

Our Future Putney

**Community Visit Report and Action Plan
February 2023**



Aerial photo by Green Mountain Drone

Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

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I. Introduction

Located in southern Vermont, the town of Putney sits nestled between the Connecticut River bordering New Hampshire to its east, and abundant forest and Putney Mountain to its west. Putney is a small Windham County community that is characterized by its beautiful landscapes, the eclectic collection of beloved businesses in its downtown, and the passion, and enthusiasm of its residents. Putney community members care deeply about their neighbors and the future of their town. With a large number of schools, a thriving local arts and performance center, and many successful businesses and community organizations, Putney has a vibrant future, and a strong system of community support to realize its goals.

The Putney community visit process began in November, though community members had been hard at work on several initiatives already. Groups representing the library, determining best uses for ARPA funding, designing the next town plan, and so many other initiatives were already working to engage residents and build toward a unified vision for the town. Putney residents have a tremendous amount of pride and energy, and this was evident immediately, as we kicked off the process with a community dinner that was attended by more than 250 residents. The process in Putney was named “Our Future Putney,” signifying a unified common goal, and every step of the process confirmed Putney residents’ desire for cohesion, connection, and collective action. Putney residents surpassed every expectation for meeting attendance, and showed up to each meeting ready to work and engage.

In December, Putney residents gathered to review the many ideas submitted by community members throughout the process so far. These submissions came from the November forums, the digital survey, and the paper surveys made available around town. There were twenty-four excellent ideas for action brought to that meeting, which you can read in the “opportunities” section of the report. Ultimately, Putney decided on three solid priorities to work toward: Revitalize Putney’s Downtown, Develop a Community Center, and Develop Housing Solutions. Each of these priorities is imbued with the compassion and support that characterizes Putney – there is a strong desire to build opportunities for connection and gathering, as well as the desire to ensure a viable future for Putney’s beloved businesses and community members.

These three priorities are large-scale, but achievable goals for Putney. With huge numbers of sign-ups for each task force, it is clear that Putney residents are ready to put in the work and offer their time and expertise for the betterment of their community.

Please support the efforts of the task forces, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report). VCRD is prepared to support the ongoing work in Putney, and we look forward to providing follow-up help to the Our Future Putney task forces.

There are many people to thank for making this Community Visit effort possible.

We would like to thank the Putney Selectboard who initially invited this process, and Town Manager, Karen Astley. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process from the beginning including: Sue Coakley, Swift River, Nate Snell, Ruby McAdoo, Elena Maksakuli, Josh Laughlin, John Nopper, Keith Marks, and Amber Paris. Thank you also to the many community leaders, groups, and organizations who worked to spread the word about the event and made sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

Thanks also to the Northern Border Regional Commission, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the National Life Foundation, the Vermont Community Foundation, and the Vermont Humanities Council who all 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 Our Future Putney Resource and Visiting Teams (listed in the back of this report) – they are the best of Vermont’s public servants.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Putney should be grateful to those who have stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces – Lyssa Papazian and Eric Bass: Revitalizing Putney’s Downtown; Katy Emond: Community Center; and Kathleen O’Reilly: Housing (with support from Marcella Eversole).

VCRD especially wants to thank Mike Cosco, who stepped forward to lead this process as the overall Community Visit chair. Mike will play an important role in coordinating the task forces, and communicating with town leadership and the general public along the way. Mike has been a leader in this work, from meeting logistics to communications and so much more, and he will continue to bring his skills and passion to the initiative moving forward. Mike and his business are such an important part of Putney, and we’re lucky to have a chair with so many connections across the community who can keep encouraging participation and collaboration.

VCRD is incredibly lucky to work in places like Putney, where residents are eager to show up, share their dreams and visions, and offer up their time and skills to move toward a unified goal. It was a great pleasure to work with the residents of Putney, and we know that this community’s energy and drive will carry the work forward. We are eager to follow your progress and support your success!



II. The “Our Future Putney” 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 Putney:**



Steering Committee Meeting: October 13, 2022

On October 13, 2022, 12 local residents met to plan for the launch of the Putney Community Visit process. This group came up with a name for the process – Our Future Putney – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics and an invitation process. Through calls, e-mails, and flyers, this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Committee included: Karen Astley, Phil Bannister, Sue Coakley, Mike Cosco, Josh Laughlin, Eleni Maksakuli, Keith Marks, Ruby McAdoo, John Nopper, Amber Paris, Swift River, and Nate Snell.

