, etc.
- Designate areas for kids spending time on electric scooters – other designated activities. Safe routes for scooting!
- Build a Brandon Bowl and Roll! Bowling alley and Roller Skating/Derby.
- Build more modest/middle housing.
- Create more solar opportunities for people who can't have solar on their roofs. Something that people who live in Brandon could buy into – a community solar project.
- Having quick stop parking in town. 10-minute parking spots for older people or people who don't have handicap tags.
- Make Brandon a stop along the Amtrak route!!! Whistlestop! Big difference for tourism!
- Bike shop!
- Make solarfest a regional location for events.
- Moving to a new town, getting in socially is difficult – help people get into the community like they have in Rutland.
- Create bike kiosk for bike rentals and trail access.
- Build more community, across lines, where are the models? Connect people to help other people – time bank, mutual aid, etc.
- Make safe space to drive and bike out of town.
- Put a bulletin board near trail areas (that don't have cell service) to communicate ways for tourists to spend money in town.
- Build an indoor pool.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- As you get farther from downtown the border gets porous...some areas clash or overlap with other municipalities. That's not a bad thing! Work regionally! Work collaboratively!
- Are areas beyond Brandon only recreation? What about sidewalks and Forest Dale? Coalescing around critical issues. Connectivity. How to get from here to there. Access. How to ensure access to trails and forests. Needs a TAB like the TAM in Middlebury.

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## Education

Visiting Team: Jessica Savage (FACILITATOR), Denise Smith (SCRIBE), Andy Barker, Rowan Hawthorne, Adam Sancic

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- School system in Brandon – elementary to HS, includes pre-school since the late 1980s.
- Land with the school that is part of the campus.
- Incredible collection of educators in a town where school budgets are hard to pass and teachers are asked to do more with less – impressed with personal passion and dedication of the teachers who live here.
- HS has really incredible outdoor education called Mooslemoo and does amazing projects with them.
- Very favorite educators are still here.
- Music teacher, librarian,... people who are teaching who are Neshobe graduates here.
- Neshobe – this week students saw the 3-4 play, 1-2 musical, volunteer in kindergarten, practice at assemblies so the kids know how to act in big group events, so they know how to behave in that community.
- Theater department is great – experience was transformative for them.
- Library is incredibly active and provides programs for youth through adults – check out a sewing machine. Supportive and get tech out there. Incredible educational activity. ASL classes, advanced directives, weekly D&D, Coding, pokeman....
- Community members can find the right fit for their families.
- Homeschool community – involved in a lot of activities in the town.
- Vermont Poet Laureate – put on a lot of programming. Ruth Stone House. Program for teachers who are also writers.
- Homeschooling parent and there were so many opportunities in VT, including library, theater troop... Brandon was centrally located and became a hub. Welcoming the school was to their kids to take part time classes, sports, and theater. Other communities where homeschools have not felt welcome.
- Growing theater program for younger children, Brandon artist guild, music, summer concert series with music happening every weekend... The arts core to the town.
- Music lessons with Brandon residents who are incredible musicians. Wonderful music teachers. Practicing their skills to their education.

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### What are the Challenges?

- The budget – doesn't pass. The message isn't coming through clearly.
- Budget feels complicated and difficult to describe and people are not showing up to listen and hear about it and feel like they have lack of control and their only control is to say no.
- Funding education in VT is unique and when we have no control over the rising costs, it is challenging and when people have some control, they can say no.
- Key pressure for teachers to provide resources for students. Legislative mandates increase the pressures on schools, creating frustration, and not seeing the results. education is expenses and it is not working for people and when people graduate from HS – needs of students are more complex and the mandates on the schools and the teachers and administrators are more complex.
- Example bullying, emergency management, huge amount of expectations, etc... complex situation the teachers are facing.
- Core value – hard to talk about money in public....
- Prepare a budget for a revote. 100 budgets. Avg. per pupil spending was higher for the towns where the budget passed. In towns that people do not have extra money, world languages that had been paired down over the years. In Middlebury they get 3 days of week of world languages – one town over. Inequity exists based on people's financial means.

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### Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Volunteer for very specific subjects – Brandon U – hour to two-hour classes that would be offered on Saturdays by community members with skills.
- Workshop space at the old HS for hands on.
- Brandon could ask our youth what they are interested in and helping them pursue those interests. Listen to the kids.
- Education being a whole life. 4 boys – parents juggling their skills. Parents and teachers are stressed out. Both parents are working. If we really cared about our kids – we would incorporate all of this. Less stress and juggling. After school activities – kids get off the bus at 2:40pm. Incorporating all the ages and stages so parents aren't going here and there and dropping off.
- Putting things in the same space. We have a lot of people who want to spend time with kids and kids who need to spend time with kids. Mentoring that could happen. Build a common culture – Neshobe has a big opportunity. Nice if parents and kids could take advantage of the community resources and people.
- Need more organic natural systems – the current system is fragmented, broken and institutional. Needs to rely more on our ancestral knowledge – we spent way more time outdoors.
- Voucher systems: school choice.
- Homeschooling has more flexibility for hiring or working with people.
- Offer more flexibility for kids to go to preschool. Pick up and drop off times are challenging. Lengthening the time for preschool to match the regular school day. Transportation is a huge barrier.
- Connecting with the background check – field trip – had over 12 parents that wanted to be chaperone and only 2 made it through – make it a carousel event at the beginning of the school year to get that done. Sad that they couldn't go and

then they don't want to try. What can we bring back, especially the senior citizens.

