

Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together

Community Visit Report and Action Plan February 2025



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

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Vision for Lunenburg'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 Lunenburg community.

Community members envision a future Lunenburg:

- ❖ that is welcoming for families and children.
- ❖ where all parts of the community – South Lunenburg, Lunenburg, and Gilman – are active and strong.
- ❖ with a strong sense of pride that includes community beautification through flowers, safe sidewalks, and street and sidewalk lighting.
- ❖ where the villages are connected for rolling, biking, and walking.
- ❖ that feels safe and walkable for people of all ages.
- ❖ that promotes the beauty of the rural landscape and the historic buildings to attract people to live here and visit.
- ❖ with ample, comfortable housing.
- ❖ whose trails serve as a regional recreation hub, attracting visitors from neighboring towns, across the state, and from afar.
- ❖ that promotes its recreational opportunities, including snowmobiling and skiing, to both locals and visitors.
- ❖ with outdoor spaces where lots of people of all ages can gather and celebrate with food.
- ❖ where adults have opportunities for gathering and doing things together.
- ❖ with social gatherings and recreation activities of all types for youth.
- ❖ with well-connected families and children who are engaged in town activities.
- ❖ that is vibrant and takes good care of the community and one another through accessibility and social activity.
- ❖ where community members are engaged in committees and events for the vitality and resilience of the town.
- ❖ where people help each other and visitors no matter who you are.

I. Introduction

Residents and visitors traveling through Lunenburg and Gilman are treated to quintessential Vermont scenery with historic buildings, open spaces, sweeping vistas, cemeteries, bandstands, churches, historic housing, and more. The largest town in Essex County by population, Lunenburg-Gilman is full of people who love their community and are working hard to build on the past and engage in a hopeful future.

Throughout the Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together process, VCRD staff and Visiting Team members heard in detail about the wealth of community assets. In addition to physical places, community members highlighted the deeply dedicated organizations and residents who maintain these special places, and partner together for the good of the community. Residents grappled candidly with the challenges of maintaining these assets with limited resources to support them. There was also discussion of exciting progress toward new initiatives in the community, and resources leveraged to support them.

Community members throughout the process expressed a desire to connect with each other and collaborate on efforts for the future of their community. There was enthusiasm for pulling together for the strength of the community, and for bringing back existing resources that the community missed, as well as creating new opportunities for the future of the community.

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.

After thorough deliberation, and multiple rounds of voting, Lunenburg and Gilman residents voted to form task forces around two priorities:

- **Expand Outdoor Recreation, Trails, and Tourism**
- **Increase Community Events, Social Engagement, and Community Recreation**

VCRD and all its partners look forward to working with the Lunenburg-Gilman Task Forces as they frame and implement these projects. They are already hard at work – please support their efforts or join them by reaching out to the chairs (find details in the Action Plan section of this report).

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

There are many people to thank for making the Lunenburg-Gilman Community Visit a success.

We would like to thank the Lunenburg Select Board, who invited this process, and provided funds for the community dinner at the first meeting and postage for the town-wide mailings for all three of the meetings.

We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of Planning Committee members who helped guide the process by identifying forum topics for discussion, developing the invitation process to start the effort, and helping with outreach at every stage: Gary Briggs, Tracy Davidson, Chris Lingley, Jessica Simonds, Debbie Thomas, Tina Breault, Sharon Eaton, Isabella Mertens, Mike Mutascio, Lane Nevins, Jim Peyton, and Gregg Williams.

Outreach is an essential component of a successful Community Visit, and many people helped make that happen. Thanks to Gary Briggs for helping with the town-wide mailing and distributing lawn signs to neighbors, to Gary and Jim Peyton for putting up banners in key locations around town, and to Chris Lingley for distributing flyers. Thanks also to the many other community leaders and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the events and make sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

The Lunenburg Elementary School was a key partner throughout this Community Visit process. Thank you to Principal Tammy MacQueen, administrator Karl Goulding and custodian Cynthia MacKillop for helping to coordinate the use of the school for all 3 of the meetings. We also appreciate Rebecca Lawson who welcomed us into her classroom to facilitate a youth forum with her fifth-grade students. The input and suggestions from students are included in the notes section of this report.

Coordinating the event logistics was a team effort. Thank you to the Methodist Church for allowing the use of their space. Thanks also to Chris Lingley and the Top of the Common for the use of their space for a forum at the first meeting, and for providing chairs for some of the meetings. And many thanks to Jessica Simmonds for coordinating childcare, and to Alia Williams, Hailey Williams, and Isabella Simonds for providing childcare at the meetings.

Thank you to Dakota Smith and Abbey Group for preparing the dinner at the first meeting and to Kate Soroachak for providing the music. We are grateful to the Lunenburg Variety Store for their pizza for the 2nd and 3rd meetings, and for their help with outreach.

We appreciate the UVM Office of Engagement and UVM Center for Rural Studies for producing a briefing profile of data points about Lunenburg and Gilman for the VCRD Community Visit Team. Thanks as well to Rural Studies intern Miranda Degreenia for attending the meeting and taking notes at two forums.

Thanks must also go to the funders of VCRD's Community Visit Program who made this process possible: USDA Rural Development, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Community National Bank, Lintilhac Foundation, National Life Foundation, Vermont Community Foundation, Windham Foundation and the Wisdom Connection. We also appreciate Front Porch Forum for serving as an outreach sponsor for the Community Visit program.

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 attended the first and last meetings and have offered their ongoing support to the task forces as they take action. The full list and contact information of participating leaders, agencies, and organizations can be found at the back of this report.

Getting things done is all about leadership, so on behalf of all who have participated so far and those who will participate going forward, our deepest thanks go to Kate Baxter and Liz Benoit who have volunteered to serve as chairs of the Task Force groups. Both have already demonstrated tremendous leadership in supporting the work of their task forces, and we are excited to see their leadership continue to grow.

Special thanks to Jessica Simmonds and Tracy Davidson for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Co-Chairs. Jessica and Tracy's deep dedication to the community is apparent, and we appreciate their willingness to take on this new role.

Lunenburg and Gilman are 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 Lunenburg and Gilman.

II. The “Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together” 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 Committee Meeting: September 18, 2024

On September 18, 2024, 12 local community members met to plan for the launch of the Lunenburg-Gilman Community Visit process. This group came up with a name for the process – Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics and an invitation process. Through calls, e-mails, flyers, banners, and lawn signs this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Committee included: Tina Breault, Gary Briggs, Tracy Davidson, Sharon Eaton, Chris Lingley, Mike Mastascio, Isabella Mertens, Lane Nevins, Jim Peyton, Jessica Simonds, Deb Thomas, and Gregg Williams.

Step 1 ~ Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: October 24, 2024

Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together kicked off with brainstorming forums held at the Congregational and Methodist Churches and one forum online. Over 60 participants shared assets, challenges, and ideas for action in forum topics chosen by the planning committee and attended the free community dinner at the Lunenburg School. Forum topics included: Community Connection & Communications; Recreation, Businesses, & Tourism; Youth & Young Adult Engagement; and Infrastructure & Affordability. Fifteen visiting team members participated, learning more about Lunenburg and providing reflections to the community.

Visiting Team members included: Jennifer Carlo, *Executive Director*, NEK Collaborative; Elizabeth Emmett, *Director of Operations*, NEK Community Action; Nicole Gratton, *Field Services Community Support Specialist*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Ryan Joseph, *Outreach Coordinator*, Office of US Senator Bernie Sanders; Alison Low, *Senior Planner*, Northeastern VT Development Assn.; Elyse Oliver, *Economic Recovery Corps Fellow*, RCAP Solutions; Jessie Schmidt, *Director of Strategic Initiatives*, Vermont Community Foundation; Brandi Thompson, *Community Programs Director VT/NH*, USDA Rural Development; and Casey Winterson, *Director of Community & Economic Development*, NEK Community Action

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Lauren Brady, *Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator*; Margaret Gibson, *Operations Director*; Kaziah Haviland, *Village Trust Initiative Director*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Director*; Jessica Savage, *Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives*; and Denise Smith, *Executive Director*.

Step 2 ~ Community Meeting: November 19, 2024

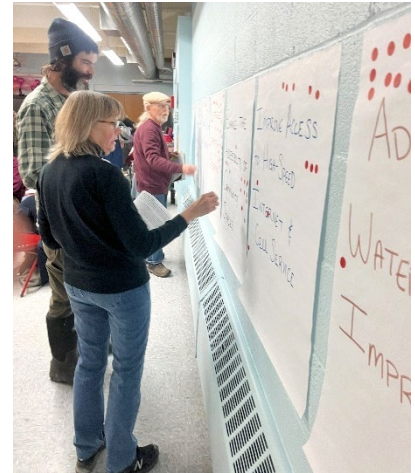
After the kick-off, VCRD staff distilled the brainstormed ideas into 14 key areas of action. Over 40 community members joined at the Lunenburg Elementary School to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After lively dialogue and a dot-voting exercise, 2 action ideas emerged as key priorities: 1) **Expand Outdoor Recreation, Trails & Tourism** and 2) **Increase Community Events, Social Engagement & Community Recreation**. Participants then signed up for task forces that will convene to move these priorities forward.

Step 3 ~ Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: December 17, 2024

On December 17, 2024, over 30 community members along with facilitators, and resource team members came 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 “Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together” action is focused at the task force level.

