

Northfield: Our Common Future

Community Visit Report and Action Plan
July 2023



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

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Vision for Northfield'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 Concord community.

Community members envision a future Northfield where:

- ❖ there is a vibrant and walkable downtown that promotes connection.
- ❖ people walk downtown, utilize services and buy at businesses in town, and the streets feel vibrant.
- ❖ there are more community gathering places in town.
- ❖ arts are deeply integrated into community.
- ❖ the community recognizes and values the health, water quality, and soil quality benefits that farmers provide.
- ❖ the community values sustainability and connection to nature.
- ❖ the river and the mountains are accessible to all.
- ❖ there is a great network of bike paths, and the community is connected to bike paths and other recreation assets beyond its borders.
- ❖ the community is growing in housing, in business, and infrastructure.
- ❖ people in town are able to find jobs and make a living.
- ❖ the cost of living and necessities are affordable.
- ❖ our community is welcoming and truly inclusive to all.
- ❖ people know each other and are open to meeting new community members too.
- ❖ diversity, equity, and inclusion are valued and felt in a meaningful way and people from marginalized communities feel safe and are comfortable.
- ❖ young people and seniors feel cherished, accepted, and supported.
- ❖ kids feel safe with the police, and in the community as a whole.
- ❖ the community supports both physical and mental health of people of all ages.
- ❖ everyone has meaningful access to local decision-making.
- ❖ people of different political and socioeconomic groups interact with civility.
- ❖ there is vibrancy, creativity, and energy.
- ❖ people of all ages can connect, learn, and grow.

I. Introduction

Northfield has so much to be proud of. With a unique downtown center and town common, a thriving University, recreational trails and river access, and so much groundwork laid for success, Northfield is a community well positioned to succeed and thrive well into the future. The Our Common Future process showcased the many assets as well as the past planning and coordinating efforts to position Northfield to move forward successfully, together. At the start of the process, there was some nervousness around engagement – Who would show up? Would we capture the interest of newer residents? Long-time community members? In the end, it turned out that this community is one that shows up in droves when it comes to charting a successful path forward for their town.

Throughout the process, VCRD staff and the Visiting Team were struck by not only how many people showed up to meetings, but more so the enthusiasm and dedication of those who did. From brainstorming to signing up for task forces, the meeting rooms were packed with people who were ready to think, plan, and take action for the future. The deliberations of the community were deep, thoughtful, and at times challenging – but they stayed positive and open and led to collective concrete priorities to build on the groundwork of the past and the momentum of today. Themes that emerged early and often in the process included connection, accessibility, and partnership. It seems clear that these important themes will remain front and center as new community task forces get to work on the priorities the town selected.

The key Priorities established by the community and now led by volunteer Task Forces include:

- **Develop a Community Center**
- **Improve Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety**
- **Build a Norwich/Northfield Partnership Council**
- **Create a Plan for Downtown Development and Housing**

VCRD and all its partners look forward to working with the Northfield Task Forces as they frame and implement these projects step by step over the course of the next year and beyond. They are already hard at work—please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report).

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

There are many people to thank for making the Northfield Community Visit a success.

We would like to thank the Northfield Select Board who initially invited this process and participated in such a positive way throughout. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the many Steering Committee members who helped guide the process by developing the key topics and invitation process to start the effort: Sally Davidson, Tom Davis, Anne Donahue, Jill Donahue, Matthew Fedders, Sheridan Gray-Jones, Matthew Kolb, Julie Lombard, Cassie Morse, Charlie Morse, David Myer, Lydia Petty, Jeff Schulz, Merry Shernock, Sarah

Wolfe, and Debbie Zuaro. Thank you also to all of the community leaders and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the event and made sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

We are very thankful for the use of the Northfield Middle and High School for hosting all of the community visit meetings and especially to Superintendent Matthew Fedders and the custodial staff at the school for ensuring that the rooms were always set up and ready – they were wonderful hosts!

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

Thanks also to the Northern Border Regional Commission, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Vermont Community Foundation, Windham Foundation, Vermont Humanities Council, and National Life Foundation who contributed funding to make this process possible.

VCRD calls state, federal and non-profit leaders to participate in Community Visit processes. We are proud of the partners we get to work with—and especially the Northfield Visiting Team—they are the best of Vermont's public servants.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Northfield should be grateful to those who've stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Cara Gauthier and Jeanne Bright, Community Center; Dan Anderson and Mary Nadon Scott, Accessibility and Walkability; Phil Susmann, Downtown Development and Housing; and Rowly Brucken and Leslie Striebe, Norwich/Northfield Partnership.

VCRD especially wants to thank Kaitlyn Keating for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Chair. Kaitlyn has already shown deep dedication to the community through her leadership at NCDN and there and in this process has demonstrated her balanced and practical leadership. We have appreciated how organized, thoughtful, and effective she has been as a leader in this process and have great confidence in her ability to succeed in the work ahead!

Some towns are paralyzed by their lists of problems and deficits—not Northfield. VCRD has the wonderful opportunity to see towns where residents recognize the challenges ahead, but line up effectively together to set vision and practical efforts to overcome the obstacles to their optimal future. The work of community and economic development is never done. It is refreshed by the renewed leadership of those who step up and who commit to the historically crucial effort to advance the best possible future. Built from strong local assets, and that key ingredient, local leadership and commitment, we see towns build new destinies. We commend all of Northfield and we look forward to working with you and celebrating with you as you move forward!

II. The “Northfield: Our Common Future” 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 in Northfield:**



Steering Committee Meeting: January 30, 2023

On January 30, 2023, 16 local residents met to plan for the launch of the Northfield Community Visit process. This group came up with a name for the process – Northfield: Our Common Future – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics and an invitation process. Through calls, e-mails, flyers, and lawn signs this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Committee included: Sally Davidson, Tom Davis, Anne Donahue, Jill Donahue, Matthew Fedders, Sheridan Gray-Jones, Matthew Kolb, Julie Lombard, Cassie Morse, Charlie Morse, David Myer, Lydia Petty, Jeff Schulz, Merry Shernock, Sarah Wolfe, and Debbie Zuaro.

Step 1 ~ Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: March 21, 2023

Northfield: Our Common Future kicked off with 6 brainstorming forums held at the Northfield Middle/High School. We also offered a Zoom forum for those preferring a virtual option. Over 180 participants shared assets, challenges, and ideas for action in the following forum topics chosen by the steering committee: Youth & Families; Housing; Public & Community Safety; Building Norwich & Northfield Connection; Recreation; and Infrastructure: Broadband, Walkability, Transportation, & Sewer. Fifteen visiting team members participated, learning more about Northfield and providing reflections to the community.

Visiting Team members included: Ted Brady, *Executive Director*, Vermont League of Cities and Towns; Jackie Dagger, *Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Program Manager*, Vermont Development of Forests Parks and Recreation; Ben Doyle, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Seth Leonard, *Managing Director of Community Development*, Vermont Housing Finance Agency; Christian Meyer, *Executive Director*, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission; Nicole Miller, *Executive Director*, Vermont Afterschool; Julie Moore, *Secretary*, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; Holly Morehouse, *Executive Director*, Vermont Community Foundation; Carol Plante, *Director*, Montpelier Community Justice Center; Clare Rock, *Senior Planner*, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission; Geoffrey Pippenger, *Director of Policy and Planning*, Vermont Department of Children and Families; Amy Tomasso, *Planning Coordinator*, Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development; Chris Winters, *Commissioner*, Vermont Department of Children and Families; Michael Schirling, *Chief Safety and Compliance Officer*, University of Vermont; Misty Sinsigalli, *Area Director*, USDA Rural Development.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Hannah Carpino, *Community & Policy Manager*; Margaret Gibson, *Operations Director*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Projects Manager*; Jenna Koloski, *Community Engagement & Policy Director*; Brian Lowe, *Executive Director*; and Jessica Savage, *Director of Community Collaboration*.

Step 2 ~ Community Meeting: April 18, 2023

After the kick-off, VCRD staff distilled the brainstormed ideas into 23 key areas of action. Over 100 community members joined at the Northfield Middle/High School to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After lively dialogue and a dot-voting exercise, 4 action ideas emerged as key priorities: **Develop a Community Center; Improve Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety; Create a Plan for Downtown Development and Housing;** and **Build a Norwich/Northfield Partnership Council.** Participants then signed up for task forces that will convene to move these priorities forward.

Step 3 ~ Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: May 16, 2023

On May 16, 2023, community members, 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 “Northfield: Our Common Future” action is focused at the task force level.

Resource Team members included: Julia Connell, *Community Development Specialist*, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development; Jackson Evans, *Field Service Representative*, Preservation Trust of VT; Gary Holloway, *Downtown Program Manager*, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development; Sarah Launderville, *Executive Director*, Vermont Center for Independent Living; Seth Leonard, *Managing Director of Community Development*, Vermont Housing Finance Agency; Kate Neubauer, *Senior Program Officer*, Vermont Community Foundation; Clare Rock, *Senior Planner*, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission; Misty Sinsigalli, *Area Director*, USDA Rural Development; Gail Shamponis, *Director*, UVM Office of Student & Community Relations; Kelly Stoddard-Poor, *Director of Outreach*, AARP.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Hannah Carpino, *Community & Policy Manager*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Projects Manager*; Jenna Koloski, *Community Engagement & Policy Director*; and Brian Lowe, *Executive Director*.



Alison Turner “AliT” shared her music during the kick-off event community dinner on March 21st.

III. Northfield: Our Common Future Priorities

Determined by Northfield residents at the Northfield: Our Common Future Community Meeting
April 18, 2023

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, more than 100 Northfield community members whittled down a list of 23 action ideas to 4 priorities that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Northfield residents selected four priorities for future action:

► Develop a Community Center

A task force could work to develop a community center or hub that would provide a space for events, connection, gathering, and programming. The group could develop a new community space or explore ways to meet community needs with existing spaces. Residents shared a particular interest in programming space, indoor recreation, as well as space for youth to gather and hold youth-focused events and programming.

► Improve Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety

A task force could work with municipal leaders and regional, state, and federal partners to improve the safety and accessibility of roads, paths, and village centers. This group could work to make the area accessible and safe for bikers and pedestrians through the expansion of sidewalks and crosswalks, traffic calming strategies, bike lanes and paths, and improved flow at key intersections. The group could also focus on ADA accessibility of walking paths and the village center. These improvements could help to improve safety and walkability as well as build connections from town to Norwich and between villages.

► Create a Plan for Downtown Development and Housing

A task force could form to work with the town on developing a concrete action plan for the future of the downtown. The group could look at strategies and policies to encourage infill development and rehabilitate and utilize vacant spaces to maximize the use of the downtown area. The group could focus on strategies to improve and develop housing in the downtown, as well as on ways to attract people to the area such as pop up events, increased parking, and improved walkability. The group could connect to the broader community and the university to identify critical needs and opportunities for the future of the downtown.

► Build a Norwich/Northfield Partnership Council

The Northfield community and Norwich University could work together to build a coordination council with University and community representatives to address challenges and identify opportunities for collaboration. The group could include student representatives, Norwich staff and faculty, town leaders, school leaders, and community representatives. Together, they could look at ways to form a stronger partnership that builds on each other's unique resources, collaborate on initiatives to benefit both partners, strengthen the connections between university students and local residents, and address challenges such as noise complaints and housing.

Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

Along with the three 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 Outdoor Recreation and Trails

Build connections between existing trails and expand trails for mountain biking, hiking, Nordic skiing, and other outdoor recreation. A task force could produce outdoor events and educational opportunities, improve access and parking, and create signage and maps to improve knowledge of available resources. Additional projects could include an outdoor rec website for the town, a volunteer trail crew, the development of a pump track, and a ski tow.

Improve Transportation Options and Roads

A group could work to expand bus routes and stops, look into an Amtrak stop, and develop other options for public transportation such as ride sharing. Additionally, the group could work with the Town to address challenging road conditions and traffic safety issues such as speeding on town roads.

Improve Community Communications

A task force could develop a town-wide community calendar, website, and communications hub to share upcoming town and Norwich events, activities, housing availabilities, volunteer opportunities, recreation opportunities, and other resources and services.

Improve Broadband Service

A group could work to convene a partnership of local residents, municipal officials, businesses, school leaders, and others to work with regional, state, federal, and private sector partners to bring improved broadband service to the region.

Develop Senior Housing

A group could form to collaborate with the Town, regional partners, state agencies and other organizations to develop senior housing in the community.

Strengthen Local Arts

A group could work to increase local arts programming including youth and adult classes, outdoor and indoor performances, and other arts events. The group could also design murals around town and host rotating exhibits to showcase local artist and celebrate the community.

Build a Network of Bike Paths

A group could form to plan and then build a series of bike paths in the community that connect Norwich to the Village, and villages to the town center. A bike path could run along the river, as well as potentially connect Northfield to Montpelier.

Expand Parent Resources and Support

A task force could work to develop supportive networks or programming for parents and their children. This group could develop playgroups, create a babysitting network, connect new parents with one another for peer support, and connect parents to mental health resources.

Advance Local Food Access

A task force could partner with local farms, the Farmers Market, and regional and state partners and funders to improve access to local food in the community. The group could focus on creating educational opportunities, developing a year-round local market, and building more connection to schools and youth. The group could also start a community garden.

Expand Recreation and Fitness Facilities

Northfield residents of all ages expressed a need for improved and expanded recreational facilities. A task force could identify community needs and build a plan and funding to improve existing facilities and/or develop new recreational options. Some ideas include soccer fields, an ice-skating rink, pool improvements, public fitness facilities, a field house, and disc golf. Partnering with Norwich could help meet some of these needs. Residents expressed a need for a gear loaning or sharing program, where community members can access recreation equipment, hunting and fishing equipment, and more so that everyone can take advantage of the town's recreation opportunities. The group could also focus on improving ADA accessibility at the pool, rec fields, and any new facilities. The group could also work with the Town to explore the potential of Town partnership or leadership on rec programming, maybe through paid staff in the future.

Recruit and Engage New Leaders and Volunteers

A task force could identify and implement strategies to engage more community members in municipal roles and volunteer opportunities. Activities could include advertising and direct invitations for available positions, community education about civic engagement and volunteerism, and potentially offering stipends to compensate community leaders for their time.

Welcome New Residents to Northfield

A group could form to develop a community "mentoring" program to pair new and longtime residents, host welcome events, and share information and resources with new community members.

Create a Community Skill and Equipment Sharing Program

A group could form to build a "time bank" as a platform to offer, access, and trade services among community members and exchange equipment and gear. This program would recognize the skills, expertise, and resources that currently exists in the town and connect residents to what they need right here in their community.