- Rutland Northeast – transcend to help expand commitment to learning opportunities. Connecting outer communities with our schools more. Something that is recognized to show them there are other paths out there. Interested volunteers to work with our students.
- We don't have enough money and districts like Midd speaks 3 languages... poor communities feel like they can't get anything better, can't do anything better. Hostile to homeschooling because it is taking children out of the school, because it erodes the public schools.
- Brigham decision – create equity in the school system again. Why are we accepting that our kids won't be as well off as

other districts, better education and opportunities in rich districts vs. poor.

- Recreation program is amazing. Art opportunities, physical, social... still accessibility barriers for families. Bring rec programs to be housed at the school. Fewer kids accessing community opportunities – get them closer to our community?
- Children's program on middle school/high school to draw out interest for businesses of their own. Community support of drawing people out. Jobs and housing – help them have a way to have their own business with support.
- Create more opportunities for the town to hear more about what is happening in the school and the people who work in the schools and sharing more stories of the educators in our communities.

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### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Great discussion and was impressed with how many people have connections to education. All have great assets. Think about how to connect with each other more often.
- Get youth connected with the community more. Career exploration. Getting people connected with businesses for education – maybe a toolkit could be developed. So many incredible things in Brandon. State perspective – how could the dept. of labor help.
- Inspiring – walking away with is the pressure to provide the additional social services and how that translates into the work that you do and how we as a state support schools in being able to provide that support.
- Don't wait for permission. There is so many opportunities to connect with each other.
- This conversation is a systems change conversation – about culture, beliefs, etc... deeper things are important.

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## Infrastructure and Public Safety

Visiting Team: Alyssa Johnson (FACILITATOR), Kevin Lambert (SCRIBE), Sarah Furman, Ken Linge

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- There have been many positive changes here, and although the downtown remodel took a long time, it was worth the effort.
- Visitors from Boston often remark on what a lovely community we have.
- Local churches provide meals for the community.
- The library is a wonderful resource.
- The Chamber of Commerce is active and engaged.
- People in Brandon communicate well with each other, and it feels like a good old town.
- The town has one of the best highway departments in Vermont, with excellent plowing and road maintenance.
- Sidewalks are solid, and the community has seen more of them added.
- Street walkways have been freshly painted, with clear zones marking crosswalks.
- The town has some of the best water in the state thanks to a pressurized aquifer that keeps it free of pollutants.
- The fire department is active, vibrant, and dependable.
- The community maintains a pleasant rural feel and is not overdeveloped.
- Community spaces are green, full of trees, and the downtown feels lively without being overly urban.
- The Selectboard and town offices are excellent, with capable people who respond quickly when given notice.
- The fire department responded immediately during a middle of the night CO issue, which may have saved lives.
- After a major flood damaged the town offices, the town secured grants so repairs cost residents nothing, and the facility is now a strong community asset.
- The town hall is a special place for this small community.
- The overflow system beneath Route 7 has prevented the town from flooding again.
- The police department is very responsive and respectful toward the community.

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### What are the Challenges?

- Many towns have signage extending from their buildings to show what businesses are inside, and this community needs more signs like that.
- Speeding is a major issue, with people driving 55 in a 35 mph zone on Route 73, and there are concerns about impaired driving due to bars and parties.
- Five or six businesses are not accessible, and the number of disabled residents is higher than many realize.
- A sobriety checkpoint is needed on Union Street Extension near the railroad tracks.
- Young people worry about safety while biking, and a connected network of bike paths is needed so kids can travel safely between school and downtown.
- Speeding on River Street is excessive, with frequent incidents of cars driving far too fast.

- A sewer line near a home, built in the 1800s, has split in places, and delaying investigation will only worsen the problem; development interest must be balanced with maintaining existing infrastructure.
- Children ages 11–14 riding e bikes and skateboards face hazards near the bridge and Route 7 by the Mobil station, and they need education about safe routes.
- Water delivery pipes are old and corroded inside.
- The town lacks a stable police force, and many officers left due to political issues.
- Some in the public safety community underestimate environmental health risks in homes, and more education is needed.
- People doing tough jobs for very little pay need to be heard about what their work requires.
- Every Brandon resident should have basic needs met before the community tackles larger global issues.
- A Tesla was suggested for the police force, but the idea lacked thoughtful consideration.
- The crosswalk across from the bank ices over in winter and needs a drain installed.
- Brandon Rescue has a strong volunteer base but is short on professional EMT staff.
- The town needs more housing for low income and moderate income residents.
- Having sidewalks on both sides of Route 7 may feel like a luxury to some and can constrict the road.
- The 30 new units being built cost \$500,000 each, which is too expensive, and more affordable construction options are needed.
- It is difficult for residents to dispose of unwanted items, as the transfer station is costly and transportation is challenging.
- Stick built houses struggle to stay dry, and the town should explore partnerships with the modular home industry.
- The school (Otter Valley) needs significant work, as it was built in 1961.