Resource Team members included: Richard Amore, *Community and Economic Development Representative*, USDA Rural Development; Sarah Buck, *New Project Director*, RCAP Solutions; Jackie Dagger, *VOREC Program Manager*, VT Dept of Forests, Parks & Recreation; Ben Doyle, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Nicole Gratton, *Field Services Community Support Specialist*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Annie McLean, *Community & Economic Recovery Specialist*, Northeastern Vermont Development Association; Luke O’Brien, *Outdoor Recreation Specialist*, VT Dept of Forests, Parks & Recreation; Michael O’Hara, *Vermont Chair*, Twin State Rail Trail Committee; Elyse Oliver, *Economic Recovery Corps Fellow*, RCAP Solutions; and David Snedeker, *Executive Director*, Northeastern VT Development Assn.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Lauren Brady, *Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Director*; and Jessica Savage, *Director of Programs and*



Strategic Initiatives.

III. Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together Priorities

Determined by Lunenburg residents at the Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together Community Meeting on November 19, 2024

Through thoughtful conversation about the future of their community, Lunenburg-Gilman community members whittled down a list of 16 action ideas to these two priorities that offer opportunities to build on existing resources and strengthen the community. Residents concluded the meeting by signing up for Task Forces in these selected areas.

Lunenburg residents selected these priorities for future action:

► Expand Outdoor Recreation, Trails, and Tourism

Community members highlighted the VAST trails and other existing trail networks, as well as the potential for rail trail and horse trail expansion. A group could form to promote and expand these outdoor recreation resources. Residents expressed interest in creating new walking and biking trails, and a bike park. The group could also work to connect residents and visitors to local businesses via trails, signage, and other resources.

► Increase Community Events, Social Engagement, and Community Recreation

A group could create events and opportunities for all ages to connect across the community. Community members expressed interest in hosting art and computer classes, additional events with food, intergenerational activities at the Senior Center, incorporating more volunteer opportunities into community events, and improving and expanding recreational resources and programming in Lunenburg and Gilman. The group could explore increasing the use of existing community spaces and buildings or assess current recreational resources and determine those most desired by the community. The group could also re-launch a Recreation Committee to steer and coordinate this work. Other opportunities that the group could support include the Church’s caring committee, which supports people in need, and the Town welcome packet which is in development. Specific ideas for desired recreation improvements included improving the recreation fields and basketball courts, as well as creating an ice-skating rink, ski area/rope tow, a skate park, a pickleball court, a dog park, and more.



Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

Along with the chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action that community members shared on Community Visit Day. 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.

Expand and Deepen Community Communication

A group could form to expand and improve the community's communications tools and skills. The group could assist town staff, community organizations, and regional resource providers with training, resources, and coordination on how to share and promote each other's events and information. Tools and strategies for communication could include updating bulletin boards and signs, creating print or digital newsletters, advertising the town website and meetings, creating a local news service, a phone tree or directory, mailings, Front Porch Forum, Facebook, and other ideas. The group could hold classes to teach community members how to access and utilize digital tools, and work to cultivate positive storytelling and town pride through the community's communications.

Support and Expand Business Opportunities

A group could form to support the existing businesses in the community, as well as attract new ones. Residents expressed support for the Variety Store, Multitude Takeaway restaurant, local farms, and many individual contractors and craftspeople. The group could launch a survey to understand the needs of current business. The group could explore the types of businesses that would meet community needs and inventory potential locations for new businesses, such as the old Gilman mill buildings. The group could also connect businesses to regional tourism and recreation resources.

Increase Youth Civic Engagement

Lunenburg and Gilman could create opportunities for additional youth involvement, especially in community planning and decision-making. A group could create opportunities for middle and high school students to volunteer for the Town to receive school credit, create a Youth Advisory Council to the Selectboard, develop internships with town offices, and have a youth representative on the Selectboard and municipal committees. This group could engage youth through personal invitations and share civic opportunities in youth spaces, at the library, during town events, or in schools. The group could also create opportunities for celebrating youth and showing them they are valued in the community.

Enhance the Accessibility of Community Spaces

Many community members described a need for more physically accessible gathering places in Lunenburg and Gilman. A group could assess the public and community buildings and outdoor spaces and develop actionable strategies to improve their accessibility. Spaces that were suggested for this kind of support include the recreation fields, the Town Office, the Old Town Hall, the Gilman Middle School, and the commons and band stand. This group could seek funding to make more indoor and outdoor gathering spaces ADA compliant, support bringing heat to indoor gathering spaces, and help building owners figure out ways to make buildings open to the public more regularly. The group could also explore ways to make spaces more inviting and welcoming for all community members.

Improve Access to High Speed Internet and Cell Service

A task force could form to improve broadband and cell service in all parts of Lunenburg and Gilman. This group could assess the existing access and programs, educate the community about their options, and advocate to the State and service providers to expand coverage for the community. The group could partner with NEK Broadband, the State, and other broadband service providers to improve internet access in all parts of town. The group could work to address affordability concerns for these services and connect with and learn from other communities that have successfully improved services.

Advocate for Water System Improvements

A group could form to connect with the Fire District Boards and investigate ways to support their work and improve the Lunenburg and Gilman water systems. The group could approach the Boards to find out what options have already been explored, and understand what barriers are preventing improvement. The group could offer support, suggestions, and volunteer to partner with Boards. Members of the group could also volunteer to write grants that the Fire Districts don't have the capacity to pursue.

Increase Opportunities for Youth Social Connections

A group could create more social opportunities for youth to connect with each other and with existing social groups in town. This might include identifying youth residents and surveying them to find out what they want to do. Youth expressed interest in recreation, indoor and outdoor sports, as well as arts, dances, and other activities. The group could explore the creation of a Youth Center space that would be open to youth from nearby communities and have programs such as organized sports, games, and arts. This group could also encourage existing businesses and organizations to host events, volunteer days, and programs to build connections across generations.

Create a Town Grant Writing Role

The community could create a designated position responsible for researching and seeking grant funding for Town and community projects. This could be a paid or volunteer role. A group could form to determine the strategy for structuring and funding the role and provide ongoing support in developing projects.

Promote Community Safety and Beautification

A group could form to improve places around town that are in disrepair and explore tools and policies to promote community safety and wellbeing. Residents could expand on existing efforts at the Senior Center and Church Caring Committee to provide support for community members in need. The group could also work on projects that would generate community pride like flowers for the covered bridge, town merchandise, or town-wide clean-up and volunteer days.

Build School-Community Relationships

A group could enhance the current energy and relationships to support and connect with the Lunenburg School, as well as to strengthen community connections to parents and students who attend school outside of Town. Members of the group could attend the Kingdom East School District Board meetings to ensure that the voices of residents are being taken seriously. The group could also explore how to advance alternative education funding options that may better serve the community.

Increase Road and Pedestrian Safety

A group could form to explore ways to increase road safety throughout town. Many residents suggested improving the walkability of the village areas of Lunenburg and Gilman with sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and by finding ways to slow traffic. The group could build on the implementation results from the AARP walkability study and explore temporary and permanent traffic calming and road safety options. They could also partner with the State to address challenges on Route 2.

Two additional ideas for consideration were added at the community meeting on November 19:

- **Build Senior Housing**
- **Improve Transportation Options**



IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, December 17, 2024

Lunenburg-Gilman 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.

► Expand Outdoor Recreation, Trails, and Tourism

Community members highlighted the VAST trails and other existing trail networks, as well as the potential for rail trail and horse trail expansion. A group could form to promote and expand these outdoor recreation resources. Residents expressed interest in creating new walking and biking trails, and a bike park. The group could also work to connect residents and visitors to local businesses via trails, signage, and other resources.

Community Chair **Kate Baxter**

Facilitator **Jessica Savage**, *Director of Community Collaboration, VCRD*

Resource Team Members **Jackie Dagger**, *Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Program Manager, VT Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation*,
Nicole Gratton, *Field Services Community Support Specialist, Preservation Trust of Vermont*
Luke O'Brien, *Outdoor Recreation Specialist, VT Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation*
Michael O'Hara, *Vermont Chair, Twin State Rail Trail Committee*
Elyse Oliver, *Economic Recovery Corps Fellow, RCAP Solutions*
Dave Snedeker, *Executive Director, Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)*

Community Participants and Task Force Sign-ups Kate Baxter, Ryan Baxter, Liz Benoit, Nancy Benoit, Jesse Boemig, Marianne Borowski, Tina Breault, Gary Briggs, Tracy Davidson, Monica Eastman, Denise Fay, Meagan Forbes, Jacob Fournier, Charles (Chuck) Howard, Sen. Russ Ingalls, Rep. John Kascenska, Jessica Lee Smith, Adriana Lewis, Linda Magoni, Gerald Mertens, Mike Mutascio, Cathy Mutascio, Lane Nevins, Jessica Simonds, Beverly Wilkinson, Harry Williams

Current status and overview of the issue today

- Lunenburg has a number of existing assets:
 - The Variety Store and Multitude Takeaway,
 - Snowmobile and ATV community and trails,
 - Ball fields, parks, commons, and the bandstands
 - Connectivity with NH as a border town,
 - Water access to Connecticut River Paddle Trail, Neal Pond, and the Moore Reservoir recreation opportunities including some good fishing
 - Scenic and Historical sites, the covered bridge
 - Victory Basin (State Forest) and wildlife, birdwatching
- According to the Co-Chairs of the Twin State Rail Trail: Nothing planned for the rail corridor from South Lunenburg to St. Johnsbury. VT Rail Systems (who are open to communicating with town) are in talks with CSX about purchasing the corridor.
- There's disrepair from Lunenburg to Concord, superstructure would need to be completely redone. If it became a rail trail, it still has to be rehabilitated to support railroad again. The Twin State Rail Trail

Committee has been trying to cooperate with VT Rail Systems so that the projects can be mutually beneficial.