Start a Commons Committee

Build a committee dedicated to improving the common, holding events for the community, and improving access and use of the community space.

Improve Opportunities for Local Youth

A group could form to develop strategies to improve opportunities for youth to build skills, experience, and connections in the community. Activities could include creating a local mentorship program, building stronger connection to opportunities at Norwich, increasing volunteer opportunities, and finding ways for youth to build college credit and/or technical skills for their future.

Expand Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Build a Town-community task force to explore expanded water and sewer infrastructure and map out the current expansion needs. The group could then build a plan to meet those needs and identify funding sources to move the project forward.

Build a Community Policing and Public Safety Strategy

A group could come together to build a plan for the future of policing and public safety that meets the needs of the community. A task force could lead an effort to bring together Town leadership, community groups and individuals, Norwich University, and youth to identify policing and public safety needs, community values, and identify strategies to implement a shared vision. The town could consider working with a facilitator or expert to find and implement strategies that work for Northfield and ensure community safety, connection, and trust.

Improve Access to Dog River

A task force could form to improve access to the Dog River, as well as host clean up days and community events. The group could also bring community partners together work on developing a path along the river.

Clean Up Northfield

Create a committee focused on cleaning up Northfield's downtown, roads, river, and parks. The group could build a volunteer clean up corps, in partnership with youth, Norwich University, and other community organizations, and hold regular events to encourage clean up and beautification of the town.



Community members reviewed the opportunities list, and then chose their top priorities for action at the community meeting on April 18th.

IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, May 16, 2023

Northfield 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.

► Develop a Community Center

A task force could work to develop a community center or hub that would provide a space for events, connection, gathering, and programming. The group could develop a new community space or explore ways to meet community needs with existing spaces. Residents shared a particular interest in programming space, indoor recreation, as well as space for youth to gather and hold youth-focused events and programming.

Community Co-Chairs: Cara Gauthier and Jeanne Bright

Facilitator: Hannah Carpino, *Community and Policy Manager, VCRD*

Resource Team Members: Julia Connell, *Community Development Specialist, Vermont Community Development Program*; Jackson Evans, *Field Service Representative, Preservation Trust of Vermont*; Kate Neubauer, *Program Officer for Community & Environment, Vermont Community Foundation*

Community Participants: Melody Adams, Chelsie Anderson, Brent Andrews, Amelia Barouxis, Jeanne Bright, and Task Force Signups Casey Cutkomp, Joan Marie Davidson, Tom Davis, Nicole DiDomenico, Nancy Evans-Shiok, Kristine Foley, Cara Gauthier, Taylor Goodwin, Gail Hall, Kaitlyn Keating, Bob Keeley, Matthew Lipschutz, Andrea Lively, Mike Macijeski, Colden McClurg, Liz Meehan, Simon Pearish, Rebecca Pearish, Luke Plumley, Aaron Rhodes, Anastasia Rhodes, Merry Shernock, Peggy Smykal, Kelly Wantuch, Charles (Tony) Winters, and Meghan Young

Action Steps

1. Research successful community center projects completed in other Vermont towns.
2. Identify pre-existing community programming and groups within Northfield and connect with them- what are they currently doing? What space are they currently using?
3. Reflect on mission as a group given the information gathered.
4. Research potential funding resources for data collection efforts.
5. Research best practices for data collection projects and subsequent analysis.
 - Look into how other needs assessments/inventories have been done.
6. Release a community needs survey and a space inventory/assessment.
 - These efforts can run parallel.
 - The survey will help gauge Northfield residents' desires for a community center space.
 - The space inventory will catalogue existing spaces, their capabilities, and their status/ownership.

Resources

VCRD can send the task force information about other towns that have chosen to focus on developing a community center as a result of the CV process. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org.

Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV) can work with towns to identify needs for specific buildings – conditions assessments, cost estimates, etc. PTV can also help groups organize fundraisers, act as a thought partner, and more. Contact Jackson Evans at jackson@ptvermont.org.

Vermont Community Foundation has several grant processes that could be applicable for this group. There are smaller Spark grants, which are designated towards projects that promote “community togetherness”. There are also larger funds for this project further down the line- funds for planning assessments, but also bricks and mortar funding. Learn more at <https://vermontcf.org/>.

VCRD has some seed funding that could be used to match grant funds or kick start early initiatives and pop ups. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org.

The Vermont Community Development Program has three types of funding that could be applicable: accessibility, planning, and implementation grants. This funding is federal, so the town would have to be the official applicant. Funds could help with hiring a consultant, doing a feasibility study, public engagement, and more. There are also funds for projects that serve low-to-moderate income Vermonters. Contact Nathan Cleveland at nathan.cleveland@vermont.gov.

There are some helpful resources in the VCRD Community Leadership Resource Guide <https://www.vtrural.org/guide/>.

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs.

Action Step Recommendations

Obtain youth input through multiple means - surveys, listening sessions, ask for conversations in schools.

Visit and meet with other communities that have successfully built community centers to understand challenges and opportunities, help scope the concept, and learn from others (see potential ideas below).

Conduct a survey of residents to understand what programming and space is needed, and where the town would like to see the facility placed.

Meet with the University to understand what facilities might be available to the community.

Evaluate the plans and operations of the Gray Building / Gray Building Coalition to understand the challenges and opportunities they faced.

Undertake an assessment of the existing spaces.

Consider if there are cooperative tenant uses (child care? senior programs?) which might partner in a space if it were re-vamped or newly available.

Discuss with the Town who would be best to own and operate a space: the Town, or a separate organization. If there is an overall community organization, that group could be an effective place for handling grant funding/fundraising, project funds, and project management as ideas progress.

Coordinate regularly with the Downtown Development and Housing group, as there could be excellent alignment around helping plan events and tying activities of these groups together.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

Vermont Afterschool for assistance with ideas and best practices to engage community youth voice. Learn more at <https://vermontafterschool.org/>.

The Town of Milton prioritized creating a recreation and community center after their Community Visit, and is currently working on a feasibility study. Jessica Groeling is the overall chair from the Milton on the Move process, and can be reached at Jessica.M.Groeling@vermont.gov. VCRD can provide additional contact information.

The City of Essex Junction has a successful community center. Contact Brad Luck, Recreation Director, at bluck@ejrp.org and 802-878-1375 ext. 1556.

Town of Williston is currently scoping the creation of a community center. Contact Eric Wells, municipal manager, at 802-878-0919 and ewells@willistonvt.org.

Cambridge Community Center Project. Learn more at <https://cambridgecvt.myrec.com/info/default.aspx> and contact cambridgevtcommunitycenter@gmail.com or (802) 644-5028.

Involve the local Area Agency on Aging to determine how older residents may also be represented in and/or served in this new center.

Vermont Arts Council is a resource for cultural facilities. Learn more at <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/organizations/cultural-facilities>.

Potential Funding Sources

Better Places Grants “community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public...The program provides one-on-one project coaching, local fundraising support, and two to one (2:1) matching grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000 to make your community-led placemaking ideas happen. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/better-places>. Additional information and project examples can be found at <https://www.patronicity.com/BetterPlacesVT>.

The Spark Connecting Communities grant program provides grants of \$500-\$5,000 for “grassroots work that builds social capital.” Applications for the next round of funding are due July 18, 2023. Learn more at vermontcf.org/our-impact/programs-and-funds/spark-connecting-community/.

Once a project has been identified, there are programs which can help do the pre-construction/planning work. The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) program can assist communities with grant-writing or other tasks to achieve Federal funding. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at Mariah@vhcb.org at 802-828-1098.

If the process involves the development of Community Facilities, the USDA Community Facilities program provides support for a variety of programming. VCRD can provide additional support for developing and submitting an application. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community->

[facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/vt](#) and contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.

The Vermont Community Development Program could potentially be used to support planning or implementation work. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>.

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) can be an excellent grant resource depending on the type of project. Visit www.nbrc.gov and contact Vermont contact Kristie Farnham at kristie.farnham@vermont.gov.

VCRD is a continuing partner for resource connections, and has some modest funding resources. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.

The Preservation Trust of Vermont has several grants that might be interesting to explore for historic buildings, including the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant. Learn more at <https://ptvermont.org/help/grants/> and contact Ben Doyle at ben@ptvermont.org.

The State of Vermont also offers some Historic Preservation grants. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants> and contact Caitlin Corkins at caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov or 802-828-3047.

Vermont Arts Council has cultural facilities grants. Learn more at <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/organizations/cultural-facilities> and contact Michele Bailey at 802-402-4614 m Bailey@vermontartscouncil.org.

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development has a list of funding resources: <https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/CPR-Funding-Directory.pdf>.

There are state and Federal tax credits available for properties located within village centers. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits>.



► Improve Accessibility, Walkability, & Pedestrian Safety

A task force could work with municipal leaders and regional, state, and federal partners to improve the safety and accessibility of roads, paths, and village centers. This group could work to make the area accessible and safe for bikers and pedestrians through the expansion of sidewalks and crosswalks, traffic calming strategies, bike lanes and paths, and improved flow at key intersections. The group could also focus on ADA accessibility of walking paths and the village center. These improvements could help to improve safety and walkability as well as build connections from town to Norwich and between villages.

Community Co-Chairs: Dan Anderson and Mary Nadon Scott

Facilitator: Jenna Koloski, *Community Engagement & Policy Director*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: Clare Rock, *Senior Planner*, Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission
Sarah Launderville, *Executive Director*, Vermont Center for Independent Living

Community Participants: Dan Anderson, Brent Andrews, Stevie Balch, Dylan Braam, Jeanne Bright, Colin
and Task Force Signups Bright, Cynthia Bushey, Bill Clements, Jaime Cotton, Melody Carrier, Casey Cutkomp,
Tom Davis, Matthew Fedders, Joel Goon ??, Elroy Hill, Kaitlyn Keating, Ginny Kunkel,
Andrea Lively, David Maxwell, DeLane McIlvene, Kelsie Meehan, Fred Nadon, Mary
Nadon Scott, Lydia Petty, Luke Plumley, Gillian Shapiro, Carolyn Stevens, Tim Swartz,
and Debbie Zuaro

Current Status Notes

- There is a plan for a Main Street Bridge repair which will cause traffic disruption in 2025.
- There is no walkability in the Falls village. There are plans for one crosswalk in the falls which is moving forward.
- Today, it is mostly the Selectboard leading on planning and decisions for sidewalks and walkability.
- There was a Steering Committee that came together to lead the Better Connections grant which produced the Ridge and River Routes Plan. That committee then morphed into leading on the VOREC grant for recreation and connection to the Village.
- There have been several planning efforts focused on walkability including the Ridge and River Routes plan and a 2005 study for pedestrian connection between the Village and the Falls. Both plans hit obstacles or funding challenges and did not move forward.
- AARP has worked with the community in the past and funded placemaking activities on the common to the park.
- There is a lack of accessibility in the town – both ADA and Universal or human centered design.
- It is not very safe to bike or walk in town or between villages – both the falls and also to the south village.

Action Steps

1. Review the current planning documents including the Ridge and River Routes plan as well as the 2005 pedestrian connection plan and the Town's capital plan for sidewalk and walk/bike infrastructure. Collect past work and recommendations in one place. Use this collection of past work to identify key actions that this group could move forward.
2. Lead a series of "accessibility audits" with community members with an array of different backgrounds, interests, mobility needs, and uses. Identify the critical points in town for review and review the current resources and what is needed. These audits, when coupled with the planning documents listed above, can help to identify a few first priority projects for the group/town to focus on.

3. As a “low hanging fruit” activity, look at the current availability of accessible parking spaces at key recreational resources and points of access to the town and paths. Work with the Town and other partners to expand availability. This work could be part of a more broad “ADA checklist” that the group could work with Vermont Center for Independent Living to implement.
4. Work on traffic calming measures. Identify some critical areas and work with AARP, Localmotion, or others to develop calming strategies. This could include pop up measure to try out some ideas and then work towards more permanent solutions. Some target areas may include Wall Street and the Schools Complex.

Other Potential Action Ideas:

- Provide education and outreach to the community about the importance of accessibility, traffic calming, and pedestrian safety. Support the Town as advocate and “cheerleaders” for the cause.
- Focus on access to businesses in the village.
- Create an ADA committee who can lead on an ADA checklist review.
- Look at an inventory of available funding sources for this work.
- Inventory the accessibility of parks and recreation resources in the community.

Resources

The Vermont Center for Independent Living has educational resources and can help with the ADA checklist as well as potentially connect to some funding sources. Contact Sarah Launderville at slaunderville@vcil.org.

The Institute for Human Centered Design has resources that could be useful.

Norwich University could be a partner. There may be student groups that would be interested in engaging in the work.

Other towns/cities that have done some work on accessibility and walkability include Burlington Parks and Recreation, Brattleboro, Rutland, Barre, and Bethel.

The Bethel Better Connections project is called “Bethel For All” – would be good to connect with that group and learn more about their goals and initiatives.

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission can help with traffic study work, walk audits, and with reviewing the existing plans to move towards implementation. Contact Clare Rock at rock@cvregion.com.

Look into the Health Equity Pilot program run by the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Health. Learn more here <https://www.healthvermont.gov/about/vision/health-equity> or contact Richard Amore at richard.amore@vermont.gov.

There are some helpful resources in the VCRD Community Leadership Resource Guide <https://www.vtrural.org/guide/>.

Town ARPA funding could be a resource.

VCRD has some seed funding that could be used to match grant funds or kick start early initiatives and pop ups. Contact Alyssa Johnson, alyssa@vtrural.org.

Local Motion could be a key partner and could support the use of the Ridges and River Routes implementation guide. Contact Jonathon@localmotion.org.

AARP could be a funder and implementation partner. Contact Kelly Stoddard Poor at kstoddardpoor@aarp.org.

There is a funding section with resources listed in the implementation guide of the Ridges and River Routes plan: https://centralvtplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/SE-Group_Proposal_Northfield-Master-Plan_email.pdf.

The VTrans Bike Ped Program could be a funding source. Learn more at: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped>.

Safe Routes to School could help support this work: <https://saferoutes.vermont.gov/>.

The Better Places program could be a good funding source for traffic calming and pop up activities or any other placemaking initiatives. Contact Richard Amore at richard.amore@vermont.gov.

The Community Development Block Grants could be a funding source. Contact Nathan Cleveland at nathan.cleveland@vermont.gov.

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.