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### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- Add signs outside buildings to make retail options clearer.
- Build skateparks to reduce risk for skateboarders.
- Install signs encouraging riders and skateboarders to slow down in dangerous areas.
- Educate public health officials about environmental health risks in homes and businesses.
- Expand road monitoring to improve safety.
- Install shelters for people waiting for the bus.
- Complete long planned bike paths.
- Explore ways to share or sell the town's abundant water resource to fund other projects.
- Improve residential zoning codes to increase home safety.
- Strengthen Vermont's residential building standards.
- Pursue grants and public funding to expand housing options.
- Consider converting the large school building in the center of town into housing.
- Recognize that the old Brandon High School building is used for many purposes but may not be suitable for housing.
- Continue rehabilitation of the school building, including façade repairs and window upgrades.
- Although a new pump kept the sewer plant functional, the facility is still 100 years old and needs long term planning.
- The Selectboard should address emerging issues early, and forming a lobbying group could help.
- A laundromat would be a valuable asset, and concerns about security are overstated.
- Interview previous laundromat owners to understand why it closed and determine what staffing would be needed.
- Brandon Rescue could benefit from improved or additional ambulances.
- Extend sidewalks from the high school to other key destinations.
- Increase police presence around town.
- Parents should educate their children about safe riding of e bikes and scooters, and signage would support this.
- Address stop sign issues near the liquor store, where speeding off Route 73 is common and enforcement is lacking.
- Strengthen awareness of how buildings affect health and finances.
- Increase transparency about how public money is spent.
- Reallocate sidewalk space to widen roads for bike paths where appropriate, recognizing that some tradeoffs are necessary.
- Mark dangerous sections of roads to keep riders out of harm's way.
- Post signs requiring people to walk bikes or skateboards in hazardous areas.
- Expand efforts to bury utilities underground, building on the progress already made.
- Make appliance disposal easier by designating an annual pickup day.
- Consider a system where residents place items in a central crate or drop off point for collection, funded through taxes.
- Promote scientific solutions that support better housing construction.
- Partner with Habitat for Humanity, which not only builds homes but also performs repairs.
- Take advantage of modern building materials that are easier to mass produce and more durable.
- Encourage more young people to serve on Selectboards to bring fresh perspectives.
- Ensure schools budget annually for repairs instead of letting needs accumulate.
- Replace the school's roof and heating system.
- Commit to maintaining every new structure the town builds.

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### **Reflections of the Community Visit Team**

- Municipal leaders across Vermont are seeking smart ways to fund projects, and planning is a key lesson from those efforts.
- Capital planning is strongly encouraged statewide; as children we take infrastructure for granted, but as adults we recognize its importance.

- The people here demonstrate strong community development capacity.
- Positive outcomes occur when people gather to plan for capital needs.
- Project costs can be daunting, but the conversations still need to happen.
- Resources exist to help communities navigate these challenges, and they are worth exploring.
- There is a real cost to doing nothing, and the community's leadership is an asset because it is willing to act.
- The ability for kids to walk, bike, or skateboard safely is a major concern, and connecting the dots on this issue is important.
- Improved signage is an accessible, low cost opportunity.
- Deferred maintenance can undermine communities, and it cannot be ignored year after year.
- It is encouraging that Brandon recognizes this issue and keeps it front of mind.

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## Zoom Forum

This input was gathered from a Zoom forum facilitated by VCRD staff.

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### What are the Assets in Brandon?

- Small community.
- Where we are close to the Green Mountain natural areas and hiking trails.
- Being close to the environment.
- Brandon Free Library, one of our favorite places in town.
- Outdoor recreation trails, the Falls Alana.
- Great downtown area with good shops, food options, sidewalks and pedestrian spaces.
- Close knit community, if there's something you need, there's always a neighbor willing to step in and help you. There's lots of friendship and willingness to support each other. Comforting that people are here to help each other succeed.
- Infrastructure improvements to the Downtown roads and the flood resilience.
- Brandon Rec has expanded opportunities for kids to do things.
- My kids have a positive experience in the Neshobe School.
- I feel pretty safe living here.
- Living just outside the village, we can walk into town and we walk everywhere! We love the walkability to get what we need.
- We have a grocery store in town.
- Small town with a great community - people know each other and we're polite and civil to one another despite the things we disagree on.
- Knowing what's going on around town, and how responsive the Selectboard and Town are to things like improving the crosswalks or other things that people speak up about.
- Working toward renewable energy sources like solar. Also good that Green Mountain Power allows customers to use solar and electric vehicles.
- The flood resilience and road infrastructure are net good because they protect the long-term of the community.
- Have lots of great downtown businesses, seems like things are doing pretty well with a new coffee shop and Red Clover moving to new digs. The Brandon Chamber is very active and helpful.

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### What are the Challenges?