- VT Rail Systems owns the line in New Hampshire up to the Gilman Mill and intend to purchase the corridor extending to St. Johnsbury. The company's President stated in December 2024 that they intend to restore freight operations to move logs through

Vermont from New York to New Hampshire to supply the milling industry there. They would use the Lunenburg corridor to store sections of those trains as they wait to connect with active trains. There's opportunity for collaboration potentially for rail with trail (where a trail runs alongside an active railroad) and they're open to meeting with rail groups after purchase.

Priority Action Steps

1. Request a meeting with the heads of the companies who own and are planning to purchase the railway (VT Rail System & CSX Transportation), as well as the VTrans departments relevant to the railroad and a potential rail trail, with help coordinating this meeting by Senator Ingalls.
2. Inventory existing recreation activities and resources in town. Look to identify both what people like or engage with as well as the gaps, what is the community missing that would be beneficial? Consider collaborating with the other task force on this project.
3. Create a map and wayfinding system (signs, information, and maps) for the recreation resources in town that both locals and tourists can easily find.
4. Visit other communities (possibly Danville & Burke) who have done something like this to learn from their recreation successes and challenge.
5. Work with NVDA to create a funding list/inventory to fit this group's projects and help us pursue them.

Other Potential Action Ideas

- Develop an ATV, snowmobile, and equine trailhead and parking area.
- Inventory of recreation so that we know about all the things going on in town and can share it. (Maybe work with Community Events Task Force on this.)
- Expand wayfinding mapping, signage, and pamphlets about trails, businesses, and historic landmarks, parking, and activities. Identify and map all rec. access points.
- Get grant funding for marketing, to help clear trails or tree maintenance, sidewalks, and other projects like that.
- Take better care of soccer fields, like putting up fences so that youth don't have to chase balls into the woods or road. Improve/restore the basketball courts.
- Inform the community about the facts of the rail trail and the possible future uses.
- Gather information about the sections or railroad in town, what the status of those sections is, and which sections would be most valuable to convert to a trail.
- Work toward making it easy and safe to bike or run around Town on the roads.
- With Community Events Task Force, survey community members to understand what they do to have fun and recreate in town. Include lots of outreach, scheduled community meetings, and stories.
- Collaborate with local young adults or students to do story telling about outdoor recreation. All ages may have stories about how they use the towns resources, or stories from the past, and maybe local young people could help record and share these stories.
- Reach out to local landowners who have, or used to have, trails going through their property to learn how this group could support that. Inventory private and public property in Town that might have potential for developing recreation.
- Work with Kingdom Trails on the bike trails on Tug Mountain.

- Collaborate with neighboring communities on trails and other recreation opportunities. Consider immediate neighbors like Concord (Miles Pond, Connecticut River/Moore Reservoir, and the rail corridor), Victory (State Forest), and Guildhall (Connecticut River and Town Forest) as well as more distant Towns with similar experiences or interests.
- Advertise and sponsor bus trips to recreation resources between nearby towns so that more local folks have access to recreation in town and in neighboring towns.
- Work on the local recreation options for families, maybe in cooperation with the Community Events Task Force. For example, bring back the ski tow and sledding hill, set up an ice-skating rink, maybe on one of the disused fields.
- Work with the other task force to create a designated outdoor space to host small community gatherings or celebrations like a birthday party.
- Consider and plan for the long-term maintenance labor and costs for any projects this task force takes on, including a rail trail or other trails or a recreation site. Good planning and looking ahead will help keep these opportunities available for future generations so that they don't fall apart.
- Think about who will be coming here (locals, neighboring towns, tourists from out of town) and how they will access the recreation resources (parking and lodging or places to stay) in a way that is safe and sustainable for the Town and recreationists.

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 Recommendations

When writing for grants to expand trail systems, consider creating a visual campaign to promote trails with a graphic designer to promote in town.

Connect with local organizations that can host events related to the trails (story walks/bikes for affinity groups).

Some towns/cities in VT have worked with marketing firms on wayfinding applications for visitors to help them navigate around town. Perhaps something similar could be utilized for community trails.

Convene meetings with local trails groups and regional partners to:

- Recap the Community Visit process/outcomes and assess interest in collaborating with the Expand Outdoor Recreation, Trails and Tourism Task Force.
- Learn about stakeholder priorities, upcoming trail projects, trail usage data, and challenges.
- Identify shared goals and resources to serve as the basis for developing joint applications for grant funding.
- Identify shared goals and their overlaps with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Engage community members on what currently exists and solicit insight on how to make the trail network a multi-use space, or more welcoming to those not already using them.
- Survey recreational interests of town members through a direct mailing, providing residents the opportunity to engage at their own pace.

Create a detailed GIS-enabled digital trail map documenting:

- All existing trail networks (VAST, hiking, biking) and ownership / responsibilities.
- Trail surface conditions and difficulty levels.
- Connectivity to roadways and local businesses.
- GPS coordinates and access points.
- Potential expansion or connection opportunities, based on conversations in "Local Stakeholder Alignment" meetings.

Develop and distribute a brief survey to stakeholder organization membership to understand trail users' spending patterns (i.e., which local businesses they visit).

Purchase, rent or borrow trail traffic counters to gather insights on trail usage and preferences; create a schedule for data collection across all the trails participating in the Task Force. NVDA, SE Group and/or the VT Dept of Forests Parks and Recreation might have trail counters to lend or know where to find them for lending/renting. Contact Annie McLean at amclean@nvda.net or Luke O'Brien at luke.obrien@vermont.gov.

Post all publicly accessible trails on TrailFinder: <https://www.trailfinder.info/>. This site is made up of trail manager approved mapped trails and it's free to get your trails on it! Contact Claire Polfus to learn more: claire.polfus@vermont.gov.

Technical Assistance / Peer Connection Recommendations

Conduct site visits to successful trail communities in New England to 1) Understand trail development strategies, 2) Learn about initial infrastructure and funding costs, 3) Learn about maintenance costs and fundraising strategies, and 4) Gather recommendations for implementation.

Contact folks like Abby Long and the staff at Kingdom Trails; Cynthia Stuart in Concord, who was instrumental in the NEK Gravel Rides Project in Concord; Heather Pelham is the Tourism Commissioner and very accessible. Caledonia Trail Collaborative: CTC is the area Vermont Mountain Biking Association (VMBA) chapter. Run by volunteers with the resources of VMBA, CTC could be a great local partner to engage in brainstorming about trail opportunities in Lunenburg-Gilman. Learn more at <https://www.caledoniatrailcollaborative.org/> and contact info@caledoniatrailcollaborative.org.

Take a look at neighboring towns in NH and see what resources they can tap there- start small, perhaps with one trail, and build toward a bike park or other larger projects.

St. Johnsbury has been working on developing economic opportunity through their Rail Trail. Connecting with Discover St. Johnsbury could provide some insight. Contact

Contact Gary Holloway at the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development to hear examples of what other towns have done and to inquire about state funding resources including the Better Places program. Contact Gary at gary.holloway@vermont.gov.

Jessica Savage, VCRD's Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives, worked for the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation for many years and would be a great resource for strategizing and planning next steps. Contact her at jessica@vtrural.org and 802-227-2790.

NEKCA's Parent Child Center can host family-centered community events; the Youth Center can host and promote Teen activities on the trails. Contact Elizabeth Emmett, Director of Operations, NEK Community Action, at eemmett@nekcavt.org.

RCAP Solutions' Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) Fellow, Elyse Oliver, is available to assist with trail mapping and trail user behavior research and can facilitate connections with successful trail communities. Additionally, the ERC Fellow can facilitate connections with the Rails to Trails Conservancy (national trails nonprofit) and SE Group (outdoor recreation planning and design firm) for initial conversations / consultations. Contact Elyse Oliver at eoliver@rcapsolutions.org.

Resources and Potential Funding Sources

There are several grant programs that could be relevant for the Task Force in 2025. The ERC Fellow could assist the Task Force in reviewing and preparing for these applications. Contact Elyse Oliver at eoliver@rcapsolutions.org.

Better Connections Program <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>.

The Recreational Trails Program provides annual funding to Vermont communities for the development and restoration of public recreational trails. Applications require a 20% match. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreational-trails-program>.

Recreation Economy for Rural Communities: epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has a Rural Economic Development Initiative, or REDI program, which can 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 or 802-828-1098.

VCRD and NVDA will write letters of support for grant applications. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org and Annie McLean at amclean@nvda.net.

VCRD has some seed funding that could be used to conduct feasibility work, or kick start planning for implementation. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.

The Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Program offers grants with no match requirements for projects that create measurable success supporting and growing their local economies through leveraging outdoor recreation. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants/vorec-community-grant-program>.

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program provides technical assistance for grant applications. Learn more at <http://www.nps.gov/rtca> and contact Jennifer Waite at 802 457-3368 x21 or jennifer_waite@nps.gov.

Vermont Community Foundation is already a funding partner, continue applying to their funds with new projects. Their Spark Grant program may be particularly relevant to some of the action ideas identified. Learn more at <https://vermontcf.org/funds/spark/>. Applications will be accepted between April 1 – May 13, 2025. They also have a Northeast Kingdom fund, <https://vermontcf.org/funds/nek-fund/>.

The Department of Health offers Healthy Community Design resources that may be relevant. Learn more at <https://www.healthvermont.gov/wellness/physical-activity-nutrition/community>.