Action Step Recommendations

Meet with the Regional Planning commission to consider scoping a project. Learn more at <https://centralvtplanning.org/> and contact Clare Rock at rock@cvregion.com.

Conduct a street safety pilot similar to Bethel (<https://bethelrevitalizationinitiative.org/street-safety-pilot>).

Consider applying for a Better Places Program grant / project to pilot some improvements. Better Places Grants are a “community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public places...The program provides one-on-one project coaching, local fundraising support, and two to one (2:1) matching grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000 to make your community-led placemaking ideas happen.” Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/better-places>. Additional information and project examples can be found at <https://www.patronicity.com/BetterPlacesVT>.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

AARP has a number of useful guides. See <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2020/rural-livability-workshop-report.html> and <https://states.aarp.org/vermont/how-can-we-improve-vermonts-complete-streets-policy>.

Local Motion is a statewide nonprofit with a mission to “to make it safe, accessible, and fun for everyone to bike, walk, and roll in Vermont.” They offer a variety of technical assistance and funding opportunities. Learn more at https://www.localmotion.org/community_action and contact info@localmotion.org.

The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) can be a potential partner for planning and implementation and potentially assist with some grant applications. Learn more at <https://centralvtplanning.org/> and contact Clare Rock at rock@cvregion.com.

Potential Funding Sources

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program is “designed to assist states, local governments, and Tribes in implementing strategies to reduce energy use, to reduce fossil fuel emissions, and to improve energy efficiency.” Learn more at <https://www.energy.gov/scep/energy-efficiency-and-conservation-block-grant-program>.

AARP Community Challenge Grant can fund permanent physical improvements, demonstration projects, and new or innovative programming or services. Visit <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/info-2023/2023-challenge.html>. Contact Kelly Stoddard Poor at 802-951-1313 or at kstoddardpoor@aarp.org.

VTrans Bike and Pedestrian Program has educational, design, and funding resources. Learn more at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped> and <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped/resources>.

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) created a Vermont Federal Funding Guidebook with potentially applicable grants. Learn more at www.vlct.org/sites/default/files/uploads/VLCT%20VT%20FF%20Guidebook%20V%201.0%20121522.pdf.

Better Connections Program could be a potential funding source. Learn more at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>.

VCRD is a continuing partner for resource connections, and has some modest funding resources. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.



The first meeting of the Downtown Development and Housing Task Force.

► Create a Plan for Downtown Development & Housing

A task force could form to work with the town on developing a concrete action plan for the future of the downtown. The group could look at strategies and policies to encourage infill development and rehabilitate and utilize vacant spaces to maximize the use of the downtown area. The group could focus on strategies to improve and develop housing in the downtown, as well as on ways to attract people to the area such as pop up events, increased parking, and improved walkability. The group could connect to the broader community and the university to identify critical needs and opportunities for the future of the downtown.

Community Chair: **Phil Susmann**

Facilitator: **Alyssa Johnson**, *Community Projects Manager*, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Gary Holloway**, *Downtown Program Manager*, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development; **Seth Leonard**, *Managing Director of Community Development*, Vermont Housing Finance Agency

Community Participants: Brent Andrews, Tom Bright, Bill Clements, Tanya Crawford-Stempel, Ray Crowder, and Task Force Signups Tom Davis, Brad Denny, Anne Donahue, Britta Eberle, Ryan Hereth, Megan Hereth, Erin Hicks-Tibbles, Kaitlyn Keating, Michael Krause, Heidi Kunkel, Aaron Maas, Kyle Maass, Deborah Maxwell, Cody Morris, Mitch Osiecki, Danielle Pelczarski, Blake Pierson, Luke Plumley, Megan Roush, Margaret Snelgrove, Phil Susmann, Julie Susmann, Joseph Wantuch, and Michele Winters

Current Status Notes

- The Town has started a Housing Subcommittee; several members of the task force are also members of the Subcommittee.
- There is an existing lot in the downtown area that has focused interest for potential redevelopment and housing. Brownfield remediation has been conducted, and there are interested potential investors.
- There are some underutilized storefronts in the downtown that are not open to the public.
- Northfield currently has Village Center designation for the downtown area, and there active efforts to pursue the Designated Downtown designation, which comes with additional benefits. Northfield Community Development Network (NCDN) is deeply involved in this effort.
- There are efforts to expand the freight yard/way.
- There is strong demand for housing in the community.
- There is some additional potentially developable land under consideration for housing development that is located outside of the downtown area.
- The Town has a staff Economic Development Director, Tom Davis, who is a resource and contact for many of these topics.
- There is an ongoing zoning rewrite to improve the Town's zoning regulations to make it easier to develop housing, including removing some requirements for Development Review Board (DRB) review.
- The Northfield Savings Bank building in downtown has a second floor that is not renovated.
- There was work done to increase the threshold for Act 250 review for commercial p-project review in Northfield from 1 acre to 10 acres.
- NCDN is working on a transportation corridor effort.
- Employers in the community have a need and desire to grow and hire, but the inability of folks to find housing is often a limiting factor.
- A high percentage of Northfield residents commute out of the community to work.
- Northfield does not have a hotel or large amount of other lodging properties where folks can stay.

Action Steps

1. Develop a group vision statement. This work will inform the questions and background information sought in future phases of the work by the group, and can be a useful tool in communications with residents and stakeholders.
2. Based on the vision statement, learn more about pertinent background information to inform the efforts of the group. In particular, meet with Tom Davis, the Town Economic Development Director, to learn more about current initiatives and existing efforts underway. Specific information that could be covered in a meeting, or through an informational email or other means, include:
 - a) Review of existing studies that have been conducted.
 - b) Existing groups and networking the communities and their potential role (e.g. Housing Subcommittee, Planning Commission, wastewater committee).
 - c) Potentially developable parcels, especially in the downtown area.
 - d) State agencies and organizations that are involved in downtown development and/or housing.
 - e) Understand the implication of Act 250 legislative changes that have been passed or could be considered for the future.
3. Conduct updated community engagement efforts to understand the community's vision. There was a study that was conducted in 2014, but it could be updated. The group expressed additional interest ensuring those most impacted by the lack of housing availability were engaged in all components of the group's work.
4. Based on the vision, background information, and community engagement efforts, reconsider, rank, and prioritize next action items.

The group expressed support for ensuring accessible, hybrid meetings moving forward.

Additional Potential Actions

- Explore ways to improve and invest in properties.
- Engage with building property owners.
- Market developable properties in the community.
- Hold a meeting to debrief with other groups in the community.
- Understand who the group reports to and how it interacts with other groups in the community.
- Investigate funding sources available from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development and other sources.
- Determine how to cross pollinate with other groups in Northfield.
- Explore tax incentives to support developers.
- Invite contractors and builders to a conversation to understand challenges.
- Consider the use of a rental registry or other policy as a "stick" to encourage compliance with regulations.
- Review the letter from the Vermont Leagues of Cities and Towns about Act 250.
- Connect with large employers, who have a vested interest in housing efforts.
- Review efforts in other communities, including tax abatement and property acquisition.
- Explore modular communities and tiny home options.
- Create dashboard and statistics to track changes in housing over time.
- Consider leveraging a revolving loan fund to support housing.
- Explore ways to support beautification efforts.
- Investigate the positional for the VHIP program to help support housing development (see additional information below).
- Explore ways to support accessory dwelling unit (ADU) creation and infill development.
- Consider both short-term, "low hanging fruit" and more long-term initiatives.

Resources

The Vermont Housing Finance Agency has created a comprehensive housing data website for Vermont, including detailed info on communities. It is available at: <https://www.housingdata.org>.

The Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) “offers grants up to \$50,000 per unit for repairs needed to bring vacant rental units up to Vermont Rental Housing Health Code guidelines, add new units to an existing building, or create an accessory dwelling unit on an owner-occupied property.” Learn more at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/vhip>.

The Vermont Downtown Action Team report for Northfield created in 2014 is available at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/flood/downtown-action-team>.

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development has a funding directory for Designated Downtown and Village Centers: https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/CD/CPR/State-Designation-Programs/CPR-Funding-Directory.pdf.

There are task forces in Barre, Londonderry, and Putney that are also working on Housing efforts in their communities. VCRD can help make connections to the chairs in these communities. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs.

Action Step Recommendations

Connect with the Planning Commission and explore if they could they apply for a Municipal Planning Grant to perform a Housing Needs Assessment.

Develop a mechanism to understand the scope and scale of need - how much affordable housing? at what income? Need of rental vs. ownership?

Identify town-owned or university owned property that might be a low cost site for housing.

Consider pursuing a Bylaw Modernization Grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development to update zoning bylaws to facilitate the type of growth desired. Learn more at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/content/bylaw-modernization-grants>.

At the next full group meeting, try to break down your larger group into some sub-groups who can tackle different ‘jobs’ since there is a lot to tackle here. Each sub-group can then make a work plan to guide their process. The third step is to have each sub-group bring those back to the full group to get everyone aligned and see where there is overlap.

Within committees or even ad hoc groups, the ‘Main Street’ approach can be a useful framework. This means separate committees (or even ad hoc groups) tackling separate work plans handling “design” (murals, green space, public art, planting, etc.), “economic vitality” (working to fill businesses and promote local shopping), and “Promotions” (creating engaging community events periodically throughout the year). This allows for more volunteers to be part of an effort, allowing groups to concentrate on their areas of interest, but also provides some structure and organizational ability to move projects forward, handle funding and fundraising in a central place.

Engage with the Accessibility, Walkability, and Pedestrian Safety group to assure that accessibility is a key focus of this work.

Consider identifying a project that would benefit from a Better Places Grant (see additional information below).

Before any concrete actions can be taken, identify what the community wants. More Housing? Better Housing? Cheaper Housing? Housing with Income Restrictions (aka big “A” Affordable Housing)?

Review an overview of resources available at this link: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/town-future>.

Northfield already has a designated village center. Explore the list of benefits and tools that can be leveraged by private owners and the municipality at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs/village-centers>.

Consider the exploration of further designations, particularly the possibility of seeking a Neighborhood Development Area. Learn more at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs>.

Connect with the Department of Housing and Community Development to learn about Better Places grants.

There is already a housing group working in Northfield – perhaps having that group re-work their purpose to incorporate ‘missing middle’ housing is a good next step.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

Gary Holloway, Downtown Program Coordinator, Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802-522-2444.

The Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA) has a Toolbox for municipal leaders with a variety of resources. Learn more at <https://www.housingdata.org/toolbox/steps-for-municipalities>.

The National Main Street Four Points Structure is useful reference for downtown work. Learn more at <https://www.mainstreet.org/ourwork/theapproach>.

The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) can be a potential partner for planning and implementation and potentially assist with some grant applications. Learn more at <https://centralvtplanning.org/> and contact Clare Rock at rock@cvregion.com.

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development has links to a number of resources at <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing>.

Potential Funding Sources

Better Places Grants are a “community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public places...The program provides one-on-one project coaching, local fundraising support, and two to one (2:1) matching grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000 to make your community-led placemaking ideas happen.” Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/better-places>. Additional information and project examples can be found at <https://www.patronicity.com/BetterPlacesVT>.

Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) Small Grants for Smart Growth “provides seed money for catalyzing, community-based initiatives that are grounded in or help to support smart growth.” Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, and awards range from \$500 to \$1,500 per project. Learn more at <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-smart-growth/> and contact Kati Gallagher at kgallagher@vnrc.org.

Municipal Planning Grants are available for a Downtown Master Plan or other implementation plan to help support town capital improvement plans and other future planning goals. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>.

For funding sources, Vermont Community Foundation could be a good connection. The Spark Connecting Communities grant program provides grants of \$500-\$5,000 for “grassroots work that builds social capital.” The next round of Spark grant applications are due July 18. Learn more at vermontcf.org/our-impact/programs-and-funds/spark-connecting-community/.

Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services has a Regional Economic Development grant program that or capital costs associated with major maintenance, renovation, or planning related to the development of facilities reasonably expected to create or retain job opportunities in Vermont communities. Contact Judy Bruneau at judy.bruneau@vermont.gov or (802) 828-3519. Visit <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>.

There are state and Federal tax credits for designated downtowns and village centers: <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits>.

Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) is a program to be promoted to private property owners. This program can bring units back online that have fallen out of code OR it can be used to add ADUs which are a critical element of infill development which can add units without changing the look and feel of an existing neighborhood or village. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/vermont-housing-improvement-program>.

Community Development Block Grants from the Vermont Community Development Program could potentially be used to support planning or implementation work. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>.

VCRD is a continuing partner for resource connections, and has some modest funding resources. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.

USDA Rural Development has a variety of resources that could be available for planning and project implementation. Rural Business Opportunity Grants can help economic planning, cluster planning and with groundwork to spur economic development. Rural Business Enterprise Grants can support the progress of particular enterprises and might be especially useful if an incubator project is developed. Visit www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants/vt for grant information, and find contacts here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices/vt> or 802-828-6000.

If the process involves the development of Community Facilities, the USDA Community Facilities program provides support for a variety of programming. VCRD can provide additional support for developing and submitting an application. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/vt> and contact Alyssa at alyssa@vtrural.org and 802-222-6898.

The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) program can assist communities with grant writing or other steps to help support access to Federal funding. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at Mariah@vhcb.org at 802-828-1098.

The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) is an excellent grant resource depending on the type of project. Visit www.nbrc.gov. State contact is Kristie Farnham, kristie.farnham@vermont.gov.

► Build a Norwich/Northfield Partnership Council

The Northfield community and Norwich University could work together to build a coordination council with University and community representatives to address challenges and identify opportunities for collaboration. The group could include student representatives, Norwich staff and faculty, town leaders, school leaders, and community representatives. Together, they could look at ways to form a stronger partnership that builds on each other's unique resources, collaborate on initiatives to benefit both partners, strengthen the connections between university students and local residents, and address challenges such as noise complaints and housing.