- Sustainability - technological infrastructure and changes in climate.
- Worried about the flooding in our town and nearby communities in the last couple of decades. Climate will affect all parts of our lives. Our society has been focused on short-term consumerism and maybe we need to think about de-growth where we only consume what we can produce ourselves or by working the land..
- Connection between Forest Dale and Downtown is reliant on cars, and so is most of town.
- Danger of kids biking or walking on Rte 7 to the schools or to parts of downtown because everything is set up for cars to move fast.
- Education is the elephant in the room in Vermont, with small communities we struggle to support the education that the community expects. We have a good system for kids but it's getting more costly and it's a statewide issue.
- We have a backlog of school building maintenance - bonds for maintenance fall on local voters and property owners to approve with only small grants, but in other places the State helps deal with building maintenance. New buildings are so expensive, but it's also expensive and hard to repair an old building.
- The education system in Vermont is very confusing.
- Even though the schools in this area have been somewhat consolidated, there is still a really small group of students and not enough people supporting them.
- Identify is really entrenched with the school so talking about change and thinking about what the next generation needs is really hard.
- Healthcare costs are really driving up the cost of everything including education.
- Access to early childcare and daycare is really scarce resource.
- Brandon fails to pass the school budget some years which points to not having a great relationship of communication between the community and the school district. Less responsive to the community concerns, and hard for them to be transparent about their budget and what the community is paying for.
- Declining enrollment, transparency, and communications. School Board meetings are fine and strive to be open to the public, but the budget is hard to understand and give feedback on.

- Graduation rate at OVUU is low at 70%. 50-60% go on to education after and some of them stay in town. A lot of young adults don't see Brandon or Vermont as a viable place to live and get a career or further education.
- Hard to find housing for elder parents.
- Hard to find housing for even visiting nurses or teachers, or other professional community members.
- Affordable housing options in Brandon are really limited so waitlists are really long. And to afford the houses that come on the market in Brandon requires a high-paying job in a lot of cases.
- There aren't a lot of well-paid jobs in town, have only a few larger companies, and lots of small family-owned businesses.
- Land use and regulation is another barrier to housing.
- We keep losing public safety employees to other town.

### **Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?**

- More electric vehicles, work more on solar. Go beyond the political drama around this stuff and just think long term about what the pros and cons are.
- Want walkways or bikeways between Forest Dale and downtown and generally want more connections between all parts of Brandon to move around without a car. Would be good for biking, walking, or running to amenities or to schools.
- Could try to revive the effort to have a bike and walking path through parts of town.
- Would be great recreation opportunities to have bike trails or a bicycling and walking path.
- Could have bike lanes in downtown.
- Build a stronger relationship between the community and the School Board and the School District, help community members understand and be able to give proactive feedback.
- Make sure zoning makes it possible for residents to put a tiny house or other ADU's on personal residential property so elder parents or graduating students can move back.
- Look at the housing stock and other buildings we already have that could be retrofitted or rehabilitated for housing.
- Have an organized community housing effort in Brandon to develop or attract developers for more affordable housing, attract young adults and families.
- Create an indoor recreation facility including an indoor walking track so that community members can meet up in the winter time where they can exercise and spend time together.
- Include a swimming pool, a skating rink, and an indoor playground!
- Could Otter Valley School open up for weekend or after school hours as a walking track or other community recreation? Could have a club that gets together at regular times.
- Would love to see something happen with the old high school, sounds like maybe some arts group is working on reviving it. Would like to know more about that and have more engagement.
- What can we do about retaining our public safety employees? Could the community be more engaged with the police and the fire department?
- Could we have a school Resource Officer in Otter Valley school who works with the schools and the Brandon Police so that there can be a positive connection between the school and the police force to support the school with any potential safety threats to the school or can help with safety and truancy checks?
- We should have more fun activities for teenagers.
- Go back to the idea of a Valley View recreation space, but engage the whole community right from the beginning. Incorporate people's hopes and concerns and have better information and transparency about the cost of building and maintaining the operation into the future.



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## Ideas from Brandon Youth

This input was from students who joined during a free block forum on April 30 at Otter Valley facilitated by VCRD staff.

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### What are the best things about Brandon?

- Library has lots of extra things it does besides just being a library: ASL class, D and D, craftmaking class.
- Brandon Rec does a lot: sports, little sister does basketball, cheerleading and softball. Mom coached there for softball and cheerleading for younger divisions, games here.
- Bill Moore announcing a lot of rec sports and he makes them a big deal, makes them known. Big asset to Brandon and rec dept
- Morningside bakery, May's, 22 Park (eatery: they have ice cream, they have fries, burgers, mac and cheese, place for us to eat)
- Art Gallery and book shop: art gallery displays student work, raffles.
- Book store is small but nice, not a lot of parking near it
- Champlain Farms: slushies and convenience store stuff.
- Walk around town, always someone walking outside, take a loop around a park and around an abandoned school, playground, dog park. If you live in the middle of town not great for fishing or hikes.
- Waterfall: walks to there and back, during Fourth of July they do a duck race, everyone puts a number on them, whichever one gets to the river after the waterfall wins.
- 4th is a big deal: catering, lots of events, parade, street dance, lots of shops, cookouts.
- Lake Dunmore to swim or play a summer sport.
- Camps are family camps on Lake Dunmore, campgrounds.

### Are there things you don't like about living here?

- Struggle to get jobs because of activities (sports, theatre, etc.).
- Hard to get jobs maybe?: most people go to Dunkin or Cafe Provence or 22 Park.
- Some places want more experience from high school students so only restaurants.
- Housing is hard.
- Going away for school, but like this area in general, close knit community, VT in general is safe and nice.
- In most zombie movies they are always heading to VT: humans are trying to find a less crowded place, not so many people, but close knit.
- Parents both on fire department, mom grew up here, lots of people know grandfather, know a lot of people.
- Going away to school, but would maybe come back, like mountains, mountains are safer weather wise, but really like the ocean.
- Thinking about moving to NY: mom lives up there, people are nice to each other. Moriah, small town but bigger than Brandon, decent variety of places to live and go to for different stuff.
- Brandon is smaller town, people connected about the size, but when something on the news, spreads out and people get involved and strong reactions.