AARP has winter place making grants and other potential funding opportunities including their community challenge grants. Find out more here: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/>.

The 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. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/land-and-water-conservation-fund>. Applications require a 50% match.

The Vermont Natural Resources Council has small grants that can help with community engagement. Find information here: <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-smart-growth/>.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has an Office of Conservation Investment, which aims to administer grants that support a variety of recreation and conservation goals. With Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge nearby, they could be an accessible and natural partner for some recreational activities. Contact the Northeast Regional Office to find out more: <https://www.fws.gov/media/office-conservation-investment-regional-contacts-2024>.

REI Cooperative Action Fund: REI Co-op administers grants through their corporate responsibility program with the aim of engaging communities around equitable access to the outdoors and supporting projects that meet this mission. This resource will likely require a Non-profit partner to be eligible. <https://www.reifund.org/>.

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/>.

► Increase Community Events, Social Engagement, and Community Recreation

A group could create events and opportunities for all ages to connect across the community. Community members expressed interest in hosting art and computer classes, additional events with food, intergenerational activities at the Senior Center, incorporating more volunteer opportunities into community events, and improving and expanding recreational resources and programming in Lunenburg and Gilman. The group could explore increasing the use of existing community spaces and buildings or assess current recreational resources and determine those most desired by the community. The group could also re-launch a Recreation Committee to steer and coordinate this work. Other opportunities that the group could support include the Church's caring committee, which supports people in need, and the Town welcome packet which is in development. Specific ideas for desired recreation improvements included improving the recreation fields and basketball courts, as well as creating an ice-skating rink, ski area/rope tow, a skate park, a pickleball court, a dog park, and more.

Community Chair **Liz Benoit**

Facilitator **Alyssa Johnson**, *Community Visit Program Manager, VCRD*

Resource Team Members **Richard Amore**, *Community Programs Director NH/VT, USDA Rural Development*
Sarah Buck, *New Project Director, RCAP Solutions*
Ben Doyle, *President, Preservation Trust of Vermont*
Nicole Gratton, *Field Services Community Support Specialist, Preservation Trust of Vermont*
Annie McLean, *Community and Economic Development Coordinator, Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)*

Community Participants and Task Force Sign-ups Liz Benoit, Gary Briggs, James (Jim) Clark, Cynthia (Cindy) Clark, Sandra Cronin, Tracy Davidson, Theresa deVillafane, Meagan Forbes, Jessica Lee Smith, Chris Lingley, Henry Lingley, Carol Macie, Rodney Noble, Jessica Simonds, Alan R Sweeney, Debbie Thomas, Carol Wenmark, Kimberly Williams, Mary Yackley

Current status and overview of the issue today

- The Town welcome packet is in progress.
- It can be challenging for some folks to find out when events are happening in town.
- Jessica spearheaded an ARPA application for public signs on Rt. 2. There is interest in signs on River Road as well.
- Some events have used incentives (sledding and hot chocolate kid event), but still hardly anyone showed up.
- The Gilman Senior Center hosts great lunches, events and programming, and a food Pantry.
- Library is a great space, events and programming.
- The School space is used for the Gingerbread Bazaar, Maple Festival (TOC), Veterans Breakfast (school, but community driven).
- Methodist church space and united congregation are important assets.
- The Congregational church building is used to host open mic and Old Home Day. There are historic displays, sell creemees and Maple Cotton Candy.
- George L Fox Memorial Chapel – Working on getting an elevator/new roof, brought the chimes back, hosted Trunk or Treat, and will host 4 Chaplains service in February.

- Girl scouts – memory tree, and the 4H club decorated the bandstand.
- Cole Farm (Brian and Wendy Williams) on River Rd Decorates their house for Christmas and hand out candy canes.
- Bandstands (Lunenburg and Gilman) – Space (38th army band on May 3rd).
- Town Hall space is used, and in the process of getting upgrades through the MERP grant.
- Soccer Field and Baseball Fields could be used for pick up games of pickle ball, corn hole, horse shoes, soccer, etc.
- There is an old tennis court no longer in use.
- There are outdoor games on the common in the summer.
- The Gilman Middle School has some outdoor space.
- To get volunteers you have to get the word out, you have to do a thorough job and get it out in a lot of ways and in large print.
- Top of the Common has a list of non-members that are willing to help with their org when they have events. They allow the volunteers to choose what they want to do or are good at and allow them to engage that way so they aren't asking volunteers to do something they don't want to. The overall list is too short!
- Sharon Eaton is working to host bingo for all ages, including kids, starting in February at the Gilman Senior Center.

Priority Action Steps

1. Create a yearly calendar for known events that happen annually, monthly or weekly. An initial draft could also be updated monthly on a digital platform. This could also include which events offer opportunities to volunteer. The calendar could also be a tool to program out the year, perhaps be included as a page in annual town report. It is important to build existing events to sustain and keep them robust or they will peter out.
2. Launch a newsletter that lists events for the next month, resources, and updates. Determine a sustainable timing for this- Quarterly? Every other month? The group noted that a good template you can plug stuff into will be key, and likely the most time consuming. Jessica and Carol volunteered to team up for this effort.
3. Form longstanding committee or other structure for the group. Coordinate with trails task force, especially regarding potentially overlapping recreation areas.
4. Advance plans for a pavilion. Specifically:
 - a. Visit other pavilions (Glover, Brunswick, Hardwick, Garland Mills, Lancaster?).
 - b. Conduct community outreach to ensure interest in the pavilion, and further define necessary components (Power? Paved foundation? Location?)
 - c. Based on the inputs from the community, determine plans to secure a location (By the Gilman Middle School/Tennis courts? Would the Mill donate space where old hockey rink is?), create building plans, raise funds, manage access, etc. As part of this work, consider plans for ongoing operation and maintenance.

Other Potential Action Ideas

- Create signage on Route 2 and River Road.
- Bring back weekly outdoor games like horseshoes or pickleball. There is a horseshoe pit, but need someone to facilitate/organize it, not just offer it).
- Kickball has happened and people don't show up – needs to be scheduled and set.

- Explore referee training and/or bringing in nearby communities for friendly competition with incentive for the person who wins.
- Host Movie nights. The senior center has a movie screen, movie nights there?
- Town Website could be more meaningful and helpful. Currently have a volunteer who puts information in the calendar. It is limited in what you can put in there (200 characters), so it is helpful to use links that lead to better longer descriptions.
 - Talk with SB and then have it be part of new Town Clerk job
 - Include more information on where to find something and when annual events are. Right now they link to the Top of the Common website
- Create a Town PR position – paid position/Americorps?
- More youth engagement and volunteers- perhaps for Capstone projects?
- Develop more partnerships: many seniors in town have great brains, but need the technological help.
- Tax help at senior center again would be great.
- Fix the old Town Hall building.
- New town hall needs to be ADA accessible (in progress, MERP grant can give 80k).
- Create events at a time when everyone gets depressed (February vacation!!!)
- Bring youth, seniors and those in between together (board games/card games)
- Is there a place at the Neal Pond for the pavilion that could help support water events? Right now they only have a Boat Launch where you are not supposed to swim.
 - It's a State Boat ramp. All the rest is private land. Adjacent pond is also private.
 - Used to have a pavilion on the "heights", picnic tables (Seth Colby owns land)

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 Recommendations

Develop an online space where events and offerings are shared (which can also be shared out on flyers, etc.) This could be the existing Facebook page, but something that many can see.

Host "low threshold" gatherings (i.e. coffee and donuts) on a regular basis to gather more ideas as time goes on: Rupert Village Trust does this at the Rupert Village Store and it is a successful way to gather new ideas for events, etc. Learn more at <https://www.rupertvillagetrust.org/>.

Maintain a mechanism for people to add their names to the events listing (whether Facebook or email list, etc.). This could be included in the Welcome Packet, posted at library, etc.

Survey town residents about their volunteer capacity and interests. Determining what the town's capacity for new projects is seems like an important first step. Visioning what a vibrant town looks like and presenting this graphically can be inspiring for drawing volunteer interest and support.

With all the community spaces available, there may be an opportunity to explore the co-working hub models that also host the community events. The Space on Main in Bradford has a similar set of programs and opportunities. Learn more at <https://thespaceonmain.org/>.

NEKCA's Parent Child Center can host family-centered community events, Youth Center can host and promote Teen activities in the trails, we can also table at local community events to connect residents with resources to meet basic needs. Contact Elizabeth Emmett, Director of Operations and Visiting Team member, at ee Emmett@nekavt.org.

For writing grants, get a sense of skills within the community before looking to pay outside partners to consult.

See if other successful town events from other regions can be replicated (example food truck nights in St. Johnsbury, easy to replicate and schedule with local vendors).

A Recreation Committee is a good idea; a town needs an interest assessment to choose first priorities might be a place to start - get some early wins and build momentum!

Many communication strategies were discussed, including email newsletters and bulletin boards - you might see if you can find just a little funding to pay someone to do this on a weekly basis to develop resources that people will learn to look to.

Establish a recreation or “social-cultural” committee to institutionalize the mission as more than just a list of goals. Creating a body to hold members accountable and bring in those passionate about implementing these changes will go much further than having it fall to the selectboard or asking one community member to do it. Many hands make light work!

Empower a newly established town committee to research and pursue a variety of grant opportunities as they relate to the town’s short-term and long-term goals. Additionally, encourage this group to engage with other area/statewide partners in supporting the missing (i.e. pairing with other Non-Profits like VCRD).