Community Co-Chairs: **Rowly Brucken** and **Leslie Striebe**

Facilitator: **Brian Lowe**, *Executive Director*, VCRD

Resource Team Member: **Gail Shamnois**, *Director*, UVM Office of Student and Community Relations

Community Participants: Dan Anderson, Brent Andrews, Susan Barnard, Amelia Barouxis, Rowly (Rowland) Brucken, Marie Chilson, Casey Cutkomp, Joan Marie Davidson, Tom Davis, Nicole DiDomenico, Anne Donahue, Kristine Foley, Emily Gray, Sheridan Gray-Jones, Daisha Green, Ryan Hereth, Kaitlyn Keating, Elizabeth Kennedy Potkowski, Julie Lappin, Aaron Maas, Stephanie Maass, Mike Macijeski, Colden McClurg, Allison Neal, Andrew Padilla, Sarah Path, Blake Pierson, Carlos Pinkham, Elizabeth Kennedy Potkowski, Douglas Shiok, Susan Stillinger, Johnnie Stones, Leslie Striebe, and Anna Svagzdys

Current Status Notes

- Many valuable relationships and opportunities already exist between Norwich and Northfield, but many residents do not feel aware of all the opportunities & there is additional potential for partnerships that could benefit Norwich students, faculty, and area residents.
- Collaborative relationships that already exist touch on many parts of life (i.e., Rotary, a lecture series, hosting high school commencement, special Olympic athletes, ambulance service, youth meeting programming, programming through the Shaw outdoor recreation center, library access, and committees like a Select Board – University committee and Norwich reps on town housing committee and the police chief search).
- And, task force participants noted that there was potential for even more intentional collaborative programming as well as different or more robust communication to make sure people were aware of the excellent opportunities. Some new ideas a task force could consider included ways to connect students with paid job opportunities (odd jobs, yard work, babysitting, childcare, etc.), ways to help students connect with the community (meals and shared holidays for international students), new ways businesses in town could celebrate student return, Northfield youth access to athletic resources, and community access to forests and trails. The task force also briefly mentioned major goals, like housing costs and ways to retain Norwich grads in local businesses, as potential future task force conversations.

Action Steps

1. Clear buy in and support of the task force from the leadership of both institutions – the President of Norwich and the Northfield Select Board.
2. Establish and MoU that provides a Partnership Council mission statement + and clear roles for committee members.

3. Establish a clear plan for communicating about the committees work to the public (to help raise awareness about current opportunities and to get people interested in becoming involved in the Partnership Council's work).
4. Get people on the Partnership Council who are broadly representative of the Town and University (and the Council should reach out to others who aren't represented during the course of its work).
5. Put a clear leadership/governance structure in place for the group.
6. Have a catchy name – that will help with publicity!
7. Limit the initial focus of the group...there are many issues a group could focus on. Choose three to start, and set a timeline for making progress on those three areas.

Other Action Ideas

- Establishing a regular meeting schedule and location.
- Securing some funding to support the meetings.
- Making the meetings accessible – both physically and by helping provide childcare.
- Having a web presence and considering using Zoom.
- Writing bylaws.
- Establishing a set of principles as part of a framework for how the committee will operate and make decisions.
- When the Partnership Council meets, it should review the task force's vision.
- Consider whether to have co-chairs or a single leader.
- Develop resource lists that show what connections already exist between the University and Town.
- Define some clear measures of success (based on the areas the Council decides to focus on).
- The Council could help coordinate among existing initiatives (in addition to helping amplify the communications about what is going on).
- The Council could use new AI technologies to help amplify communications about existing initiatives between the town and university.
- Highlight some of the potential value of what the Partnership Council could do in order to help people realize what is at stake or what could be achieved.

Resources

Local resources through Norwich or Northfield – small investments can go a long way on a project like this.

Local people are the key to making this create value for the broader community.

Philanthropic organizations like Ben & Jerry's or Vermont Community Foundation (VCF) might be willing to provide a seed grant that could spark progress here. One possibility is the VCF "Spark Connecting Communities" grant program provides grants of \$500-\$5,000 for "grassroots work that builds social capital." Learn more at vermontcf.org/our-impact/programs-and-funds/spark-connecting-community/.

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns may have resources or advice for communities with a university.

Gail Champnois and UVM's Office of Student – Community Relations has had a "Coalition" of community and university members in place for 30 years. It is a more flexible concept than the Partnership Council, but Gail is a great resource who has done this work successfully.

AARP could be interested in this work.

Norwich Alumni Network.

Local businesses.

Local Rotary Club.

Northfield school district staff.

Community banks like Northfield Savings Bank.

VCRD could provide support or referrals to additional resources. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

After Community Meeting Day, Resource Team members, representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, submitted their recommendations for other potential actions and resources the task force might consider as it moves forward. These recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.

Action Step Recommendations

Reach out to the universities/colleges across Vermont who have town/gown partnerships or dynamics.

Consider reaching out to other similar situations (i.e., a military school in a rural town) to ask their experiences or guidance (plus/delta...things that worked well in those relationships, things that could or should change).



Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch on May 16th.

V. Northfield: Our Common Future Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held in-person and virtually with over 200 Northfield community members and the VCRD Visiting Team on March 21, 2023, and through a paper and online survey.

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

Youth & Families

Visiting Team: Alyssa Johnson (FACILITATOR), Brian Lowe (SCRIBE), Nicole Miller, Holly Morehouse, Geoffrey Pippinger, Chris Winters

What are the Assets in this Area?

- PTNO – Parent Teacher Neighbor Organization that supports elementary school.
- After school programs and especially the middle school.
- Brown public library story time + community room (great place for activities).
- “Crafternoon” session at the Library.
- Rock band and creative programming and the theater and drama through the Northfield High School.
- Northfield Middle & High School is amazing.
- Access to programs through Norwich.
- The river is a big asset.
- PE teacher at the elementary school in particular.
- Jump Rope program on Tuesdays...for 40 years!
- Student art displayed publicly.
- Schools focus on kids needs being met at a basic level, lots of exercise.
- Educators at the high school have been really outstanding; work hard to welcome new families and students.
- Buddy-up program at Norwich University.
- Everybody Wins program to improve reading level; follows student for 3 years.
- Spring musical – brings community together, whether or not you have children involved in the play.
- Dog River Park.
- Farmers Market.
- Annual 5k Run that Northfield Savings or others sponsor.
- Privately run groups for drama, chess, ...community initiatives is great.
- Walkability in the town ... lots of playgrounds, some great parks that are accessible.
- Hiking & biking trails (Shaw center, Garvey Hill).
- Great and growing little league program in town.
- Youth hockey.
- Toddle playground is great.
- Best, most child friendly pool is a well-used asset.
- Youth sports (especially Dynamo soccer).
- Labor Day race.
- Events on the Common – Light Up Night, Annual Night, Maypole Dance Celebration (it’s a blast!).

What are the Challenges?

- Not a lot of opportunities for older kids to hang out in the town – lots of parks for little kids; but just houses and the river for high school students.
- Not a lot of community spaces in general, especially in winter there are very few spaces.
- Competition among groups in town that can get a little divisive.
- Being new in town, there’s no way to learn about things other than word of mouth.
- Safe pedestrian access – can’t get to the town pool without some serious crossings//areas with no sidewalks.
- Particularly true Pedestrian Access issues up in the Falls area.
- Accessibility and ADA access is very challenging – for things like the town pool, but also within the school...lifts don’t work.
- Childcare is always a real challenge...this is strongly reinforced.
- And summer camp coverage is very challenging...the available camps fill up in 15 minutes or so.
- Many kids in the community can’t access the pool – pool is a wonderful asset, but whether it’s the cost of using the pool or transportation, many people cannot get into the pool.
- Lack of youth opinions in the projects...total lack of youth voice in discussion and sometimes youth feel hostile...people should ask why youth aren’t coming to the meeting.
- 6mo to get primary care + no optometrist anywhere nearby.
- Failing infrastructure ... like on the bridges ... complicate pedestrian access.
- Poor signage can also make pedestrian access harder than it should be.
- Rt 12 is not walkable...some kind of connection between the downtown core and the Falls could connect the community in a new and helpful way.
- The Common could be more kid-friendly.
- The fountain is a flashpoint for debate (should it be a fountain or splash pad?).
- Separate from the fountain itself, the challenging conversation itself is a different challenge...very different views of who thinks what / values what in the fountain.
- Really lacking indoor space for young to teenage space...lots of very empty buildings that have sat vacant for years and are perfectly located to be a community center.

- Lack of options...no vibe in the downtown...could be more activity.
- Director for only local 0 – 5 space notes a huge waitlist; the pre-K expansion will likely put the private center out of business because 0 – 3 costs are so much more than 3 – 5yo.
- Northfield lacks infrastructure to absorb kids under 6yo...there will be no pre-K so where will the 5yo go?
- Northfield has a tremendous number of under the table childcare providers...licensing costs a lot of money.
- Enrollment level particularly for the middle and high school is plummeting and can become a self-reinforcing cycle...real challenge for the town/community.

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

- Public private partnerships.
- Northfield could utilize vacant buildings for a climbing gym or a pool hall ... could be adult friendly, could be kid friendly.
- Northfield could have more than one restaurant.
- Food cart friendly part of town.
- Community center for kids and teens ages 0 – 18 yo...turn vacant buildings into a well-utilized space...incredible opportunity.
- Conversation around pre-K expansion and what the impact will be for private childcares.
- Bike path could use a facelift, along with more recreation and community space.
- Northfield could have more sidewalks.
- Northfield could hire a part-time grant writer.
- Northfield could try to get Norwich to collaborate a little bit.
- Northfield could have a stronger outdoor rec municipal presence.
- Collaborate with the parent-child center in MTP to do playgroups and parent education.
- Northfield could make Rt 12 to the falls walkable and accessible.
- Northfield could have a welcome sign facing both ways on Rt 12.
- Run a shuttle for kids to the pool over the summer.
- Scholarship program for kids to access the kids.
- Crosswalks that are more direct. AND – more crosswalks!
- Northfield elementary could home cook their meals...support in the room for all the schools.
- Northfield could get an ice rink out of the barn...or just generally explore a rink.
- Increase communication – there's a ridge and routes running organization, but no one knows it...chance to get better at communicating.
- Town website that works on your phone...links never work, impossible to know when the pool is open.
- Northfield could use a community calendar on that website.
- Northfield could have a community board of sorts...physical or digital...lots is shared...just a place where people can know what's going on event-wise in the area...closest thing to this is the bulletin board in the diner...there is a board at the library that is hidden.
- Accessibility to mental health care for children and families.
- Create a "library of things" for snow shoes, ice skates, tools, useful things for the community.
- Series of orientation programs for new people to the community...along the lines of the old welcome wagon, but on a different scale.
- Northfield could...collaborate with surrounding communities such that...after school in Randolph and Northfield is coordinated (expand who can access when).
- Change Board and Commission times so its not always 7pm on weeknights.
- Welcome wagon with reciprocity to celebrate working lands, elders, and ability to connect and celebrate some of the strengths that exist in this community.
- Northfield could have more of us involved in the local government.
- Northfield could offer some kind of stipend so that its not limited to retirees and those willing to do it for no compensation.
- Northfield could have a wildlife expert to hang out with the bear and help me figure out how to keep my kids safe.
- Space where high schoolers can go after school...we have so many creative makers and artists...where is the connection to screen press, maker space for high schoolers to learn some of these skills.
- Northfield could have a maker space.
- Bring more restaurants to town.
- Northfield could entice someone to open a real food store within walking distance in the center of town.
- There is an opportunity to highlight local food and sustainability...local food store but also a way to learn skills for youth and education.
- Bring the foodbank into the school.
- Put more funding into the food shelf somewhere welcoming...right now its in the basement.
- Northfield could be ADA accessible.
- Utilize the commons for more stuff...dance parties or a show and this could help fund the pool access for kids.
- Covered space for the common.
- Northfield could be participatory....lots of good things going that people don't know about, but also people have to take initiative.
- Northfield could use more fresh fruit year round...food market that supports local farmer...store front would be amazing.
- Northfield could investigate on how to raise awareness...what info is sought, what info is provided, and how to make the connection.
- Northfield could offer some class opportunities...or contract out...dance classes etc.
- More connection to outdoor resources and better integrate with the town forest.
- Northfield could be more transparent and have a more established consistent line of communication for town notices.
- Northfield could make FPF more positive.
- Could be less divided and more diverse by involving Norwich University more.
- Sports, pool, other access costs are a real barrier... many families cannot access the pool especially.

- Northfield could have a revolving community loan fund that is focused on youth-oriented investments and the payback could be volunteering time.
- Northfield could have a time bank.
- Northfield could have a free outdoor concert scene...good way to get your name out with some big outdoor spaces.
- The Bridges has a sliding scale for participation...free, middle tier, upper tier...is there a way to bring that to the pool? Income based payment model.
- Northfield could have more outdoor time during the day with new support staff to help teachers and funds to provide the gear to play in all seasons.
- Storefront historical society...some way to keep and preserve traditions and give them respect ... similar to a historical society ... way to show the towns history and traditions.
- Way to preserve the towns farming history even as so many people leave farming.
- Northfield could create a series of murals that celebrate past and create walking trails.
- Need better PR...we actually have some of the things that people are asking about, like a little historical society.
- Northfield could volunteer more!
- Northfield could have live interpretation on the walking mural tour from time to time.
- More involvement with youth in the art community.
- Program of support for families that have new babies...especially if people don't have families nearby.
- Community health program in partnership with UVM and Norwich in town.
- Restaurant open on Mondays...Good Measure is now open Mondays people say.
- Northfield could have an Amtrak stop.
- Northfield could have an indoor training facility for little league.
- Northfield could have an indoor pool.
- Northfield could have a true indoor skating rink and more skating options outdoors.
- Make a giant indoor sports complex...climbing wall to hockey....
- Volunteer run coffee shop for youth.
- No volunteering and mentorship program...bring it back for teens.
- Middle and High Schoolers are prepared for what comes next...when they leave, want to come back...more outdoor ed programs, more Community College credits, partner with Tech programs...graduate with some credits and skills.
- Northfield could work with Norwich to put in a rope tow for free community skiing.
- Northfield could have a better newspaper.
- Northfield could have a community garden and youth could have their own space in the garden.
- Secure Congressionally Directed Spending to make the Gray building more accessible.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Heard a real need for voices for youth to be engaged so that any spaces or community meetings are including that voice and so that the solutions are actually helpful.
- Walkability and accessibility...both ADA and cost.
- Significant childcare challenges as a theme.
- Would encourage the town to think about who is participating in what, how and when to break down some silos.
- A lot of positive feedback about the schools and the folks who work in the schools.
- Centrality of communication for connection as well as communication for knowledge...kept recurring themes.
- Challenges focused on activities, rather than the environment.
- All youth age groups, recognizing caring adults.
- Welcoming new people in but not losing sight of the old – old people or older traditions and perspectives.
- Strong list of assets...each missing one or two things.
- Maker space-opportunity given the skills in the community.
- Transparency as a key to trust...central to being able to move forward.
- Age range in the forum.
- Importance of youth voice in shaping any outcomes.

Housing

Visiting Team: Seth Leonard (FACILITATOR), Ben Doyle (SCRIBE), Clare Rock, Amy Tomasso

What are the Assets in this Area?