### What could the community do to make Brandon a better place to live in and grow up in? What do you wish was different or wish you could change?

- Do a career day here: maybe for the school instead of learning about our future, we could go out and explore the places nearby where you could actually experience it.
- Community service day: that mixed with career day.
- Having personally owned businesses be more welcoming to people who aren't in their family: they give jobs to people in their family, you won't hear about it unless it's from the person that's related to them, communication about job options for locally owned businesses.
- Have a drive in movie theatre, maybe a movie or some type of theatre, school has an auditorium and there is the theatre in Rutland.
- More variety of restaurants and stores.
- Maybe a big playground that everyone knows where it is: giant spiderweb.
- Biking and hiking trails.
- Live in places where you can access the woods from home, 4 wheeling trail.
- Lots of people have 4 wheelers and use them on their land and woods, allow them to go on each other's land.
- Trail for that in Leicester that connects to Brandon.
- Some restaurants have things like creemees, but we hang out at houses mostly.
- Slushees in Jiffy Mart and Champlain Farms.
- Bloom and Bungalow.
- Moonlight Madness: all the shops are open and you get money and buy things from places.
- Town businesses close early so that makes it work for folks.
- After 5 or 8 pm everything shuts down: hard to go there.
- Most people go to Rutland after events or go home.
- Hang out space that is open later: maybe a mall or something? Arcade?

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## More Ideas from Brandon Youth

These are ideas that were shared in a forum with an 8<sup>th</sup> grade civic class facilitated by VCRD staff on April 30, 2026.

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### What are the best things about Brandon?

- Like all the events that go on.
  - The Duncan.
  - Events and sports.
  - Chill and small town.
  - The Dunkin and small town.
  - The Duncan.
  - Small town.
  - Events, hear about it thru FB and school.
  - Like leaving town.
  - Golf course.
  - Events.
  - All the entrepreneurial businesses.
  - 4th of July celebration.
  - Sports.
  - Water fountain, Hannaford's.
  - Smaller community.
  - Brandon library.
  - Rich history but wish it was more available.
  - Sense of community in a small town, staggering number of local events.
  - Football.
  - Walgreens is convenient.
  - Open the subway back up.
  - Local farmer's market: wish it could be bigger, having more music.
  - More places to eat out.
  - More parking downtown.
- 

### Are there things you don't like about living here?

- Worry about "drunks".
  - Having to come to this school: too many people.
  - Lack of people with jobs.
  - The Dunkin takes 30 minutes to get coffee: understaffed, a bunch of teenagers working there.
  - Brandon is low income can lead to people living paycheck to paycheck, rising cost of living.
  - Not a lot of sidewalks, some people have to walk on road, can be danger too if vehicles are going too fast.
  - Not a lot of law enforcement: we need more because there are shootings and other things, police come from far away, takes up to half an hour to respond.
- 

### What could the community do to make Brandon a better place to live in and grow up in? What do you wish was different or wish you could change?

- Local farmer's market: wish it could be bigger, having more music.
- More places to eat out.
- More parking downtown.
- More places to park bikes around town, only 4-5 around town.
- Should have a WalMart like in Rutland: more jobs, Super WalMart, more stores, landscaping businesses.
- More walking options from Estabrook, more jobs that are walkable with sidewalks.
- Could use the drive in movies more often: hasn't been used in two years, was in affiliation with the Paramount during COVID.
- Taco Bell: lots of support.
- Someone used paint gun on movie screen so needs to be cleaned.
- Carnival event at drive in spot: traveling carnival late June/July 1-2 weekends, having movies during carnival would be a great idea, not just rides which are expensive.
- Football.
- Playground at Otter Valley: better basketball court up by old school.
- Have recess, more time outside.
- Indoor pool and put it on school property.
- Fishing pond, or pond for swimming.
- Access to ponds or river for fishing.
- Water fountains for fishing.
- Chinese and Japanese and Mexican food:.
- Food trucks come in with different foods.
- More places for people to live and reduced cost of living which exceeds people's income right now.
- Apartments or other options.
- Track and field spot and events.
- Buffet: everyone would go there.
- Place for people to go for people who need money, a free place for people to go, like a community center.
- Not enough off roading ATVing.
- More hunting options: release ducks here for that.
- Allow ATVs on the roads.
- Pheasants as hunting opportunities.
- Recreation park closer to town: Estabrook is far outside town, field with public bathrooms, maybe tennis courts other things.
- 4 wheeler trails.
- Snowmobiling.
- More gas stations.

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## Additional Action Ideas

Here are the ideas residents and youth contributed through paper and online survey forms.