Technical Assistance / Peer Connection Recommendations

Ask VCRD who has done calendar or websites well. Connect with these communities to learn about their experiences. Recent examples include Highgate and Swanton. Contact Alyssa at alyssa@vtrural.org

UVM has a NEK Community Resilience Internship Program that gets students out of Burlington and into rural Vermont; last summer students served the Greensboro library and recreation committee. This program got re-upped. Contact Kristen Andrews, Internship Coordinator, Career Center/ Office of Engagement, (802) 656-3455. Annie McLean can also help make introductions if needed: Annie McLean at amclean@nvda.net.

AARP has winter place making grants up to \$10k and other potential funding opportunities including their community challenge grants. Find out more at: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/>.

RCAP Solutions’ Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) Fellow, Elyse Oliver, is available to assist with asset mapping using the Rural Infrastructure Strengths Evaluation (RISE) and can design a digital and print survey for community voting on new recreation needs. Additionally, Elyse could create photo collages for the desired facility improvements to convey a more visual vision for the facilities. This could be utilized in grant applications. Contact Elyse Oliver at eoliver@rcapsolutions.org.

There are also several grant programs that the Task Force could work to prepare applications for in 2025. Elyse could assist the Task Force in reviewing these applications and their requirements and prepare a roadmap for gathering the needed application materials, as well as with specific asset mapping or imagine generation. Contact Elyse Oliver at eoliver@rcapsolutions.org.

Stay tuned to see if the Better Places Program through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development receives additional funding. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/better-places>.

RCAP Solutions could present the results of the in-progress Town capital improvement plan to the Task Force to give a sense of what town-owned facilities (if any) could house additional recreation facilities. RCAP Solutions could then consider additional TA opportunities through USDA Community Facilities to fund improvements if a public facility is selected. Contact Elyse Oliver at eoliver@rcapsolutions.org.

Connect with Catamount Arts for support/guidance on anything art related- they have a wealth of knowledge and have supported other small organizations in their start-up efforts. Contact Jody Fried, Executive Director at jfried@catamountarts.org.

Anything that involves an old building can turn to Preservation Trust of Vermont for Technical Assistance in knowing the building better, developing a strategy for rehabilitation, ADA and Code upgrades, explore funding opportunities, meet with other funders, etc. Contact Nicole Gratton, Field Services Community Support Specialist and Visiting Team Member, at nicole@ptvermont.org.

NEKCA's Parent Child Center can host family-centered community events, Youth Center can host and promote Teen activities in the trails/ in town, we can also table at local community events to connect residents with resources to meet basic needs or bring our mobile unit to community events. Contact Elizabeth Emmett, Director of Operations and Visiting Team member, at eemmett@nekavt.org.

Communities with outdoor ice rinks that could provide guidance: Derby, Derby Line, Newport, Brighton.

Northeast Kingdom Council on Aging (NEKCOA) provides a variety of services and supports to aging Vermonters in Vermont's NEK. They may be a good natural partner for the Senior Center and have the capacity/insight to facilitate intergenerational activities and programming.

NEK Organizing (NEKO): A broad coalition of community groups, families, individuals focused on organizing the communities of the Northeast Kingdom around issues faced by rural communities. Learn more at <https://nekorganizing.org/our-volunteers/> and contact organizing@nekorganizing.org.

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program provides technical assistance for grant applications. Learn more at <http://www.nps.gov/rtca> and contact Jennifer Waite at 802 457-3368 x21 or jennifer_waite@nps.gov.

Resources and Potential Funding Sources

Municipal Planning Grant may be able to help with some of these tasks, and NVDA may be able to help with an application. Learn more about the grant at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant> and contact Annie McLean at amclean@nvda.net.

Elyse Oliver, eoliver@rcapsolutions.org, could assist the Task Force in reviewing these applications and their requirements and prepare a roadmap for gathering the needed application materials for grants, including those below.

The Better Connections Program provides technical assistance and funding to communities. Learn more at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>.

The Recreational Trails Program provides annual funding to Vermont communities for the development and restoration of public recreational trails. Applications require a 20% match. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreational-trails-program>.

The Recreation Economy for Rural Communities planning assistance program helps communities identify strategies to grow their outdoor recreation economy and revitalize their main streets. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/recreation-economy-rural-communities>.

Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Community Grant Program offers grants with no match requirements for projects that leveraging outdoor recreation to support economic growth. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants/vorec-community-grant-program>.

The State of Vermont has a Recreational Facilities Grant, which requires matching funds for shovel-ready projects. Learn more at <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>.

The 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. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/land-and-water-conservation-fund>. Applications require a 50% match.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has a Rural Economic Development Initiative, or REDI program, which can pay for grant writers from programs such as the ones above once you've identified funding sources. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at mariah@vhcb.org or 802-828-1098.

USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Program is a Federal program aimed at constructing or improving essential community facilities in rural municipalities. This resource would be most tailored to any of the buildings owned by the town or non-profit organization. RCAP Solutions could assist with an application if funds are available. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/communityfacilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/vt>.

VCRD and NVDA will write letters of support for grant applications. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org and Annie McLean at amclean@nvda.net.

Vermont Community Foundation has several competitive grants that support the development of community resources, which Lunenburg-Gilman have received, and can apply to with a new idea! Their Spark Grant program may be particularly relevant to some of the action ideas identified. Learn more at <https://vermontcf.org/funds/spark/>. Applications will be accepted between April 1 – May 13, 2025. They also have a Northeast Kingdom fund, <https://vermontcf.org/funds/nek-fund/>.

The Vermont Natural Resources Council has small grants that can help with community engagement. Find information here: <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-smart-growth/>.

VCRD's *Community Leadership in Action Guide* contains a chapter called "Develop Events that Strengthen Community" with ideas and resources relevant to this topic: <https://www.vtrural.org/guide/>.



V. Lunenburg-Gilman Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 60 Lunenburg and Gilman community members and the VCRD Visiting Team on September 24, 2024, through a paper and online survey, and a youth forum.

Although the prioritization work of the Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together 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.

Community Connections and Communication

Visiting Team: Alyssa Johnson (FACILITATOR), Miranda DeGreenia (SCRIBE), Jen Carlo, Elizabeth Emmett, Nicole Gratton, Jess Schmidt, Ryan Joseph

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The Lunenburg Library offers high-speed internet to the public, important as only some in the community have broadband access. Most people have Consolidated Communications as an internet provider. NEK Broadband is available in some places in Lunenburg, but not at the bottom of the hill in town.
- The repainting of the Gilman Pavilion offered opportunities for volunteering and community engagement. A woman said that when her son saw the signs asking for volunteers, he wanted to engage. Now when he drives by, he feels a sense of pride in his community and wants more opportunities to do so.
- The Gilman Senior Center offers programming for community connection including a book club, meal delivery, and community suppers. They hope to plan more events and offer additional programs in the future.
- Lunenburg/Gilman hosts several well-attended annual events including the Maple Festival, Gingerbread Bazaar, and Grub on the Green.
- Lunenburg/Gilman has a new website that is updated daily with announcements, events, selectboard meeting agendas and notes, and a list of all town departments @lunenburg-gilmanvt.gov.
- The town has great opportunities for outdoor recreation including a connection to local ATV trails.
- There is an active snowmobile club (Polar Bears) with a lot of community input and support.
- The Lunenburg Community Facebook page provides a space for people to go for updates and issues.
- Gilman Methodist Church is actively being restored and turned into a memorial chapel to be used for church services and as a museum. The community and the purchaser (American Legion) are in the process of getting grants to repair the building.
- The Lunenburg Elementary School (grades K-5) is small (53 students) but the community says they are an important asset.
- Potential want for volunteer programs at the school for adults and youth.
- Volunteering requires background checks, and appears to be a hurdle in getting people to volunteer.
- Kingdom East School District offers a ski program at Burke Mountain.
- The school is starting to host more workshops/events including a composting workshop for children sponsored by the Lancaster Rotary Club.
- The historical society, Top of the Common, is working on programs with the school, including a Civil War reenactment event with an educational music component. The new Principal is open to programs and for volunteers to come in and read to the kids, etc.
- Community bulletin boards around Lunenburg/Gilman provide an accessible way for community members to get involved anonymously. Bulletin boards seem to be a main source of town information and are widely used by residents.
- Lunenburg Village Store newsroom provides a space for community members to form connections through coffee, and is a space utilized by residents for social interaction and updates on town happenings.
- Selectboard has a "Welcome Committee" in the works for new residents.

What are the Challenges:

- Community bulletin boards are not well-maintained and sometimes are not big enough. Residents recognize a need for better organization and upkeep.
- Discrepancies between what gets posted on bulletin boards in Lunenburg vs those in Gilman, especially information from the selectboard, with residents saying that "not much information gets down to Gilman."
- The Gilman Post Office has the only bulletin board in Gilman, which is generally the only place where Gilman residents can access information. The Gilman Senior Center has its own bulletin board, but mostly containing information for seniors.
- Lack of transportation, especially for seniors. More people would be able to access the Senior Center especially in winter if there was some sort of transportation available.