- 50 years ago, there was a considerable difference between rural and village. Much of the existing stock in the rural areas has improved. Made the community more egalitarian.
- Sidewalks are an asset. The housing stock downtown is robust. We have a lot of houses.
- Northfield is a great size that is close to Montpelier and near the interstate. Well located housing.
- The socio-economic diversity is good for the community. Doesn't feel elite or exclusionary.
- Lots of existing recreation infrastructure: Pool, playgrounds, trail systems.
- Close to outdoor recreation: skiing, hunting, etc.
- Norwich is a great asset that provides infrastructure and vitality.
- Northfield has a "working class vibe." Community values the factories that are in town.
- Sense of positive change: Feels up and coming. There is investment. Nice to be able to meet neighbors.
- Quiet. Not too busy. Don't get the tourists. Kids can walk around downtown.
- Northfield has been widely recognized for making much of its downtown buildings handicap accessible.
- There are examples of small-scale housing development in Northfield: Norwich Common. Built townhouses & condos, seven units. Tried to replicate this project but have had little support.

- There is a bumper crop of younger people who are coming to the town and want to be part of it. Optimistic for the future.
- Senior housing in town. People can age in place in Northfield. Fabulous place to grow old.
- There are places to meet, places to eat.
- Height and massing of buildings is good.
- Senior center and library are great.
- The housing is more affordable.
- Plenty of sewer and water capacity (only used 60%).

What are the Challenges?

- Attempts to build housing in the past have failed.
- People have turned down jobs at Norwich because they can't find housing. Not enough affordable housing to recruit and retain talent.
- High density of historic buildings but many of them are for sale.
- Don't want the single-family owner-occupied homes turned into apartments.
- Younger people can't find anything to rent or buy. Either undesirable or too expensive. Feels like people tacked 150K on to the price of anything that's for sale.
- ADU regs don't allow for enough square footage for them to be viable. If the regs were changes they could be a silver bullet.
- Really difficult to strike that regulatory balance.
- We don't have affordable housing and therefore don't have a workforce—businesses would expand if there was housing.
- Senior housing is not sufficient. We can't downsize because there is nowhere affordable to go.
- Not aware of lots that could be even developed.
- Many houses are occupied for only part of the year (people leave in the winter).
- Unclear what are the principals for the town to site housing. We will need to make changes and aren't thinking proactively.
- Some family homes are occupied by students and turn into party houses. Hard to live in a quiet community. We are surrounded by dormitories and there isn't oversight.
- We need to think about the impact the sewer and the schools.
- Roads aren't maintained well. This limits access to other parts of town.
- You can't live in Northfield if you don't drive (as an elderly person)
- Programs for helping seniors don't exist.

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

- People need to join the planning commission and get involved.
- Could build out sewer system along route 12 and reduce required lot size. Expand water infrastructure as well.
- Build more sidewalks so the community is more accessible.
- Build a trail system for community members and Norwich students (many of whom run on 12A).
- Build a connector from apartments to Norwich University.
- Build trails so people can run, bike, or walk to Montpelier. Good for kids.
- Make sure that Tops stays open. If we lose a grocery Northfield will be a wasteland.
- Build additional modes of transportation.
- More visioning about principals/values so we can prepare for change.
- Build up downtown housing (multistory) and increase infill development.
- Build town parking garage to free up all the area is being used cars.
- Lots of commercial space isn't being used. How do we transition it into mixed-use?
- Use taxes as a motivator. Raise money from taxes on people who don't live year around. Take that money and invest in new housing. Tax abatement programs to spur investment. Need to find more opportunities for investing.
- Rethink the use of land for heights and best use and expand infill development. Do we really need storage units or more housing in the downtown?
- Use the VDAP report (written a few years ago from ACCD). We need the action to move things forward. Continue to support Econ Director. Use the existing the plans and create more options for engagement.
- Build a bike path along the Dog River.
- Build more rural neighbors (build more outside the downtown core).
- We have a town plan but we need to use it. The time to decide policy are right now. Show up!
- Explore regs grants around building ADUs.
- Figure out systems for disseminating communications.
- We need to be proactive about addressing senior issues. Look at other housing opportunities. Could you build four-plexes for seniors who don't want to go to a nursing home.
- Engage the real estate community to find out more about what kind of housing is needed. Study the issue. Gather information. Study Air BNB.
- Make sure that new units help contribute to the community. We need a north star. Major loss of folks on the planning. We need to find out why.
- Listen to Vermont Edition episode on housing.
- Develop some kind of system that identifies who folks are. We need a better platform for sharing ideas and learning about people.
- Make the town website more dynamic to share information.

Public & Community Safety

Visiting Team: Jenna Koloski (FACILITATOR), Hannah Carpino (SCRIBE), Ted Brady, Christian Meyer, Julie Moore, Carol Plante, Michael Schirling, Misty Sinsigali

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Has its own police dept and Norwich has public safety as well.
- Montpelier CJ includes Northfield and justice board.
- Feels like a safe place to be.
- Sense of community neighbors tend to know neighbors, mutual accountability.
- Access to emergency services.
- Online presence and can communicate with each other rapidly: FPF.
- Online forums: FB.
- Prevalence of speed limit signs and reasonable limits.
- Feedback sign on how fast drivers are going is helpful.
- Improvements on sidewalks make walking much easier.
- PD has 6 officers and when fully staffed provides 24-hour services only 1 of 2 in Washington County to do that.
- Vehicles are in good shape.
- PD Policies updated.
- PD used to be able to come to school and mingle with them.
- Currently police do have school relationships with children.
- Volunteers working on fire and ambulance: very wonderful.
- Lots of volunteerism in community generally.
- DPW is amazing with roads: snow, mud (grading), keep them in great condition.
- School is a great asset.
- Stable community with businesses and support for community activities.
- Northfield is seen as a hidden gem and a very safe community, families move here/live here for that.
- 5-6 churches, taking care of the spiritual needs of community, families and democracy.

What are the Challenges?

- We struggle with PD and keeping them staffed, and troubles within the dept: why is that? Are we trying to do something we shouldn't do anymore: do we need to do something different?
- Town meeting: issues around ambulance needing a 3rd ambulance, don't know data, need to look at crime data, mental health data/support systems and EMS services, what are our needs and how to balance them.
- Don't know data as a challenge.
- Funding needs for ambulance: want to retain the third ambulance and to outfit it to meet needs, SB and voters at town meeting turned it down (floor vote).
- Mental health and how it gets convoluted with crime: can we support the PD by having social workers?
- Northfield sits on an island: 12 miles from Montpelier, other towns with services are far away: next in help is far away.
- Risk concentrated community.
- Public safety agencies are taxed.
- Northfield 944 calls for ambulances didn't turn down a call but stretched.
- Backroads: material that we use to fix the road causes a lot of tire damage which is a safety issue, no process to discuss the problem, can't seem to find out what the problem is.
- Traffic and pedestrian safety, speed on the roads, parking issues, mundane things. Pulling bridge out downtown in 2 years, rerouting into neighborhoods and behavior of drivers is a concern.
- Distracted drivers.
- LED lighting gives illusion of light but can't see pedestrians very well, pedestrians have been hit.
- Areas outside village with no sidewalks with no place to walk or ride bikes.
- Norwich students living in town can be loud/partying.
- PD challenges: up until 2 weeks ago we did provide 24 hour coverage, but we are short 3 who are out with a variety of issues. State police are covering at night 6 pm-2 am. Only will come out for serious incidents, lesser calls have to wait until morning.
- Can't fill roles that are out.
- Speeding: 80 miles of roads, hard for one officer to cover all of those roads and be able to catch all the speeding at the right place and right time.
- More state laws on police, and makes them afraid to do their jobs.
- Town is facing a crisis of lack of communication and trust between community and PD both ways and breeds a lot of mistrust.
- Core values of town and PD can be in opposition.
- Breakdown of communication and tensions are high.
- Struggling to support PD without understanding challenges.
- Chief's values don't align with some community members, and if I am not one of the people he values and will I be safe? Can I trust the police?
- Fair and impartial policing should be human nature and not a law, world is changing and law enforcement should evolve.
- Some of the most talented officers in PD have left for a number of reasons, 2 folks who have been incredible officers believing in community policing, these folks left, couldn't keep them and that's troubling.
- LGBTQIA kid: how would I feel if what happened in Randolph happened here.
- Felt safety: Northfield PD FB page was thin blue line, very infused image and can feel unsafe to some people.
- Not unique as a town: issues facing all towns in US.
- Noticed that we need to be more careful on FB, FPF: it's become a place that isn't healthy.

- How do you weigh the amount of risk you will accept in building police, EMS and do we keep investing.
- Within dept. there have been a long history of problems within dept. been other issues, many officers have gotten arrested. Defund police movement caused challenges.
- Can't pick up people with mental health challenges and bring them to hospital.
- Can't have officers walk by BLM in hallway and have them stay.

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

- Reconfigure the roads, speeding signs, infrastructure changes (Traffic calming techniques), passive controls.
- Social worker on hand: how many calls with EMS and PD were for mental health crises? Could having social worker on staff as part of first response team in community: learn more about the data.
- Speed cameras, "sleeping policemen": speed bumps, section on streets with bollards and makes the road one lane: traffic calming ideas.
- Communication with public about law enforcement responsibilities as primary responsibilities: education.
- Law enforcement major at Norwich: we could create internships etc.: misalignment of values. IF we can align values we have a massive opportunity to serve our town.
- Norwich EMS national certification allows them to work here, have to apply for reciprocity for police officers to work here, need to explore these nuances.
- Criminal justice programs with part time certifications and work in PD.
- Plus one for traffic calming techniques.
- Ask police who left why they left? What needs to change to recruit and keep officers?
- Need to ID who to talk to, where to get the data, when and how to talk to the police.
- See more statistics: what are the rates and what comes out of it?
- Finding a way to get communication across to people and what is comfortable to general public: FPF could be a place to get word out, FB, comfortable ways to get communication going between groups.
- Consolidating/VSP solutions: some caution around that, response times can be very slow, town loses control over PD, recommend re-growing rehabilitating PD.
- Citizen advisory board as a potential way to make decisions.
- Looking at data and deciding how creative solutions can happen: do a "civilian study" require that people rethink their jobs.
- Look at recruitment strategies: make sure we have them and highlight the gem that Northfield is, what is the health and demographics of our officers, what do we need to use to get good hires, who do we need to fill these positions, can recruit to avoid issues.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Northfield is a unique community. Has never been in a room as busy as this one, great turnout.
- Willingness to have hard conversations in a constructive way is a huge asset.
- Frequent conversation w municipalities about policing.
- This is not an uncommon conversation.
- this room needs to continue influencing this process - show up to 2nd meeting.
- The "problem statement" is NOT that Northfield is an unsafe community – the problem statement is "How do we MAINTAIN the safety of this community given the challenges."
- Strong assets - one of those is the interest level and the passion of the community members!
- Enthusiasm around proposed changes.
- Biggest conflict seems to be over values - fundamentally this is the hardest thing to address.
- Dozens of VT communities grapple with these questions.
- Increase in complexity of operating law enforcement ems and fire service. This was easier to maintain 25 years ago.
- Smaller cities, smaller state, hard to compare strategies that have worked elsewhere.
- Lots of interest in changing built environment to improve safety for pedestrians and bikers.
- Opportunities to take on smaller projects that are truly "win win."
- Complete streets initiative.
- Considerable amount of work to tackle in that space-in village, but also connecting other parts of Northfield outside of the village.
- More of a kudos than anything else.

Building Norwich & Northfield Connection

Visiting Team: Brian Lowe (Facilitator), Alyssa Johnson (Scribe), Nicole Miller, Holly Morehouse, Georeffy Pepinger, Michael Shirling, Chris Winters

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Interns from Norwich have worked for local businesses.
- Shaw Outdoor Center – used by a lot of community members.
- Economic engine for Northfield.
- Permanence and history – can't think of Norwich without it.
- Sporting events – awesome for the community to be a part of.
- Energy from having college students in the community. It's great to talk with students, and have the specific age range.

- Emergency situation, like with Irene, Norwich students are an asset, especially with such giving personalities.
- A lot of international students – enhanced diversity in Vermont.
- Student teachers from Norwich that come to the school, especially in physical education.
- Buddy Up program – really positive for kids.
- School connection – Northfield middle/high school has commencement at the fieldhouse, hockey plays home games on the campus.
- Architecture program has had volunteers redesign community spaces in communities (Highgate, Barre).
- Juniors and seniors can take free classes at Norwich.
- Center for Civic Engagement – scouting, girls who code, habitat, buddy up, emergency services.
- Students get so much from this community – feel embraced by the community because open and welcoming.
- Joint Tanzania trip with students from high school Interact and Norwich students.
- Really easy to choose Northfield as a place to live. Offers a community that is unparalleled – place to raise children, great school system – parent of young children – lovely place to have a home.
- Response to Irene – human capital provider in the emergency services.
- Huge, immediately deployable resource. Corps went out in the community for missing people, etc.
- Huge supporter of public safety in the community. The ambulance schedule would not be full without students.
- Students in 3 different fire departments in the area.
- Northfield Ambulance – shifts wouldn't be filled otherwise.
- Solid employer for the town.
- How Norwich impacts the economy of the town is not well studied- employment, monetary donations, purchases of services – hasn't been looked at before. Some in town look at as a pariah, but likely an enormous positive impact.
- Three different students have received full scholarships.
- There is a scholarship in perpetuity for a Northfield resident – a 4 year scholarship that includes living on campus.
- Norwich is an intellectual asset – not just sports program. Day long program on sports in the middle east. Plays, musical performances that the community is invited to – intellectual center for the community.
- April 10/11 Leadership Fair.
- Science Fair for the State
- Beauty and walkability of the campus – great place to just take a stroll.
- Neighbors running – can take kids to practice bike riding because safe.
- Well maintained, safe place for kids.
- Halloween trick or treat – sad my kids aren't little any more – over 600 folks came this year.

What are the Challenges?