- Create a Neshobe River Walk in the heart of Brandon initially accessible from Mill Lane, but later from Grove St, Union Avenue and Maple Street (all 4 points of the compass). The park would run from the Lower Falls along the river to the back of Hannafords' property opening up a beautiful natural resource in the center of Brandon. The park would be kept in a natural state and maintained by the "Friends of Neshobe River Walk," a volunteer organization similar to what has been done by the Friends of Town Hall and Friends of Brandon Free Public Library. A picturesque walking bridge with views to the Falls would make an iconic photo op for tourists, wedding photos, town promotional materials, etc. and help Brandon attract visitors. This idea aligns with the language in the Town Plan, i.e. "Develop town-owned riverfront properties for public use" and would meet the Select Board's desire to benefit all town residents. This property is unsuited for anything other than recreational use and the current owners have expressed interest in having a discussion with the town regarding acquiring the flood plain area. A picturesque walking bridge with views to the Falls would make an iconic photo op for tourists, wedding shots, town promotional materials, etc. and help Brandon attract visitors.
- A local job board for teenagers during the summer. Everything from a half day's work of work to a week's to a month's.
- A community garden space somewhere that is accessible to all who sign up.
- Incentivize the following (though I'm have no idea what tools/resources the Town of Brandon has/can employ): Incentivize TRULY affordable housing. Wealthy people are moving to VT - a lot of new faces in Brandon, yes? - to retire. The state needs to increase taxes on the wealthiest among us, or offer the option to voluntarily invest in community well-being through donations to home/infrastructure construction.
- Incentivize the return of a laundromat. My household doesn't need it, but our community does. (Is there such a thing as a community-supported laundry?).
- Incentivize a local entrepreneur (and whoever owns the space) to make the now-vacant Subway sandwich shop a pop-up space for a series of food entrepreneurs? Maybe someone trying to make the jump from pop-up catering or a food-truck would end up taking it over? Hopefully offering Mexican, Asian or Indian food?
- It's imperative that Brandon do a better job of supporting its schools. Our old, failing physical plant and reputation for failed budgets inhibits our ability to draw young families or investments.
- Community gardens, teen job board, more community spaces, opening up Estabrook park and providing transportation there, plus adding a sidewalk.
- A nice Recreation session last Thursday, some good ideas floated. One that I liked was to turn the abandoned barber shop into a youth hostel. A nice way to attract young, adventurous folks to our beautiful little town. But. The barber shop building is small and in very poor shape. Probable teardown, not worth putting money into. But. The Methodist Church in the center of town would be perfect. Fewer than one handful of remaining parishioners, spacious, equipped with a kitchen, fewer repairs needed. I believe the national church body would be willing to have the expense of maintaining it off their hands.
- Laundromat.
- Transportation.
- Support groups.
- Clinics (health & dental).
- Keep bulletin boards updated.
- Time bank.
- Barter forum.
- Improve Union St sidewalk.
- Transportation ideas: Phone trees for rides, use e-van, get a train to stop in town.
- Better signage for bikers.
- Start electric bulletin board.
- Bring RSVP to Brandon.
- Figure out how to capitalize on our water.
- Transportation: Ride service volunteer drivers. The Bus is too limited and other driving services are also limited.
- Old Brandon High School as community center.
- Bike trails through town and connections to other towns and Green MT and Brandbury bike trails.
- Brandon and State of VT incentives to build moderately priced housing.
- Community free potluck dinners.
- Help folks who would like to start businesses - small or large - with loans, knowledge, etc.
- Create a mentorship program.
- Bike paths connecting Brandon to other towns north and south and to national and state forest bike trails.
- Improve ride service for people who don't have cars. Network volunteer drivers.
- Have laws or regulations for property owners to keep their properties reasonable clean and maintained. There are many homes and properties in town that are full of discarded debris and garbage. In terms of attracting new residents and businesses, this is essential.
- Finish the development of an online calendar of events for all local organizations - part of the "communication" challenge.
- Community garden spaces.
- More support is needed for our schools. The budget is voted down each year but most voters attended public school and now it is our turn to care for the youth of our communities. While academic rigor and preparing students for the future are the goal, we need to first address the poverty and lack of support for our families. Students come to school worried about food security, having a warm and safe home and until we support families (resources, mental health and parenting classes), scores aren't going to increase. To sum up: Increase

family support = students ready to learn; Bridge gap between schools & community to increase support of our school systems; Brandon's youth = Brandon's future!

- Roads all around and in town need safe bike lanes.
- There should be sidewalks that go to the schools as well as a sidewalk to Estabrook Park.
- State and local incentives to encourage in-filling of space (such as garages, barns) as accessory dwellings to assist Remedy housing access for our local youth, young adults, and young couples.
- Expand sidewalks to a wider reach.
- Bikepath from center of Brandon to Forestdale.
- Grow tourism by designating Neshobe River as "catch & release" only.
- Strengthen connection between Brandon Gap and town for hiking and back-country skiing.
- Fire danger, defoliant spraying, place names (Otter Mountain) Mt Horrid / Satan's Kingdom. The colonists brought a hell and damnation / savage mentality that is indicative of the dysfunction of those European refugees.
- Community job board for teensters.
- Community garden space.
- Buses for Esterbrook.
- Sidewalk to Esterbrook.
- Blooming Bungalow has maple creemees.
- Create a big playground for people to go to with giant spiderweb.
- Brandon needs a skate park - with bowls, half / quarter pipes, rails to grind on. Biking and scootering are popular here and I think a lot of people would like it.
- Getting a community swimming pool that could have businesses sell their stuff at a snack shack as well as themes which could give people more jobs - lifeguards, snack sellers, admissions, etc. All closer to town so people can walk there and wouldn't need rides.
- A problem is that people are angry at protesters even though they don't live in the middle of town. Protesters aren't loud and they aren't violent.
- Maybe more community buildings or places with wider age ranges - at least in Pittsfield seems lacking especially for younger ages.
- Could have internships or volunteer work available.
- More nature places.
- I plan to move away but not too far - just to Whiting because that's where my parents live. I like the freedom where I live now.
- Don't let A.I. take a lot of our jobs and send kids off to work. More than 100,000 teenagers aren't working.
- Increase library inventory and size.
- Add a Walmart.
- Playground at Otter Valley.
- Increase school / town budget.
- Add a food / shopping delivery service to surrounding towns.
- Better advertisement for local events.
- More job opportunities.
- Like the piazzas in Spain, Italy, etc in Europe, we should celebrate small sections of our town separately. For example, have a block party for Park St. and share the history of Park