- The selectboard needs more people coming to their meetings. More people at the meetings would allow more residents to do the business of the town, disseminate information about upcoming programs and grants, and is generally a way to be informed about what's happening in the community. Also helps with the issue of misinformation within town matters.
- Town wants more communication between the efforts of the selectboard and residents.
- Disseminating information community-wide and finding the best way to communicate information to people is a challenge. Some people use newspapers and bulletin boards while others get their information online.
- Broadband internet is not available in all parts of the community, which would be a helpful asset in the future to help with connection, businesses, and economic growth. Need for affordable local internet options.
- General problem with community involvement; not a lot of people come out to events and meetings as people are busy trying to support themselves.
- Lack of people in the community who dedicate themselves to different community organizations such as the Fire Department and Top of the Common.
- A newer resident says that it's hard to be new in town, saying they have not felt welcome or known how to join the community selectboard and events. They note a lack of sense of community and say they have to leave the community to socialize their child.
- Lunenburg/Gilman experiences a lot of resident turnaround, with a resident saying "people come and go and take what they need" as pertaining to school choice.
- A resident says that the community comes together when neighbors are in need, but this often doesn't happen for newcomers, with a newer resident noting feelings of ostracization in the community.
- Crime and safety are of concern, residents say it is very scary and feels unsafe, and that there's not a police presence even if you want one as police are dismissive of concerns. Some concerns include speeding on dirt roads, shootings, and drugs.
- The Gilman bus stop is on the corner by the gazebo where people commonly speed. It was moved a little bit, but not enough to fix the problem.
- There is negativity surrounding general perceptions of Lunenburg/Gilman, partially fueled by poor media coverage and crime.
- Some residents have mail delivery & mailboxes while others do not, and mail only gets picked up straight on the mail route.
- A resident says that the Lunenburg School does not follow their child's IEP, and it is very scary to speak up about this, as well as painful to watch their child suffer. Since the community has no day in what the school district does, the family has moved to homeschooling and is considering leaving the community.

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

- Offer paint and sip programs, computer lessons, exercise classes, and crafts at Gilman Senior Center.
- Put more effort into maintaining bulletin boards.
- Offer more opportunities for community engagement and volunteering like the Gazebo project.
- Create a phone list so residents know how to reach each other.
- Create a volunteer program from seniors to be checked on and encourage more communication between neighbors.
- Host block parties so people in neighborhoods for residents to get to know one another.
- Send a town newsletter with town updates and events.
- Create a better rural mail service, extend the rural routes to increase capacity and communication.
- Utilize an email blaster like Constant Contact or Vermont Alert but for Lunenburg/Gilman updates/events.
- Encourage organizations to share with other organizations when something is going on or an event is happening.
- Make the school more accessible to kids with disabilities; take town money and put kids somewhere that could best meet their needs.
- Utilize existing infrastructure and make more buildings available year-round for events.
- Utilize local media (Caledonian Record Newspaper, radio) to spread the word about events.
- Create a Caring Committee at the church- when someone is in need, people come together to support them.
- Have the selectboard create a welcome packet for new residents providing basic information about how town dynamics work.
- Selectboard Welcome Committee is already in the works.
- Access to high-speed internet to attract people to live and work remotely.
- Have somebody/multiple people in the community speak about the positive things happening in Lunenburg, "need to sing our own praises" (Lunenburg PR person).
- Have access to a grant writer to get the town more grants.
- Increase physical accessibility to the Town Hall (ramps, etc.) so all people can get into the rooms where they hold meetings.
- Host community workshops to address complex issues and bring in experts to help.
- Ask town committee representatives to routinely come and report to the selectboard to keep them up to date and let them know how they can help.
- See if anybody is interested in being a school representative?
- Have the Town Clerk's Office be a disseminator of information about things going on in town.
- Add more accurate information on the town website about property taxes and routinely update with current issues and other information.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Notes that while every community has its challenges, they were struck by the amount of good infrastructure and energy around things like the school, library, Senior Center, bulletin boards, and selectboard.
- Town is starting with a nice base and has prime opportunities for growth.
- Mixture of people who are newer and multi-generational, annual events as a unique aspect of the community.
- Sees the rejuvenation of historical places and people working hard to restore them for mutual benefit.
- Many challenges are state-wide issues, interesting to see how the town could address them through unique solutions.
- Tremendous opportunity for growth through good existing infrastructure.
- Need for more positive PR and singing praises, inspiring to see people come together today as those who care about the community.
- Residents hold the ability to reach out to neighbors and talk about what's going on in the community, which is a great opportunity for networking and seeing what can be done together; opportunity for ripple effect.
- Exciting to hear that people are eager to receive and spread information; the community wants to be connected.
- With a little investment, many ideas presented are feasible; people share the ideas and passions to make ideas a reality.
- The community values tradition, which is a powerful way to bring people together. Need to make sure people know that there are ways to get out there and meet your neighbors.
- There are great outposts of connection that are established (physical and social), each place and space can be used as springboards to share information.

Recreation, Businesses, and Tourism

Visiting Team: Jessica Savage (FACILITATOR), Kaziah Haviland (SCRIBE), Alison Low, Elyse Oliver, Brandi Thompson, Casey Winterson

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Lunenburg Variety Store – happy its back and don't want to lose it again.
- Common and church are picturesque, potential tourism draw
- Library is phenomenal and the librarian is great. Has instituted great programs.
- Senior Center and the book club.
- Snowmobile club, polar bears – 75 miles of trails currently. They are experimenting with other orgs like VT Horse Council. Learning there are shared interests.
- Collaboration among recreational organizations (boating, snowmobiling, horseback riding)
- Excited about tying into the VAST and rail trails.
- A lot of people who sugar – popular and brings tourism (long standing tradition).
- Big event every year where you can visit sugar houses (Maplefest).
- Multitude takeaway restaurant (new business) – great hours (11am-9pm, 6 days a week).
- Prospect Farm and a few other great farms.
- Public gathering events (bandstand in Gilman). People like to gather for food, stories and music.
- First weekend in August there is Old Home Day -collective of all the small businesses around. Brings people out that don't normally come out.
- Huge area of land that borders the Connecticut river.
- Lake in town -gill pond and miles pond, and reservoir.
- Fantastic forests – foliage season is fantastic.
- Unposted land where people allow recreational access.
- Tribute to Veterans – cemeteries are well kept, old glory display over Main Street.
- Post flooding, anyone who worked in construction or had equipment volunteered to help.
- Help each other, care for each other.
- Have a good town website – but could use some more direction for people who might be visiting.
- George Lansing Fox memorial.
- Developed a municipal plan.
- Selectboard – really goes after grants.
- ATV use along 40 miles of dirt roads.

What are the Challenges?

- Lunenburg/Gilman used to be filled with small stores and businesses – would like to see that again.
- Need information on how rec orgs get together – i.e. where is boat access (Walker? boat launch).
- Tourists don't like the hunting and trapping laws (Vermont wide issue).
- Mill – was once a huge business in town. Huge portion of the mill is currently unused. Was a huge employer.
- No safe place or walkways to stroll or walk around without traffic. No sidewalks.
- Bridge (didn't catch name) by the bandstand could be transformed to connect with walking.
- Lack resources (i.e. there used to be a person who came to town who would help people with paperwork for assistance). Lots of older people and people with economic and service needs who are not computer literate.
- Transportation – hard to get anywhere without driving, no public transportation or van. Have to depend on friends if you don't have transportation.

- No place for kids to go and play – basketball court, tennis court, baseball field have all fallen apart. No outdoor rec/parcs.
- VT rail system just bought a piece of land that stops VT and NH from connecting a snowmobile path (S Lunenburg trestle).
- See the building around the common spruced up and painted.
- Not sufficient internet, service is limited. Consolidated has most of town and is not great.
- Low cell service.
- Used to have access to ski area/rope tow and ice skating.
- Reclaiming rec fields behind the middle school – need the fields but also the volunteers who can keep the activities going. May need to turn these into paid positions.
- Need some more signage.

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

- Tennis courts can be tennis and pickleball.
- Exercise stations outside around the courts.
- Grant writer at town hall – maybe a few neighboring towns could come together to share one.
- Ask for help (proposed by the senator) – Response we are starting to do this.
- Tell the stories – there are a lot of outdoor spaces, share them, especially organized events or systems. This helps people get involved, creates “sparks” that creates more. Social media, in person. Maybe approach town with ideas.
- More trail access, and ADA trails, fishing access – get grants for this.
- Rail is rumored to be trying to purchase both bridges for a “trash” train. This would cut off the option for trail connection. There is a petition – reach out and let SB know. We are only 1700 strong, we need to make all of our voices heard. Talk to elected representatives. Our vision is more inclusive of use. Need information on how to fight this. Don’t want 80 rail cars parked here.
- Learning more about the plans for VRS tracks – what is their plan.
- In response to VRS – we want to create a rail trail that will connect to Twin State Rail – it would be a 4-season trail. Goes along the CT river and could create fishing access. Goes through the woods. Place for people to walk.
- Successful recreation organizations coordinate with businesses and promote foot traffic.
- AARP walkaround looked at walkability of about a mile radius – there are a lot of pedestrian seniors. AARP was looking at safety of roads and walking “paths” – implement the ideas from this report.
- Gilman Mill needs to be rented – great opportunity for a company to go in and make use of the space. SB has reached out to NVDA. Maker space? Business? Gather thoughts on how to rent out the space. (from senator – put pressure on GMP to make sure substation is up to level for manufacturing).
- Bridge that is unused by the mill. We don’t own that bridge. NH owns. We would have to work with NH to do this. (bridge of flowers – bring tourism, brighten up community) Find out more about ownership of bridge and what they can do.
- Vermont outdoor business association – could be a great resource.
- People like being here because of the views, hiking and biking. This benefits the periphery of the town. There are not centralized places/parking/pulloffs. Need to create access points. Not parking in front of peoples homes.
- Extend the shared road so people can use ATVs right to house.
- More police presence – people drive too fast. Baptist hill – if people don’t feel safe doing something, they wont do it. They have sheriffs that cover a large area. Get flashing light speed sign. Speed Cameras that issue tickets (think its too expensive).
- Develop internet and cellphone that increase work/learn from home opportunities.
- Form some sort of recreation committee – connect to grant writers and resources to bring some of these ideas to life.
- Walking trail along the river.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- When they think about grants, there are grants for master planning, recreation, recreation economy, Traffic calming – lot of communities are dealing with impacts of speeding. It is a complex issue. It won’t be one thing, but a combination of increased enforcement, change in design, change in messaging – make people aware of what speeding is doing to the community.
- Telling stories about rec experiences – tie in resources at library, involve youth. Share stories across ages and pass information down.
- Strong sense of getting out and using what they have and areas that can be expanded upon.
- Events throughout the year that show why this place is special, pull in outsiders.
- Transportation – Utilizing areas for accessibility and walkability.
- Internet and cell service – important to think about. Bring folks in through remote work.
- Rec is really the basket – so many assets are tied to recreation. Look at places you have already, how do you expand and rehab them.
- Homestead declaration – there are programs that will bring people out to assist.
- Comment about relying on volunteers – statewide – how do we make it sustainable?
- Buy in – really exciting to see the encouraging comments and how on board everyone is. People are on the same page.