- Really hard for students to find something to do in Northfield, especially since the Rustic closed.
- New to town, and love hearing what is available, but hard to find that information myself – communication is challenging
- Open Ice hours at the rink – hear rumors, but lack of connections.
- “For how open the campus is, would think there's big wall around the campus”- many folks haven't been despite there being a museum, etc.
- Town-gown split – folks don't realize they're welcome, and don't take.
- Parking on campus is a disaster, and has been for 25 years.
- There has been times the public aren't welcome, so challenging to figure out, navigate, keep up with the currency of information.
- It's on Norwich.edu
- Northfield and Norwich can feel like two different communities.
- Coming out of the pandemic, Norwich had to do what it had to do to keep students safe – were really locked town for a long time, no “Hey we're open now” – community connection needs to be rebridged.
- Some known issues with Norwich's building, but on a hill, struggle with accessibility – lots of sidewalks, love to wheel around the track, go to open gym, but hard to wheel around and feel welcome on the main aspect of campus.
- There can be resentment of the college kids- that they party, spend their time differently. Folks don't want to live next to an apartment of college students.
- Challenging to find available rental units that are not gouging the students on price.
- Challenges with available housing all around – because of students, hard for those who come back to find housing. Queries on FPF often.
- For employees at the university, affordable housing is a huge issue - hits all demographics.
- Childcare. There are a couple amazing facilities, but still doesn't feel like enough. Can dissuade folks from employment.
- Misinformation circulates about free housing, who is taxed, etc. People make accusations instead of requesting more information.
- Not just a lack of information, but harmful discourse about practices about Norwich. The communication that exists is largely harmful communication.
- Kids should be kids – Town police, parties with 200 people. No one to call to say this has gone on too long, folks out drinking. Not known who has what responsibility for folks once they leave the campus. Students rent at higher rates than most folks can afford.
- College parties – can be tough with school tomorrow! Don't mind the partying as much, but wish students would clean up a little better. Find empty cigarette boxes, beer cans, etc.
- Retention of Northfield residents can be impacted. Bought a house next to a big student party house, want to establish roots in the community, but hard to raise kids in the current location.
- Live near the University forest. Seeing students with what I now know are pretend guns at 5 am was alarming. Communication piece – it would be cool if there was proactive communication to residents.
- Town forest – relationship between the town and Norwich with an access point, but the relationship could be better. No

official parking for the town. Can access through the Shaw outdoor center. Town does not have access to the Town Forest that is not through Norwich- no written agreement. (Follow up from Tom Davis- Town is building 12 more parking spaces at Shaw with grant money, and developing a MOU about crossing property). .

- March with students on Saturday morning, but hard to keep 100 to 120 people “little bit of a low rumble.” They get complaints every time they do a ruck march. They are actively

trying to be quieter. Complaints that come in make the morale of students lower when going through Town.

- Tired of Sodexo food – would be nice if there were opportunities for folks to join homes for holidays, etc.
- International students and others who live a flight away – getting off campus is challenging.
- Norwich is not the same Norwich as 50 years ago- now has all 4 ROTC branches, Civilian students.

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

- Get kids off campus on a Sunday afternoon to folks houses – get into a house with real people, real food, real TV. Going to someone’s home goes from level 1 to level 2 friendship. “Steak on the grill”
- Thanksgiving – join for an American meal, can take back to their culture .
- Opportunity for students to know to be quiet – nexus of communication needed.
- Programs that really help to get students out – “Rent a room”. Any programs to get students out in the community.
- Pandemic – couldn’t do anything. Idea for action – Norwich communicating back to the community differently and more robustly.
- Norwich posts a regular calendar – could post a community calendar that could be posted on the Town website, share on FPF, post somewhere in Town, channel 7.
- Northfield could share on the calendar.
- Social media in this town – exploit it in a good way – use social media to share information out.
- Campus tours for perspective students – share a campus tour to Northfield residents, show the campus, get you a library card, help understand the resources available.
- Community members could offer visiting and prospective students a tour of highlights the community could offer.
- Community businesses can welcome back Norwich and parents – signage, welcoming back to Norwich, discounts.
- Norwich History 1866 – When Northfield brought Norwich here, granite industry, train stopped here. What was going on then. Northfield could revisit its history to see what was happening in 1866.
- Nicole gets Norwich students into schools to volunteer- Northfield students have not gotten onto Norwich campus. Faculty members would love to have more students on Norwich campus – the University has a full-time education collection. Let students try on a civil war uniform – available within walking distance of the Northfield school, but not being used. As a faculty member, able to bring a book club for a science note, cryptography. Opportunity for students who see themselves in college – want more than that.
- Librarians in the area would do programs at the school, AP classes, Norwich – spark to make things happen and a connection. Place for the spark to occur. Far more resources, but with human capital, can do a lot more.
- Norwich and Northfield schools – can’t find babysitters. In some places, secret Facebook groups to tap into the college groups to arrange childcare. Childcare resources from current students – some sort of central repository might take pressure off parents.
- Northfield development – Chevrolet, downtown needs to develop. In some communities, strong partnership between the College and the Town that worked together to set a development program for the Town. Tops grocery store with \$6 for milk is a challenge. Have to go to Montpelier and Berlin.
- Demographics in Town – folks are getting older, and a lot are very with it and would like to learn more. Programs at the university that could incorporate seniors to audit – partnerships between students and seniors. Would get in a helpful population.
- Some sort of guidebook from a meeting of house owners, renters, student residents, neighbors, security forces in town- what is allowed, what isn’t allowed. Task Forces.
- Rules about when party ends, decibels. Right now, no parameters.
- Norwich Students have assisted Northfield in projects – could be more effort in that direction. Working on the Norwich 2 freightyard area – engineering students designed and built a bridge for. Wetland-acceptable walkways – senior projects in engineering.
- Center for Civic Engagement – is there that from the Town, the other way? Smaller non-profits have sprung up, but not something comparable. Could have a point person from the Town that has the responsibilities to be the contact person from the Town. Used to have a volunteer from the community in the Center for Civic Engagement, but no longer. CCE has connections to a lot of nonprofits within a 25-mile radius.
- School system in Northfield should also have a designated point person for Norwich to be working with.
- Engineering program – have partnered with the Town on several group. New facility for serv, roads and bridges. A lot of design, can occasionally get things built. Many opportunities not just focused town landowners, but the community as a whole. Offers a paper study, can be beneficial for grants.
- Host a Town Cleanup day where students cleaned the Town, business owners made snacks – open lines of communications between the Town and allow mingling.
- It would be cool to find ways to connect students in various communities – students, LGBTQ, students of colors. A lot of individuals and families who would like those connections, can see themselves in communities.
- Just before graduation, all the parties on the Dog River – clean up student parties from the week so kids and dogs can go down their safely.
- Something more than, or in addition to Nicole/Center for Civic Engagement – not someone to call with a concern – noisy, students doing things they shouldn’t, running around with guns, can I go swimming today, etc. Create a community person you can call and after number hours so the community

has someone to contact. Doesn't know sports, hockey games, etc.

- VP at Norwich, married to a police officer. Can't have eyes on all 2300 of the teenagers we're raising, if they live in the community and are behaving poorly, they have to call the police. Staff live on Central Street. At a certain point, students need to have consequences. Need to be held accountable like others in the community.
- Would love to know what other departments and professors would want to make connections.
- More connections between Norwich students and high schoolers – helpful to learn from their experience. Not learning from teachers who “yeah went to college” – learning from people who are experiencing it right now.
- Students looking for outside jobs if you need a barn cleaned out, farm stud, a ride – is there an interested group of students.
- Civic Engagement is charged with organizing students volunteers, not part time gig work, childcare, etc. You can help

- but not pay them – electronic or physical community boards - by financial aid, work study jobs - direct communication, not having an office play a middle person – new Facebook page??
- Have someone build an app to help connect folks.
- Board or Facebook page that connects folks looking for work – Northfield Facebook page?
- Walkways along the side of the campus – East side of campus where this no walkway, along the cemetery. Walkways where heavy food traffic is.
- Fundamental relationship between having Town and Gown – not a fundamental animosity, mostly a matter of communication – never had a problem finding something at Norwich. Isn't a fundamental, problem – sophisticated fix.
- Free college education to every eligible student of Northfield high school.
- Hold a civic hackathon, something that involved both the school and the town – working on pulling one together!
- “Stand in the woods on our own, man”
- There are ongoing efforts to get the train to stop in town.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This is tough one- a lot of layers. Hearing love for Norwich from the community, and lack of clarity about if it is open and, accessible. If you could get at the clarity, could potentially help with the frustration.
- Vision or identity thing about being seen, welcomed. Take away the acceptance. Demystifying Norwich, opening up some vision. Not just who you are, but who is really fostering that, fostering the relationship. Clark University in Worcester, MA has one of the most intentional relationships to the surrounding community in a real and intention way. Folks can go to Clark for free, so a deep understanding of Town-Gown and power. So many opportunities.
- Communication seems to be a potential low hanging fruit. Hearing a lot about HOW to do communication. A lot of “we have”, “there is”, “go to” – if that was working, that wouldn't a question. Seems to be a reliance on the tools that you have – is there a way to change that? Potential assumptions about access to tools – internet, navigate a platform, etc. There is a big difference between communication to impart information and communication to hear.
- “I feel like I've been in this meeting before.” With UVM and Burlington because of size, 5x the economic and neighborhood impact, so more challenging relationship.
- Of the 251 towns in Vermont, only a few have a University, and the rest want one.
- Challenge is “educating a parade” – whatever you build has to be sustainable and reproducible, and has to happen over and over again, because 25% of the student population turns over every year.
- Great to hear about events with neighbors, programs, community members.
- At UVM, there is a strong emphasis on off campus communication through the Office of Student and Community

Relations – talk with Gail S. Off campus welcome bags the first day students are there, plus weekly communications about parking bans, etc. Off campus living guide.

- Burlington and UVM developed joint quality of life patrols with emphasis on the early spring. Disorder is like a chemical reaction- with heat, the molecules bang together faster! Joint patrols could include administrators, police, potentially community members. Present things from going off.
- Enforcement – City of Burlington ordinance toolset that allows action when state law does not. A number of layers to that for accountability. Gives the University teeth to take action on the student conduct side if there's a citation without having to go into the criminal court system.
- UVM Medical Center has a community rounds program where they bring folks to the hospital and they get an inside look at an operating theater, medical education, etc. Interesting to think about the potential ways to bring community members into the campus.
- Further nuance and understanding – what is the post-pandemic Northfield and Norwich of NOW. What is the thing you need and want. Suggestion to make sure to speak directly with College students – have a forum with the students themselves.
- Really obvious that the University is a huge asset and the Town appreciates it. Surprised there wasn't more resentment – making a conscious effort to be a part of the community. Primed for a really great relationship if you're primed for the increased communication and connection.
- Communications is something you invest in – need to make sure to meet the need and how do you make sure that those things are doing so.

Recreation

Visiting Team: Hannah Carpino (FACILITATOR), Jenna Koloski (SCRIBE), Jackie Dagger, Clare Rock, Seth Leonard, Amy Tomasso

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Town Forest.
- The dog river.
- Paine Mountain.
- Memorial Pool.
- Norwich University Track and other facilities.
- Proximity to ski resorts.
- Shaw Outdoor Center is the old Norwich ski area which has turned into a bike, hiking, telemark ski area. It is groomed for skiing.
- The trails behind Garvey Field.
- We have a great variety of roads for gravel riding.
- Memorial Park baseball.
- The Dog River Park.
- The Falls Fields.
- The playground at the falls area.
- The volleyball courts in the falls.
- The outside area of the library has a lovely outside pavilion area.
- We have a lot of great birding.
- Good wildlife habitat.
- It is a scenic and picturesque town.
- Community events on the common.
- Winter is an asset.
- Fly fishing in the dog river.
- We have a lot of swimming holes.
- There are ATV trails and snowmobile trails.
- There is a community room in the library.
- The whole town is a year-round playground.
- The auditorium/theater at the school – they put on plays and opportunities to use it for other things.
- The general public has access to the pool at Norwich – outdoor pool at memorial park, and then indoor pool at Norwich.
- For a fee you can use the weight room at Norwich. They have a beautiful facility.
- Northfield has a swim team that practices at Norwich.
- Events at the common include a parade, holiday event, farmers market, music.
- There are a few farms that allow people to visit and do tours.
- Storywalk at the library.
- The library in general has so many opportunities including borrowing snowshoes! They have many opportunities.
- The human asset – there are so many people who volunteer time to help with maintenance of trails, involvement on rec committees, town forest committee, etc. We are a small town but there is a lot of involvement.
- Norwich provides student volunteers to help with maintenance and trails.
- Organized team sports like little league and soccer.
- Lean-to on the halkwash trail.
- VAST trail.
- We have a golf course.
- There is a Tuesday/Thursday hike, ski, snowshoe group.
- Rifle range.
- Open Studio weekend – artists open their doors once a year.
- We have enough going on downtown that people can go out after skiing, biking, etc. It is a good downtown for after recreation.
- Schools leadership group hosts the turkey trot and other events.
- There is an active senior center that provides activities and entertainment.
- A community dinner will be starting up again at the Methodist Church.

What are the Challenges?

- Parking at trailheads – there is no parking to access the forest.
- The common is not the safest gathering place for the community.
- There are not always safe connections between recreation in town.
- The dog river is so beautiful – there is no bike path to enjoy/experience it.
- The Falls exists as an island unless you have a car.
- There isn't really a central entity (person or group) in charge of recreation right now. We used to have a rec committee and they don't exist anymore. That leads to challenge with maintenance of facilities.
- Information about our trail network and how to access is hard to find.
- There may be a parking spot available but there is no marking saying to park there.
- There isn't a consolidated place to find out about recreation assets. It is shared by word of mouth but there is no clearinghouse.
- We don't have a dedicated soccer field for the youth program.
- We don't have lights to play at night.
- We don't have a track.
- Lack of expanded mountain bike trails.
- We don't have open gym time during the winter for kids recreation time.
- There isn't anywhere to hang out as a kid with other friends.
- Lack of cross-country ski trails.
- We don't have a playground at memorial park.
- Most trails are out and back and not loops.
- Limited accessibility for recreation – no options for people with disabilities.
- We need more opportunities outside of school sports.

- Lack of access to the dog river – both boat access and fishing access.
- We don't have clustered retail in downtown Northfield that could be a draw.
- We don't have flat water but a few ponds.
- We don't have public bathrooms and clean water fountains at rec facilities.
- That makes it hard to ride a bike to the park with young kids – nowhere to go to the bathroom!
- Pedestrians can't access.
- No performance venue.
- No dog park or off leash opportunities.
- A lot of rec opportunities are on private land and there is always a concern you could lose that access.