Street, meet those neighbors, have a potluck, etc. Then Pearl St, then Church St, Franklin, Union, etc.

- Have a sidewalk that goes all the way to Estabrook and one that goes to Otter Valley so people can safely get to each side of the town's public spaces.
- Create a playground, outdoor basketball court, tennis courts, and track & field running area at Otter Valley and a fishing pond on campus.
- Create business incentives for alternate (to what we have) cuisine to move into Brandon. Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Mexican, etc. Or food trucks of those cuisines to come on certain days of the week. Mexican Monday, Thai Tuesday, etc.
- There are not enough jobs within walking distance to the low income housing spots.
- The Drive-In Movie Theater could be a part of the Brandon Carnival events (lead up or when it ends).
- Have yearly fishing derbies.
- We need a hostel.
- Link with Ridgeline Outdoor collection.
- Have signage at trail heads - both formal and DIY bulletin poster boards to tell people ideas of what to do next (e.g., pizza places, good beer, go for a swim, open-mic nights, etc., where to hike next, swimming holes).
- New tennis courts.
- Community Resources:
  - What's working well: Strong local networks and community willingness to help neighbors.
  - Key challenges: Extremely limited public awareness of water damaged building risks, moisture management, and chronic dampness as a health and housing issue; Residents often normalize leaks, basement moisture, condensation, and musty odors; Downtown businesses fighting uphill battle on ambiance due to mold and air quality issues. Who wants to get home and smell a musty pizza box along with their fresh pie; Little access to practical guidance on identifying and safety addressing problems; Economic impacts of poor health, much of which is indoor air quality driven.
  - Ideas for action: Launch public education initiatives focused specifically on moisture intrusion, drainage, ventilation, humidity control, and early intervention; Develop practical homeowner and renter guidance; Create trusted buildings and water-damage prevention."
- Recreation and Community Engagement:
  - What's working well: Strong culture of public participation and community gathering.
  - Key challenges: Public and community buildings may have deferred maintenance, moisture intrusion, or ventilation deficiencies that affect comfort, accessibility, visitor health, and long-term building durability; Water-damaged environments may discourage participation by sensitive or vulnerable residents.
  - Ideas for action: Prioritize moisture control, ventilation, and building durability in community spaces; Assess roofs, drainage, basements, HVAC systems, and humidity management in public-use buildings; Integrate healthy-building standards into renovation planning; Consider the use of the IICRC S520 mold remediation standard for remediation of any community spaces.

- Development, Housing & Jobs:
  - What's working well: Significant community interest in housing preservation and revitalization.
  - Key challenges: Aging housing stock with widespread moisture intrusion, hidden water damage, basement dampness, roofing failures, condensation issues, and inadequate ventilation; Building trades often receive little practical training in moisture-safe construction and remediation, and no training in risks; Poorly executed energy retrofits can worsen trapped moisture conditions; concerns re ERVs/HRVs and improperly maintained mini-splits; Housing scarcity leaves residents with few alternatives when buildings become unhealthy; Inadequate regulation of flips harms new homeowners, often young families.
  - Ideas for action: Promote moisture-resistant building practices and health rehabilitation standards; Fix zoning regulations, esp around basement moisture protection and preventive measures; Expand contractor education in building science, drying, drainage, and ventilation; Encourage housing inspections and assessments that include moisture and water-damage indicators; Integrate healthy-building principles into housing and economic development planning; Explore UK's "Awaab's Law" as an example of how Brandon might improve rental safety.
- Beyond Downtown:
  - What's working well: Strong existing neighborhoods and historic housing stock throughout the community.
  - Key challenges: Rural and peripheral housing may face elevated risks from groundwater intrusion, poor site drainage, aging foundations, septic moisture issues, flooding, and deferred maintenance; Residents outside central areas may have limited access to remediation resources and technical guidance;
  - Ideas for action: Improve town-wide drainage and stormwater planning; Encourage proactive foundation, roofing, and moisture-control maintenance; Expand outreach and technical support beyond downtown areas; Include healthy-building resilience in long-term community planning.
- Education:
  - What's working well: Strong local commitment to schools and children's wellbeing.
  - Key challenges: Water intrusion, dampness, and inadequate ventilation can affect attendance, concentration, respiratory health, and long-term facility durability; Moisture problems are often hidden until substantial damage occurs; Preventative maintenance may be under-prioritized due to budget pressures; Academically, we're not teaching any awareness. This isn't just a Brandon problem; it's a State and National problem.
- Ideas for action: Increase awareness of the relationship between building conditions and student / staff performance; Encourage proactive moisture assessments, roof and drainage inspections, ventilation optimization, and preventative maintenance planning in educational facilities; Add EAI component to OVUSH health ed; work with students to develop the curriculum.
- Infrastructure and Public Safety:
  - What's working well: Growing awareness of infrastructure and resilience needs.
  - Key challenges: Chronic moisture intrusion and water damage are degrading buildings over time and increasing long-term repair costs; Flooding, drainage failures, aging infrastructure, and deferred maintenance contribute to unhealthy indoor environments; Building codes and enforcement don't adequately address long-term moisture performance; Community health is unaware of the health risks associated with our local housing and workplaces.
  - Ideas for action: Integrate moisture resilience into infrastructure planning and capital investment decisions; Improve stormwater management and drainage systems; Encourage stronger moisture-control standards in construction and renovation; Develop municipal building maintenance strategies focused on water intrusion prevention and early intervention; Work at state level on related update to RBES; Rather than wait for State CME requirements, reach out to our local healthcare community and help make the connection
- Implement forums and platforms to bridge the divide, move away from politics, and recognize what we all have in common.
- Bike path from town to elementary school or sidewalks along 73/Forestdale Rd; historical markers similar to blue plaques in England on historical homes/sites. Tourist information about the underground railroad history in Brandon.
- Wanting to make it easier for community members to feel welcome in the Neshobe School, so that the community is connected to what is happening at the school and so that the students have positive relationships with adults from their community. Make it as clear and easy as possible for community members to do what they need to do to join the school community. Recess and Lunch as most challenging times of day, having more adult community members playing games, available to sit out on a bench at recess, join lunch. When and where else would the community want to get involved in the school?