Youth and Young Adult Engagement

Visiting Team: Lauren Brady (FACILITATOR), Miranda DeGreenia (SCRIBE), Jen Carlo, Elizabeth Emmett, Nicole Gratton, Jess Schmidt

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The library has a strong rapport with the Lunenburg school, bringing kids to read every week and hopefully creating after school program.
- Library brings in kids with parents on weekends/after school/work. Mainly engages with grades K-5, has the goal to engage with older kids and teens.
- The local Head Start program is available to kids from Lunenburg/Gilman in the old Gilman School.
- At Wednesdays on the Common, some kids set up booths with products, offering an opportunity for youth entrepreneurship. Residents note it is encouraging to see younger people getting involved with the community because a lot of people who historically have been involved are now aging out.
- At the annual Maple Festival, all servers are youth volunteers, allowing young people to learn what it is to serve people.
- The community has a Girl Scouts troop which used to be bigger, but now is just a few girls. The focus of the troop shifted to a few older girls, one of whom is working on a community garden behind the Senior Center.
- Girl Scouts offered babysitting for the community visit and works on a Memory Tree on the Common to honor lost loved ones during the holidays.
- Veterans Day Breakfast at the Lunenburg School with the kids provides an opportunity for intergenerational connection.
- Kids participate in a program to honor Veterans at the Veterans Day event on the Common.
- Some young people are excited to come help out with Top of the Common events, building a young volunteer pool for the community.
- Top of the Common is trying to get multi-generational events so youth can get involved and bring everybody together.
- Top of the Common engages with the local Girl Scouts troop.
- There is an active snowmobile club (Polar Bears) where families get involved in snowmobiling together. Noted to be more of an organic connection not specifically for youth.
- Youth engage with the Top of the World ATV club based out of Concord.
- Trunk or Treat offered on Halloween at the Common.
- The Lunenburg Playground was updated and is actively maintained.
- There is a Christmas event at the Lunenburg School in collaboration with the Fire Department; older kids seem willing to help with events and volunteering.
- There is a well-maintained baseball field in town for families to use. The town's tennis field is in disrepair but is used by families periodically.
- Yoga is offered in the Town Offices; the Community Room in the Town Offices is used for club meetings and more.
- Student Council is offered at Concord Middle School, providing an opportunity for youth leadership.
- Colonel Town Program (sports/organized opportunities) is offered in Lancaster NH for local youth in area towns.
- Local homeschoolers can go to Allied Arts at the school and after school activities.

What are the Challenges?

- Within the school district, many older youth are not connected with the community because they are being bussed to different schools. Kids are not physically staying in the community because activities are happening in other communities.
- There is not a lot to do in town for teenagers; the town has no activities or organized sports.
- Sports are now managed through the district due to budget constraints and less students.
- Gilman School cannot be used for basketball practices because of safety issues in building. People have to leave the community for sports/activities.
- There is infrastructure that exists but is not useful/able to host activities or sports for youth; numerous municipal buildings (Old Town Hall) are in a state of disrepair.
- Once kids age up to high school, "there's no real reason to hang out in Lunenburg."
- Youth find it difficult to maintain relationships with other youth past middle school as they all go off to different area high schools (Lyndon Institute, White Mountain, St. Johnsbury Academy, Littleton).
- Teens and young adults who live in town either go elsewhere to socialize or end up working and do not have much free time.
- There are no employment opportunities in town for youth.
- The selectboard says they don't know who the youth are in the community and are unsure how to identify the youth population.
- Some youth know about events while others do not, most communication about events happens through parents or the school. Not a lot of communication to youth about opportunities, let alone events that are catered to youth themselves.
- General issue of lack of public transportation.
- There used to have a Lunenburg Community Group that hosted events such as Muffins for Mom, Donuts for Dad, Santa, and Trunk or Treat. Some of these events still happen but are put on by single people after the community group dispersed.
- Some parents regularly volunteer their time, but nothing has built where people want to routinely dedicate themselves to a group or committee.
- No infrastructure for kids (walking trails, bike paths, teen center) which makes it difficult to put things together for kids.

- Lunenburg/Gilman used to have a bowling alley and a skating rink that made activities possible, especially year-round.
- Many traditions from the Gilman School were lost in the merger with Concord School. Concord School has skipped over the graduation awards that were done in Gilman, and the funds raised from Gilman's traditional 8th Grade Cookie Walk are now funneling through Concord instead of Gilman.
- Almost all middle school Lunenburg/Gilman kids are bussed to Concord School which has led to some tension in the town.

There is an increasing number of kids going to area private schools/homeschooling with the numbers dropping every year and kids losing connections with their friends.

- Community thinks that the shutdown of the Lunenburg School is inevitable, so they're trying to get ahead of it by going fully to Concord School before middle school or transferring to a private school/homeschooling. There is anxiety surrounding the elementary school and whether it has the attendance to stay open.

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

- Encourage and incentivize youth to join community groups, committees, and selectboard to engage with their community and have their voices heard.
- Create a newsletter about community events.
- Create a youth advisory board for the selectboard, setting them up as a committee that would meet on their own without selectboard influence, then come to selectboard meetings and present ideas and needs.
- Create a Youth Center where youth events can take place and young people can engage with others their own age. Feature board games, ping pong, clubs, cornhole, and other year-round activities so parents don't have to transport their kids to other communities.
- Kids say they would use a Youth Center if it existed. Use food and snacks to attract youth.
- Create a group of youth that goes to schools and advertises the Youth Center for multiple towns, engaging the larger youth community and allowing Lunenburg/Gilman to become the place where kids from neighboring towns come to hang out instead of St Johnsbury or Lancaster.
- Pay somebody to teach local sports through a Youth Center.
- Create a playground for kids of all ages with basketball and a zipline; a place where they can play and be kids.
- Create a Youth Mentorship program between older kids/teens and elementary school kids, providing an opportunity for youth leadership and volunteerism.
- Create intergenerational activities and programs between youth and seniors through the Senior Center. Youth BINGO is currently in the works.
- Have the selectboard reach out to local high schools and find out who the local high-schoolers are in Lunenburg/Gilman, possibly set up internships within Town Offices, selectboard, or the library which would encourage community engagement

but is only possible if the town can identify the youth population.

- Figure out a way to identify each group of young people (teens, 20s, 30s) and engage them. Invitation is a great way to directly engage youth in groups/committees that they aren't already involved in.
- Create a Youth Advisory Council in the form of a youth club/hour. Need a venue where youth can feel like they have a sense of ownership, like they belong, and want to show up; establishment of a third place for youth (incentivize with food).
- Create a like-minded parent group that regularly meets and organizes events that kids want to go to.
- Bring back the Lunenburg Recreation Committee and fund them to put on events like sledding, hot cocoa bar, paint & sips, wreath decoration, Easter egg hunt, skiing, and more. Need for a designated group to think about events and engagement opportunities.
- Encourage youth pride in the community and increase sense of ownership of community amongst youth. Could buy every youth a Lunenburg t-shirt, or something that makes them feel like they have a part in the community. Need for youth recognition.
- Find a way to celebrate Lunenburg/Gilman 8th graders separate from Concord School.
- Engage more with Kingdom East School District to brainstorm more opportunities for engagement with Lunenburg/Gilman.
- Provide opportunities through selectboard for youth to learn about town governance.
- Think about the programs that used to happen in schools (cooking classes, trip to the Statehouse, agricultural day, etc.) and see if these things could happen again for today's youth.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The town is inviting and accessible to youth, which is important in making things happen. Need to find a way to communicate with youth and they will be interested, need a group of caring adults to make this happen.
- There is an opportunity to take these big ideas and make them tangible with a little help with the physical and people infrastructure.
- There is a lot going on (events), connecting youth with older people, and an active senior center.
- Struggle of youth retention and connection within community, loss of traditions, putting intention into making sure traditions stay alive.

- Lack of spaces for youth to hang out (third places), looking for ways for youth to have pride in their community and to celebrate them. Looking for different ways to support engagement and recreation.
- Lots of grassroots initiative, single person-led events. As kids age up, there is the problem of disconnection. Challenge of feeling like the kids are leaving.
- Recognizes the want for a Youth Center that serves all area youth, and some of the infrastructure needed exists.
- The power of invitation is a big piece of the puzzle.