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

- When you go up slate avenue to the forest we need a bridge to cross over the little stream to connect to another trail that goes off (that is in the works).
- Northfield could work with Norwich to build bike path – a lot of their land abuts the river (kind of like the mad river valley piece by piece).
- We should put a parking lot at the bottom of Cheeney (?) Hill for access to the Town Forest.
- We should make a town map with rec assets on it.
- A community message board to post rec resources and events.
- Could share the map in other places to draw people in.
- There are parking spaces to easily access the Shaw Center on Shaw Circle but no one knows that – we should make that more well known. It should be on a map so people are aware of those parking options.
- Need to clarify if those belong to landowners.
- Could redesign the common to be more pedestrian friendly. We could adjust the streets to make it more pedestrian friendly, a place for family gathering, dining, etc.
- Norwich is going to be creating a new fitness center. Perhaps Northfield could partner with Norwich in a town gown partnership to ensure resident access to that facility.
- We should have a dedicated recreation department. Some kind of dedication from the town to acknowledge recreation is important. Could even just be one staff.
- When you park at Norwich you often get a ticket. We should work with them to be able to park cars there for residents.
- A website could share resources – parking, trails, rentals, pdf maps, etc. A dedicated site to answer all of the questions and share information.
- We need a recreation department – we need dedicated staff and expertise.
- We should have a centralized recreation calendar so we can see what's coming up.
- Northfield could try to partner with Norwich to get a ski hill going with a tow rope. It would benefit children learning to ski rather than having to travel.
- We should make the ice arena available to Northfield residents – have more family friendly hours.
- Work with AOT to rework the Route 12 corridor to improve bike safety.
- We should develop a series of connected bike paths/trails around town to bike, walk, walk dogs – connect parks and rec resources.
- Northfield could hire a rec director and learn from Randolph what they did.
- A bike path that connects to Montpelier.
- It would be great to have a say in the Norwich facility to incorporate ideas like community center spaces, a place to hang out, facilities open to the community and not just the college.
- Develop a volunteer corps to work on trail maintenance and other recreation projects.
- Buy Beans Chevrolet and allow trails to cross between the falls and Village and then open hatchet throwing and a bowling alley.
- Open a form of recreation that would be unique to the community and be for the university students and attract people here too.
- Outdoor curling facility.
- Add more signage at recreation facilities so it's obvious that you ended up at the right place.
- More walkability from the village to the falls. It's dangerous when people are walking along the road.
- The mountain bike trails feel way too mysterious – it should be marked better for improved wayfinding.
- We should expand the trail network by partnering with other conservation commissions and trail groups.
- Develop a plan to communicate the availability of recreation and municipal resources to people. Communication could go to neighboring towns and others in Vermont to come experience these programs.
- Ensure a safe way up to Garvey field from the elementary school for safer accessibility.
- Work with surrounding towns and private landowners to do a multi-town trail system. That includes biking and cross country ski access along the VAST trail as well. Look at NEK as an example.
- Improve the disc golf course that students have built. We have a 9-hole course at Garvey fields that is not well maintained. It could expand like the one at Millstone Trails.
- Create a catalog of activities and events and create more diversity of activities. We don't have programming like dance, art, etc.
- Maintain and improve the memorial park pool and make it more attractive and inclusive.
- We need more accessibility at Garvey and memorial field – there is no handicapped parking and limited access generally.
- Northfield could offer movies or musical events on the common in the summer.
- Work with the gold course to groom Nordic ski trails in the winter.
- We should work with other towns in Vermont to share recreational resources so we are part of a statewide network.

- Find a small town that excels at recreation and have a more formal connection – learn what they are doing and see if we can learn from successes.
- Create a gear inventory and advertise more widely so residents have the ability to try and new sport or activity.
- Reserve downtown storefronts to be revolving space for small business owners in the area to share what they offer.
- Some other towns have people who financially support rec resources. We should work with darn tough to get some funding to expand opportunities. Sponsor the work.
- We should develop an outdoor center that is geared towards residents. Norwich may be interested in expanding to mountain bike rentals for the general public. This would require expanding the center. We should work with Norwich to advance that idea.
- We also need river tube rentals.
- In the plan for the new bridge, there may be a proposal for a walking trail to the river -we should ensure that happens.
- It should be transparent who maintains properties – who is responsible for each property?
- Part of a recreation department could include a performance art aspect and expand those opportunities.
- Build a pump track for all ages.
- Clearly mark public parking for sports venues, trails, etc. Create designated parking spaces at all the outside venues.
- If there are maintenance issues we should have numbers to call when problems arise.
- We could have revolving rec spaces – game nights at various location. Use our underutilized spaces for community space, youth space, etc. Rather than a community center, could revolve in existing spaces.
- Outdoor performance space for bands and theater.
- Work with the school district to improve sharing of existing sports fields.
- Build soccer fields (partnership between schools and Town).
- Fix the duck bridge so people can walk across it again.
- Identify cultural partners like the Chandler to bring programming to Northfield.
- Bring in organized events to showcase recreation opportunities that we have – build enthusiasm and energy for the resources available.
- Work with other towns to share opportunities – rotate even programming between towns to offer more variety.
- We should build our own community rec center.
- Bring racquetball courts back (maybe that could be a part of the new rec facility at Norwich).
- Northfield needs to invest in outdoor recreation.
- Build an outdoor ice rink.
- We should speak more frequently to our Selectboard about the need for these facilities/amenities/resources – what these things would offer to the town.
- Work on turning the Dog River back into the wordclass fishery that it used to be.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Your ideas are so wonderful – just the breadth of opportunities you are sharing is so amazing. There is a lot of variability in the opportunities. It was exciting to hear about people thinking about how to use the downtown space to add vitality to the downtown. I love the idea of a bike path along the dog river and the thinking about regional scale. You are not alone in thinking about recreation as a way to improve vitality in the community. VOREC runs a community grant program that grants funding for these projects that you're talking about. The Town of Northfield is a part of that program.
- There is so much variety – “this is a year round playground” There are so many assets but they aren't all connected and clear. The wayfinding and signage piece feels important and the central clearinghouse so you can actually get to these places. Thinking about ways to connect and share.
- I have lived in this area for over 20 years and I never knew there was a swimming pool! I learned a lot. There is a great need and desire for increased coordination between locations and between different entities. The accessibility piece feels critical as well. I would encourage you to really listen to the youth voice – they are the future and having a place for teenagers is really important. Over the past winter, I participated in a planning initiative in Marshfield and they are working on the same things we are talking about this evening. Working on increased coordination, signage, etc. That could be an area to connect with to learn how another town is developing a recreation plan. What is so unique about this town is Norwich – that connection could be a great opportunity.
- You have sock money! That's a powerful thing. Just to validate some of the energy and ideas. I was a community member in a similar size town and we had no programming or resources. We shifted our focus to focus on community health and wellbeing – creating spaces for humans and people to connect. We held pop up events that then became permanent uses and space. Then we worked on transportation and how people are connecting in the community. Now there is a parks and rec department and a staff and americorps. They also rely heavily on a regional parks district. Recreation economy is a thing – there is an opportunity for state and private funding to do this work. You have so much to offer to Vermont and you all need to feel like you are safe, healthy, and connected living here.

Infrastructure: Broadband, Walkability, Transportation, & Sewer

Visiting Team: Ted Brady (FACILITATOR), Jessica Savage (SCRIBE), Ben Doyle, Christian Meyer, Julie Moore, Carol Plante, Misty Sinsigalli

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Beautiful natural surroundings so close to our town, like to walk and snowshoe and bike around town.
- Local sidewalks make good walkability in downtown area.
- Proud of schools, good price on electricity thru Northfield power.
- Love this town.
- Committed to Northfield and part of steering committee.
- Top notch utilities, sewer plant, wellfield with excellent and plentiful water.
- Green mountain transit commuter bus to Montpelier.
- Finished CSO project and not contaminating river with runoff,.
- Excited about Dog River, wonderful water bodies which flow thru community.
- Electricity is part of infrastructure.
- Green infrastructure treating stormwater in innovative ways.
- Town is laid out with a lovely downtown and a great asset: great built environment.
- Redundancy in our electricity sources in that it can come over from Montpelier and Waitsfield.
- Independently owned cable company: trans video.
- Pool is an incredible asset.
- Great parks around town.
- Access to interstate.
- Paine Mountain Rec area in town forest, at Norwich, Shaw outdoor center.
- Commissions/volunteers keep things going around infrastructure (volunteer infrastructure is vigorous).
- Playgrounds are good.
- Covered bridges: have several in this community, 5-6 bridges that the town maintains.
- Once a week ride from senior center to Walmart.
- Positive service experiences with Transvideo.

What are the Challenges?

- Broadband: slow internet access, even though you have it. Paying for 3 gigs and getting one, standard is much higher.
- Paying very high rates for broadband in order to have the bandwidth needed for remote work, kids using streaming etc.
- Not very attractive for startups and remote workers.
- Left out of fiber initiative.
- CV Fiber: hearing about it for a while, hoping that it would be all done but it's happening very slowly and prioritizing people with lower connection speeds first: have some speed but not enough and lower on list for getting upgrades.
- Accessibility and connectivity of sidewalks between different areas of town, ADA compliance isn't there.
- Barriers to accessibility: older populations getting from parking to fields, parks etc. no pavement to be able to get there, people don't attend games because of it.
- Vermonter runs thru Northfield but it doesn't stop (Train) even though we have a station.
- Lack of ability to use anything other than cars for transportation (walking and biking is very hazardous on Rte 12).
- Bike safety is an issue generally.
- Speeding and reckless driving: better safety on roadsides is needed.
- Older people trying to walk/access food and carrying groceries: not easy to get to and from.
- Bad driving on ebikes at high speeds on rail trails: that is something for us to think about too.
- Route 12 is an asset and a challenge for walkers and bikers, town only manages part of the route and state the rest and changes town wants can't always happen.
- Bridge being rebuilt and will require a bike path that you can't get to and from.
- Removed midday route from Northfield to Montpelier so now it's only for workday people's schedule and makes it challenging for some people.
- Only grocery store is Tops and so a long haul to get food from certain Northfield areas ("food desert").
- Connectivity between villages is challenging.
- Sewer infrastructure only serves the village: 800 hookups to water/sewer, at 60% capacity.
- Water goes further down to Falls to Berlin line.
- Pay for water and sewer at same rates: put lots of water out in spring, summer and fall which doesn't go into sewer, shouldn't be an increase in sewer usage in summer.
- Swimming pool has the same situation and not really making sense.
- Concerned about electric push and cost, ability for us to have enough infrastructure for demand for electricity as it increases related to electric cars, heat pumps etc.
- Housing infrastructure for electrification needs to be upgraded and what will that do to the grid?
- Rates and bonds are very related and concerned about rising costs as more bonds are needed.
- Infrastructure is focused on village center and costs are borne by ratepayers and only a subset of community at large and puts a large burden on them.
- Roads after patching jobs going out of town before you hit the bridge heading to Tops is no longer town but we always get neglected for repair jobs.
- Last time route 12 was refinished was in 1996 and haven't been re-paved since.
- Unpaved roads aren't that great: sharp stones are bad and mud season can be terrible.

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

- Electric dept. reports and assessments: what is the status? Are we assured that we can meet the electrification goals? Plan to adapt to increased demand: Northfield electric should do a study to see if it's ready for the future, member of VEPSA (VT Public Supply Authority) and is doing this assessment, as houses increase amps, can we meet demand?
- Extend sewer lines at least as far as water: people want to get on it. What areas should sewer reach? Planning and development: determine land options for housing, industrial development (something that makes jobs) and define how to make services extend, define where the best places to create opportunities are, ex. Dichon Meadows development potential, determine why and where and then fund it. Conduct due diligence and why and how to bring infrastructure.
- Engineering plans to extend sewer lines on 12 and 12a exist, about to complete those plans as an attempt to get federal funding for the extension of the sewer, ARPA survey showed this a top priority as well (extending it south). Discussions around extending it north as well.
- Northfield Falls: some reason to focus there, some of the densest housing we have, limited amount of room on those lots for septic right near the river, and will need sewer in the future.
- Connect our communities through transportation, sewer, river: lots of federal money flowing and right now there is money available to make that happen.
- Help transvideo expand what they are doing: they need financial and structural help to get internet stronger. Provide support to existing cable/internet provider to improve and expand service.
- Determine reasons for high cost for internet and slow speeds: what are those bottlenecks and how can we remove them?
- Class I takeover of route 12 so that we can close the gaps for pedestrian access and infrastructure.
- Find a way to get Amtrak to stop here.
- explore other commuter rail connection possibilities.
- (Tom Davis is working with Norwich to try to persuade Amtrak to make Northfield a stop, may have a chance with students and push).
- Phase sewer additions to other areas in town along with road repairs and sidewalks.
- Create traffic calming features on route 12.
- Figure out road, pedestrian traffic, manage river for flooding risk and sewer lines, coordinate all that.
- Pool is very accessible but needs accessible parking access: create that.
- Memorial Park: create more accessibility options.
- King Street: playground, fields etc. need to fix visibility and curve. Walkability from village to pool is limited and should be improved.
- Offroad connection between villages: create bike/walk path to connect features.
- Create a roundabout/something beautiful/better option than the angled current intersection at intersection at 12 and 12a (Lover's Lane is a cutthru for this now). Big trucks need a better option so let's create it.
- Continue funding pool and make it more affordable to everyone.
- Train station is privately owned and for sale, not sure what will happen.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Julie: this is a great time to be thinking about infrastructure with so much money in the system right now. Prioritization for lead service lines with significant money looking at places you're going to be digging anyway. Home services upgrades are eligible, VOREC program can help with pool accessibility, knowing that there are a lot of ideas where they are lots of dedicated pots of funding, think about what's most important and go after funding with purpose.
- Misty: this is a time in history that you will most likely never see again, it's the time to do those generational projects, amazing assets with community (electric, transvideo, water and sewer) you have the ability to build that tax base with these assets. You can never do enough planning: there will be money at some point, update the plans you have or make new plans and spend the money on doing good planning as it will always pay you back.
- Ben: everything all the other forums are talking about depends on infrastructure, people know and remember details about your infrastructure, you have so many assets that other communities don't have, you could leverage them and you can double down on these things and get funding, looking at communities around VT who are succeeding they decide to invest in the future.
- Carol: lots of knowledge in the room about town, energy and enthusiasm for what will keep you going is very impressive, showed interest and you want to get it done and applauds that.
- Christian: 2002 CV plan here: lots of ideas enacted from that, and at this point now developing these ideas and looking forward to working with town to bring ideas to fruition.

Zoom Forum

Facilitator: Kim Rupe

What are the Assets in Northfield?