## VI. Brandon Community Visit Participants

|                     |                      |                     |                    |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Helyn Anderson      | Jessica Doos         | Brenna Kimball      | Barbara Richardson |
| Zoe Armao           | Genevieve            | Laura King          | Ber Richardson     |
| Mike Bailey         | Drzewianowski        | Nancy Kusner        | Linda Rivers       |
| Dylan Bell          | Genevieve            | Sharon Ladago       | David Roberts      |
| Kimberly Bell       | Duchesneau           | Jim Leary           | Bonnie Robinson    |
| Lindsey Berk        | Barbara Ebling       | Nancy Leary         | David Rose         |
| Lesley Bienvenue    | Joyous Emerson       | Joy Marcotte        | Liz Ross           |
| Jesse Bilodeau      | Ralph Etnier         | Ray Marcoux         | Sara Rossigg       |
| Patrick Binder      | Kim Faber            | Lyndon Martin       | Michael Ruppel     |
| Winnie Bird         | Patrick Fitzsimmons  | David Martin        | Jeff Sacks         |
| John Bird           | Michelle Fitzsimmons | Jennie Masterson    | Clare Schick       |
| Joshua Borisuk      | Carol Fjeld          | Kathy Mathis        | Mike Schick        |
| Jordan Bresette     | George Fjeld         | Sandy Mayo          | Len Schmidt        |
| Abby Brodowski      | Jessica Fjeld        | Janice Mead         | Jack Schneider     |
| Jill Brooks         | Melly Flynn          | Conrad Merb         | Barbara Scribner   |
| Michael Brown       | Joseph Flynn         | Jason Mitchell      | Scott Scribner     |
| Brent Buehler       | Joseph Flynn         | Janet Mondlak       | Fiona Slattery     |
| Billy Bullock       | David Fontaine       | Patty Moore         | Patrick Snow       |
| Judy Bunde          | Phoebe Forman        | Bill Moore          | Terry Souers       |
| Bernie Carr         | Teena Foster         | Heather Nelson      | Jeff Stewart       |
| Jacqueline Carrigan | Roger Foster         | Aida Nielsen        | Linda Stewart      |
| Jeff Cohen          | Devon Fuller         | Lissa Nilsson       | Kevin Thornton     |
| Cindy Cohen         | Susan Gage           | Matthew Orchard     | Aaron Tucker       |
| Leo Colby           | Linda Gebhard        | Jill Pariseault     | Zeke Tweedie       |
| Jan Coolidge        | Devon Haeuber        | Sarah Pattis        | Carolyn VanVleck   |
| Ray Counter         | Doug Haeuber         | Nick Patyk          | Wyatt Waterman     |
| Tim Crossman        | Nita Hanson          | Sarah Pelkey        | Tricia Welch       |
| Jeff Dardozi        | Jeff Haylon          | Laura Peterson      | Jeff Weston        |
| Julie Demaree       | Seth Hopkins         | Chris Powers        | Tom White          |
| Stanley Dill        | Susan Johnson        | Betsy Quigley       | Ben Wimette        |
| Vicki Disorda       | Anna Kehoe           | Kerrie Quinn        | Lisa Wolcott       |
| Jeremy Disorda      | Ethan Kelleher       | Lowell Rasmussen    | Julia Wolf         |
| Andy Doaner         | June Kelly           | Dennis Reisenweaver | Casie Yoder        |
| Erynn Doaner        | Molly Kennedy        | Cecil Reniche-Smith | Erica Zimmer       |
| Jill Doody          | Phil Keyes           | Karen Rhodes        | and many more...   |

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Thanks to the funders of VCRD's Community Visit Program who made this process possible:



**Northern Border  
Regional Commission**



**National Life Group  
Foundation**



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