Infrastructure and Affordability

Visiting Team: Jessica Savage (FACILITATOR), Kaziah Haviland (SCRIBE), Ryan Joseph, Alison Low, Elyse Oliver, Brandi Thompson, Casey Winterson

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Brought fiber lines – can now work from home successfully.
- Highway department and Fire station are great building and have great staff.
- Clean up after flooding was fast.
- A lot of volunteers came to help Roads crew – felt like they must have all worked 24 hours a day.
- Finally in a place in this town where we have people in the right places. They have identified problems and we are working to get them done. They have identified and prioritized issues.
- Dynamite librarian, brought community back to library, great kids programming.
- She has also brought in grant money to the library – programs and building.
- New senior center – great to have back. They do bingo and great lunches. She wishes more people were able to get there and use it.
- Transfer station – nice and usable.
- Happy to have the store back – even better than it was.
- Takeaway restaurant – new.
- AARP did a walking tour of Gilman and Lunenburg – what’s needed/what will be helpful
- Sidewalks, crosswalks and lighting.
- Done a great job beautifying the Green.
- Paved roads are nice.
- Reconstruction of the bandstand – good asset but also good experience working together to renovate it.
- American Legion purchased George W Fox church – leave chapel as is and are creating a museum. Want to be part of Gilman
- American Legion wants to be involved.
- Riverside Rescue.
- A lot of history here.
- Historic Structure in town are fantastic. Common is fantastic, congregational church, old town hall.
- Lunenburg community group has historic photos of town.
- Good police presence.
- School.
- Clean water and plenty of it – Gilman not Lunenburg.
- Community members – we are a waving town, always feel welcome.
- Staff at the Post Office – we have a post office in each.
- Highway department just hired a new guy.
- Lunenburg community Facebook page.

What are the Challenges?

- A lot of traffic by the new restaurant – maybe not a great place for a restaurant.
- The fire station roof leaks.
- Water plant is very old, pipes need replacing, new equipment.
- Nice to have a place to meet (town hall, but internet isn’t great).
- Lunenburg’s water is not as great – often boil notices, could limit development and business growth.
- Water and sewer cost price keeps rising.
- A lot of culverts need to be updated.
- A lot of the infrastructure is very old.
- Water and waste water in Gilman – under fire district number 2, Mr. Gilman put it in.
- Lunenburg fire district number 1 – has spent a lot of money trying to get good water and it is not there.
- A lot of antagonism around water and fire districts.
- One issue is that this is a gravity fed system – if there is one leak, anyone on the low hill will go from 100psi to 20psi, it needs to be a pressurized system. The town is not responsible for the water, and the districts are not going out for available money. Town will have to take it over at some point.
- Highway department needs more help and more equipment.
- State law identified and named fire district 1 and 2, it is not the fire department – how things are organized isn’t clear. Need a flow chart to show who should be accessed.
- No Jobs – this leads to no young people, lower tax base.
- No industry.
- Bedroom community – everyone lives here but goes out to work.
- Access to public transportation – no options (just RCT, and they go right through to Lancaster. They should stop). We pay for RCT through state taxes, they should stop here.) they provide individual drivers, but not busses.
- Lack of sidewalks – walk safely and snow removal on sidewalks.
- Aging housing stock – people have higher heating bills, higher insurance or difficulty getting insurance.
- Insurance doesn’t like woodstoves either.
- Income of the community in the town is low, a lot of abandoned homes, and falling down homes.
- Dirt roads are in bad shape, there are challenges to keep them in good condition, but it is still frustrating to drive down poor roads.
- Transfer station could do more than it does – more information, payment, how to recycle.
- There is a lot of “junk” around.
- Every institution in town needs to do a summary for the annual report.
- Only have 1700 people in the town but are the size of St. Js. It is a lot to cover with a lot less money.

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

- Need a year-round nice place to meet with internet.
- More information at the transfer station.
- Town office building has a common meeting room but it is not accessible – the building needs to be made fully accessible. This should be done across the board.
- Ongoing restoration efforts around the top of the common – create a public meeting space that was available and accessible.
- Communication – how do people who don't have internet find out about things. Could be facilitated through case management, council on aging – Need to let people know (agencies that work with people could have information on hand to give to clients) Maybe library? Senior center?
- There are a lot of people in the "middle" who don't qualify for services but don't have \$15,000 a month to pay a facility.
- Library has meeting space and internet.
- Amish community close by – they have beautiful barns – could hire to renovate barns and do barn quilt tours.
- There are farm restoration grants available through the state – should look into this.
- Form a committee to write a grant to tap into resources to fix water system – grants have to come from the presidential committee (not SB or Town). Has to come from the waterboard itself. Approach board and ask them if they can do this.
- Go to board meetings for the waterboards if you live in the district, there was a start to this process but it fell off. Go to the fire district meetings!!!
- No matter what it is, you have to put pressure on people in charge to form a plan.
- Plans take time – need the people in the town to speak up and communicate better to fix issues.
- A lot of abandoned homes – there have been fires – less and less buildings hooked into system. Promote this place as a place to build a home.
- Create standards for dealing with derelict buildings, abandoned buildings on property they own.
- Celebration around George Fox birthday to get people to come. Opportunity to get involved in the legion.
- More attendance at select board meetings – need more townsfolk.
- How does everyone get information about all these meetings people should be attending? (on the bill for fire districts, selectboard puts agenda up all over).

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Water -asset and challenge, great ideas about what to do and who to talk to. First time in 20 years there is a group of people in positions that are doing something about it.
- Water system control is a recurring theme in a lot of communities. When there is a problem, the whole community is impacted. The lines between the town and fire district are getting blurred because there can't be development without adequate water. In the future, the capacity of fire districts may have to be reevaluated.
- Community hubs – resilience hub, great information and resource center, not just disaster.
- Event spaces that are available – figure out how to spread word.
- Strong community here – a lot of next steps are about attending meetings.
- Ideas around growth of communication – community page, and connection to official website. Maybe post to Facebook page as well.
- Find that one place everyone knows and put the information there, and allow people to depend on it being there. Post it regularly. Update it.

Additional Action Ideas

Here are the ideas residents contributed through a paper and online form

- The Gilman Mill could be used for shops connected to trail systems, and/or a hydroponic farm selling in NEK & NH.
- Renovate Old Town Hall for a community gathering space.
- One big step: the town should get out of KESD. Our tax dollars need to be invested in our own town. We need to bring what we can back to our community.
- Encourage or enforce cleanup or fencing of back yard exterior storage of various items, especially in areas that could drain into Connecticut River.
- Increase use of our commons for Lunenburg/Gilman with weekly or monthly live music events, food trucks/vendors. Bring people to town and residents together to build community and increase revenues for other events.
- Sign in Town Clerk's to direct people to meeting rooms for Select Meetings and other public meetings.
- Changeable signs displayed in Lunenburg & Gilman village centers to update residents to events and meetings.
- A VT State University student could help the town keep a quarterly newsletter. If could be mailed the first time to residents, then they could opt in to an email newsletter.
- Create a kids' soccer group who can use the existing fields.
- Residents should receive mailed information about how to navigate property taxes for at least their first two years.
- Fox Chapel and Congregational Church could be wedding venues with more support from the community.
- Better Town communication with updates and transparency. Website is important to use for more things. Perhaps a public Facebook page (info-only, no comments) linked to the Town website so residents can share events and excitement. To increase municipal volunteers, perhaps offer a Shaw's gift card after 3 months of participating?

Youth Forum

These are notes from a forum with 5th grade students in Miss Lawson's class conducted by VCRD staff at the Lunenburg school.

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Sports especially baseball. Kingdom East has a team in Concord, also in Lancaster
- Animals in the area (all of them)
- The trees
- Friends live close by
- A lot of signing birds
- The weather- rain, snow, variety
- The water: Neil's Pond, Walker's
- The stars at night
- Full moon- wicked bright
- Mountains – hiking, trails
- Trees in the fall
- The people here
- Nice neighbors – deliver hot meals and coffee
- Family and friends on the same road
- Neighbors helped when we were new and welcomed us
- Neighbor gave us bubbles
- Neighbors always wave
- Lunenburg Variety Store & Deli – very kind people
- Neighbors helped find my cats
- Neighbor drives me to school!
- Neighbor helped clean up when a bear spread garbage around
- Multitude takeaway is awesome!
- Lyndonville buffet

What are the Challenges?

- Can't just bike around town.
- I am scared because there have been a lot of house fires.
- Trash on the side of the road.
- People sometimes judge people who are poor and just trying to get by. People assume a lot about others.
- Thunderstorms and lightning can be scary – a tree fell on the neighbor's house
- Facebook reports of people driving drunk. I'm scared to let my dog out at night.
- People almost getting hit on the road.
- Scared to be at home alone because of strange people in the area
- Not having access to the Gilman school is hard.
- Lots of coyotes.
- Parents working long hours and not sure when they'll be home
- No daycare so limited options when staying home

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

- Restore access to basketball court and recreation fields.
- Glow in the dark mini golf.
- Safer neighborhood environment.
- Trails for dirt bike, 4-wheeler, skatepark.
- Create a dogpark.
- Create more daycares and playgrounds.
- Create a planetarium or museum to learn about gemstones.
- Host art classes.
- Pool, indoor and outdoor, maybe hot tub.
- Mini-golf.
- A gym for sports, exercise, and yoga.
- Bowling Alley.
- Homeless shelter.
- Dog and cat shelter.
- Trampoline park.



VI. Lunenburg-Gilman: One Community Working Together

Community Visit Participants

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Nancy Benoit
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Deborah Johnson
Rep. John Kascenska
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Dana Peavey
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