- Active Front Porch Forum.
- Available programs offered for community members.
- Trail access/availability year-round.
- Public library – especially programs (Toddler Story Time) .
- Senior support – Meals on Wheels, exercise programs, games.
- American Legion.
- Town swimming pool (swim lessons).
- Grocery store (not always common in towns this size).
- Toddler playground.
- Online forums (organizations offering online options to participate).
- Location – ease of getting to Montpelier, accessibility to other parts of the state.
- Sense of community – events to bring people together.
- Farmers market (year-round) with options to pick up orders after hours.
- Bus service/public transportation.

What are the Challenges?

- Not always agreement among processes among leadership.
- Need for better/more housing.
- Both buying/renting options are limited and expensive.
- The need for business development – more businesses.
- Transportation to other parts of the state are a challenge (local transportation is great but ability to travel farther is difficult).
- Needing to get more people involved – low turnout at town meeting.
- Lack of participation.
- Lack of available childcare – been on waitlists.

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

- Increase existing events downtown - weekly/monthly concerts outdoors and open downtown area.
- Make downtown area more accessible for walkers and bikers.
- Offer classes to share skills and ideas with each other (ex: Bethel University).
- Work to become more energy efficient. See if Norwich could help with climate action ideas.
- Increase awareness of energy rebates with residents.



Scenes from Community Visit Day.

Ideas from Northfield Students

As shared in a group conversation with Northfield students on April 10, 2023

What are the Assets in Northfield?

- The farmers market works well and brings a lot of people together in town.
- The youth sports and rec teams – the Little League program all help to get kids active when they're younger.
- The town has a pool.
- We have a library.
- We have a grocery store and dollar tree.
- O'Maddies Café.
- Payne Mountain and the trails up there are really accessible. It's nice to have a place to hike right in town.
- Having Norwich in town is an asset because it has a financial benefit for the town but gives us opportunities as students to live next to a college or take college classes there.
- Labor Day weekend brings a lot of people together and raises money for other town opportunities.
- There is a bank in town – that's handy.
- It's a safe town and I don't hear much about crime or injuries that often.
- We have multiple different parks for different activities.
- I like that they redid some of the sidewalks on Central street.
- It is a very beautiful town and Vermont is a beautiful state.
- The Common itself is an asset.
- The Northfield Historical Museum is connected to the library and it's nice in there.
- The little mini libraries where you can go in and take books – there are four in town.
- The clothing shelf – SERV – under the town office. You can go and get free clothes.
- The town is relatively accessible to people with physical disabilities.
- I like the clothing drop and swap at Norwich.
- Having Cabot hosiery and Darn Tough in town is an asset. They donate things to us all the time. The sock sale used to bring tons of people to town and offer economic opportunities.
- There are covered bridges.
- There are a lot of apartments areas for people to rent – Norwich has some apartments. Some rental housing at the Common. It is usually hard to rent in more rural towns but there are options here.
- In the summer there is a volleyball league that the town puts on. It's really fun. There are lot of old people there but it's still fun.
- We do Green Up Day in the town.
- Since Norwich is in town, the CVMC doctors in town are connected to Norwich. Having that doctor in town and dentists is very convenient.
- Carrier coffee and Good Measure add a lot to our town. Makes us feel "hipper" and "with the times" and people really appreciate them being here.

What are the Challenges?

- They took away one of the banks.
- They didn't put sidewalks everywhere.
- There are a lot of houses on my street that are used for partying.
- Noise and college partying.
- We have really bad apartments. They are poorly maintained and are really junky.
- Plowing in this town is really bad. Other towns are more cleaned up and here it is horrible in the winter.
- It would be convenient if there was a sidewalk at Slate street.
- The roads are horrible. Main Street in particular is bad.
- Fernandez hardware store has a lot of junk in front of it and it blocks the pedestrian bridge. Some people really love what they have there and others don't.
- We need more sidewalks. It's hard to walk to friends' houses because it's not really safe.
- When I'm walking in the parks there is a lot of dog poop that people need to pick up.
- There aren't quite enough transportation options and many people here don't have cars. I see a lot of people hitchhiking. The bus options are limited and hours are cut back.
- The backroads are not paved and during the mud season the busses can't go on that road so it is difficult to get places that time of year.
- Mail delivery is often messed up. You get mail from your neighbors in your mailbox.
- Limited childcare and afterschool programming for children.
- We don't have an ice cream shop.
- It is irritating that they don't have mail delivery in parts of Northfield Falls – you have to go to the post office.
- There is no track. Norwich has a place to run around the football field, but not a formal track.
- There is no actual park. The Dog River park is not a real park.
- I see a lot of special educators in the school talking down about the students and insulting them. They are supposed to be supporting these students if they're difficult.
- There is a lot of drug activity in the parks at night.
- There are needles and beer cans and garbage in the park and it smells like a dumpster.
- There are no sidewalks in Northfield Falls.
- There is a disconnection between the village and falls.
- There are no bike lanes anywhere in town.

- There are broken wine bottles and garbage in the river.
- Issue with speeding in the town – especially by the school.
- The Town is underpolicing. People are not punished for their crimes.

- Whenever I see the police car it is always just one person – lack of staff to help out with policing in the community.

Opportunities: What are your ideas to make Northfield a better place to learn, live, and play?

- We need an animal shelter in town to volunteer at. There are so many stray cats.
- We need an ice cream shop with all the things.
- We need a gym. We could have a separate public gym. There is a women’s gym in the gray building. As long as it is maintained well.
- Fix existing sidewalks and bring sidewalks to Northfield falls. Improve community safety.
- We should have more trash cans in town and public places.
- We need more public parking. Places to leave a car and go for a walk.
- Make sure that public housing owners take better care of their facilities. Laws or policies to enforce this.
- More green up days to pick up trash.
- We need a teen center.
- Create more convenient public transportation.
- Somehow regulate or control the noises and issues with college housing.
- It would be nice to see Northfield expand the rec program. A lot of kids here go other places for mountain biking and other programs. It would be nice to have a broader program that serves Northfield.
- A committee open to the community at large that is dedicated to regularly cleaning up streets.
- Norwich and Northfield could do something where we can share facilities. If their x-country team ran here we could use their track or other facilities. A facilities exchange.
- Integrate the Town and Norwich a little more.
- Start a mentorship program between students. “Buddy up” but for older students.
- More student-driven learning like they have at the Randolph Tech Center.
- Northfield could use a bowling alley.
- More therapists in this area. We need more mental health services.
- We need more fast food options.
- We should provide more resources to the school nurse so she can resolve more issues.
- Identify ways to draw more people here – our towns need more diversity.



Mural at the Northfield Middle and High School.

Additional Action Ideas

Here are the ideas residents contributed through an online form

- I don't have any specific ideas yet. I want to listen to what others have to say. I feel as though housing is a huge issue, though. And also infrastructure. Without these, we will not be successful in attracting young, working professionals and families to our community.
- Build a bike path/ walking path connecting Northfield to Montpelier (and Northfield to Northfield falls). It can go alongside the railroad (like many foot/bike paths in Germany).
- 2) Clean up clutter and dilapidated buildings on the other side of the track from depot square
- Regarding the town forest, signage, parking, accessibility, trail maintenance, and marketing thereof: Northfield could do nothing. A lot of folks really like the existing state of our town forest. As residents of Northfield, we have the luxury of having this beautiful space in very close proximity to town and with that comes the ability to go there often to explore and learn the trails and terrain over time. Getting more people out there is of course great, but it also comes with some risks especially if people find themselves out there in terrain that is above their head. I worry that increasing any kind of marketing of our recreational opportunities, especially outside of Northfield, will significantly increase the amount of traffic on our amazing trails and could potentially put even more pressure on our already strained emergency services. Instead, I'd like more resources aimed at educating private landowners on their rights and the benefits of opening up their land to recreational use as recently we have lost a local favorite trail when a landowner incorrectly thought it would jeopardize the current use status of a trail on their property.
ps: Thank you so much for coming out and holding a really great meeting Tuesday night! I look forward to the next one.
- I am designing a field house to be owned by Northfield Little League, and used for indoor baseball, softball, soccer, and maybe climbing in the cold months. I will need financial support for this.
- Could Norwich and Northfield collaborate and have some ADA accessible paths on (and to) campus to increase inclusion of people of all mobilities, and feel more welcoming.
- Could Norwich have a group of student volunteers (nursing department, cadets, anyone interested in engaging with and assisting the public) to act as helpers/tour guides for mobility needs, for special events (Halloween, sporting events, ceremonies, campus tours).
- Northfield NEEDS to address the roads. The poor quality of the roads will drive away those who pay the highest taxes as they are not seeing a return on their investment. I appreciate other things that add to quality of life, but without roads that we are capable of driving down, we can't get to them.
- Adorable housing with walking access to the Commons.
- Northfield needs a recreation department to oversee facility maintenance and programming.
- Northfield could have a fire department that follows state fire safety and environmental laws.
- Sidewalks from Northfield Falls to the center of Town. Public trails in Northfield Falls.
- As a mother of an active 14 year old, we wish there was an open gym option. Either in connection to Norwich or at the school. A place to meet friends, play basketball or indoor soccer or other games. This is for winter months, as there are great options when there is no snow. There is a lot of talk about more access to Dog River; tubing, etc. It is vitally important that this is researched as The Dog River is a struggling fishery and some of these ideas would be damaging and the health of a river is critically connected to the fish and bug life.
- Community values survey: When you think of our police department, what is one word you want to use to describe them? What are your top priorities in a police department? Evaluation of current police department recruitment and retention strategies: What's working and not working?
- We need more crosswalks on South Main Street between Downtown and Norwich. Currently there are only two: one at Washington Street and one at Prospect Street.
- Design and build a roundabout at the intersection of 12 + 12A and put a weight limit on Lovers Lane.
- Northfield should hold more community dinners.
- walkable sidewalks from "sign post to sign post."
- trails from Northfield Falls to downtown.
- public walking trails in Northfield Falls.
- some way to resolve conflicts between neighbors that isn't the police--maybe a community mediation group?
- all genders restrooms in our schools and public spaces.
- unstructured playtime and outside time/outdoor education everyday in our public schools.
- better bus service between Northfield and surrounding communities (reliable and regular throughout the day).
- a community truck (so not everyone has to own one, but people can use it when needed to transport large items).
- rideshare/carpooling program.
- solar powered EV charging station.
- network geothermal for our downtown area.
- more public walking/hiking trails.
- become a "tree city" with the arbor day foundation (free trees for community members to plant where they live!).
- community root cellar.
- lending library for tools and other things people may need occasionally.
- community time bank.
- community conversations/listening events to foster connection between people whose families have lived here a long time and newcomers.
- Northfield Falls in in desperate need of redevelopment and infill. Focus on bring sewer and sidewalks into the Falls to allow for higher density housing and connections to the downtown. This is an environmental justice issue if ever there

was one. The town has been ignoring the needs of the people in the Falls for many years. Now is the time to fix this.

- Focus new development in and around the village areas and protect the rural lands and resources (it's in the Town Plan!). This will move the town towards walkable communities and using less fossil fuels, while also helping those without easy access to cars and public transportation to thrive. Do not encourage development in rural areas. Development (both housing and commercial) in the rural areas will cause the villages to lose business and commercial development, will cost more to maintain public services, cost more to develop, and will impact natural resources. Protecting rural areas is good for the environment and for the preservation of the beauty of Northfield and Vermont.
- I agree that we should have a better system of trials for transportation around town. This will help people get around without cars and will protect the environment.
- Have a community oversight board for the police. It's obvious that the current oversight system is not working. Town management takes a hands-off approach and allows the police to decide their enforcement priorities. That should not be the case. This has resulted in a police force that is unresponsive to the needs of many in the community and that has had several problems with inappropriate behavior.
- Deal with the traffic problems all throughout the town. Speeding and loud exhaust systems have ruined the quality of life for those living on main roads (and even backroads). The police have been reluctant and/or ineffective in dealing with

the problems, and they have only gotten worse. If you want people to want to live in this town, seriously deal with these quality of life issues.

- Consider paying volunteer board members a stipend. The volunteers do their job the best they can, usually with little or no help from town staff (and at times the staff do more to hurt rather than help get the work done). Educate staff (and the Select Board) to respect and support the volunteers that do so much of the work around here.
- Focus on the needs of the people that live here. I don't see the value in trying to increase the population. It will cost more in public services (and it will not lower taxes), and the people that live here now have real needs, and that should be the priority.
- Develop and improve the corridor between the Falls and town. Make sidewalks and safe pedestrian/bikeways between the two centers.
- Encourage and enliven the businesses abutting the Common. Create easily accessible parking for Town Forest.
- Stop the creeping of businesses down Rte 12A, down Rte 64, between Rte 64 and Norwich on Rte 12; sprawl sucks the life out of the core.
- Encourage empty/large lots to infill with housing in core of town.
- Make a dog park and allocate resources to this
- I think putting in a McDonald's or Burger King as well as a hospital closer into Northfield would be helpful.

VI. Northfield: Our Common Future Community Visit Participants

Melody Adams	Stephen DeMaio	Elizabeth Kennedy	Topper Morris	Ann Sivori
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Chelsie Anderson	Brad Denny	David Kennings	Charlie Morse	Peggy Smykal
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Stevie Balch	Dennis Donahue	Michael Krause	Lynn Newcomb	Paul Sternberg
Susan Barnard	Jill Donahue	Devin Krevetski	Collin O'Neil	Carolyn Stevens
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Eric Barouxis	Shannon Doney	Ginny Kunkel	Kathleen Osgood	John Stevens
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Kathleen Burroughs	Ben Gauthier	Stephanie Maass	Carlos Pinkham	Anna Svagzdys
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Aramy Cho	Emily Gray		Elizabeth Kennedy	Joseph Wantuch
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Sarah Conlon	Gail Hall	Deborah Maxwell	Aaron Rhodes	Jeremy Whalen
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Ray Crowder	Megan Hereth	DeLane McIlvene	Janet Robitaille	Chris Winters
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Rebecca Dalgin	Erin Hicks-Tibbles	Kelsie Meehan	Megan Roush	Bruce Wright
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Sally Davidson	Aimee Jacobs	Patrick Meehan	Adam Sevi	Meghan Young
Tom Davis	Anne Johnson	Lois Melander	Gillian Shapiro	Caroline Zeilenga
Nicole DeDomenico	Michael Johnson	Christian Meyer	Merry Shernock	Joe Zuaro
Royal DeLegge	Catherine Johnston	Vanessa Middleton	Douglas Shiok	Debbie Zuaro
Susan DeLegge	Kaitlyn Keating	Caitlin Miller	Alysha Sickles	and many more...
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