Step 1 ~ Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: November 14, 2022

Our Future Putney kicked off with 4 brainstorming forums held at the Putney Central School. We also offered a Zoom forum for those preferring a virtual option. Over 200 participants shared assets, challenges, and ideas for action in the following forum topics chosen by the steering committee: Youth, Families & Aging; Housing; Community Connection; and Economic Development & Business Vitality. Nine visiting team members participated, learning more about Putney and providing reflections to the community.

Visiting Team members included: Katie Buckley, *Director Federal Funding Assistance Program*, VT League of Cities & Towns; Ben Doyle, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Rebecca Ellis, *State Director*, Office of Senator Peter Welch; Alex Farrell, *Deputy Commissioner*, Dept of Housing and Community Development; Holly Morehouse, *Vice President for Grants*, Vermont Community Foundation; Gretchen Rittenhouse, *Senior Housing Analyst*, VT Housing & Conservation Board; Meg Staloff, *Southern VT Economy Project Manager*, Brattleboro Development Credit Corp; Monica White, *Commissioner*, Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living; and Michael Wood-Lewis, *Co-Founder and CEO*, Front Porch Forum.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Hannah Carpino, *Community & Policy Manager*; Margaret Gibson, *Operations Director*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Projects Manager*; Brian Lowe, *Executive Director*; and Kim Rupe, *Development and Communications Manager*.

Step 2 ~ Community Meeting: December 12, 2022

After the kick-off, VCRD staff distilled the brainstormed ideas into 24 key areas of action. Over 100 community members joined at the Putney Central School and via Zoom to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After lively dialogue and a dot-voting exercise, 3 action ideas emerged as key priorities: **Revitalize Putney’s Downtown**; **Develop a Community Center**; and **Develop Housing Solutions**. Participants then signed up for task forces that will convene to move these priorities forward.

Step 3 ~ Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: January 17, 2023

On January 17, 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 “Our Future Putney” action is focused at the task force level.

Resource Team members included: Matt Bachler, *Senior Planner*, Windham Regional Commission; Chris Campamy, *Executive Director*, Windham Regional Commission; Ben Doyle, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Dan Groberg, *Community Planning & Project Manager*, VT Dept of Housing & Community Development; Seth Leonard, *Managing Director of Community Development*, Vermont Housing Finance Agency; Pollaidh Major, *Director of Policy and Special Projects*, VT Housing and Conservation Board; Elisabeth Marx, *Senior Philanthropic Advisor*, Vermont Community Foundation; Gail Nunziata, *Broad Brook Community Center*; Meg Staloff, *Southern VT Economy Project Manager*, Brattleboro Development Credit Corp; and Susan Westa, *Executive Director*, Windham Regional Commission.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Alyssa Johnson, *Community Projects Manager*; and Brian Lowe, *Executive Director*.



III. Our Future Putney Priorities

Determined by Putney residents at the Our Future Putney Community Meeting
December 12, 2022

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 Putney community members whittled down a list of 24 action ideas to 3 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.

Putney residents selected three priorities for future action:

► Revitalize Putney's Downtown

Work with local property and business owners, and regional and state experts, on a plan to address vacancies in the downtown. A group could plan efficient use of space for housing and retail, as well as improve walkability and pedestrian safety. Additionally, the group could work to beautify the downtown with murals, public green space, other public art, and tree and flower planting. In filling vacancies, many residents expressed a need to focus on local services such as a salon, laundromat, café, and restaurants.

► Develop a Community Center

A community center or hub could provide a space for events, connection, gathering, programming, and sharing of information and resources. A group could form to explore the development of a new community space or a reinvestment in and expansion of the current Putney community center. Residents shared a particular interest in a community kitchen, indoor recreation space, as well as space for youth to gather and hold youth-focused events and programming.

► Develop Housing Solutions

Many residents see a need for more affordable, safe, and quality housing for seniors and people of all ages and income levels. A task force could come together to develop housing solutions that meet the needs and character of the Putney community. The group could work with regional and state partners and experts to assess current needs and explore options including new development, co-housing models, multi-generational housing, a Community Trust, and more. Additionally, the group could focus on a review of zoning and other regulations to improve housing development opportunities and identify any infrastructure needs there may be to support housing solutions.

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 Community Events

A series of annual events for Putney could help to bring the community together more often. Events could include educational programming such as craft and dance lessons, youth programming, community suppers, an annual talent show, more opportunities to highlight local businesses, a Putney parade, and more. A task force could build an outreach and invitation plan that would reach people of all ages.

Support Local Businesses

A task force could form to connect and support local business owners and entrepreneurs with the goal of boosting and revitalizing the local economy. This could include a business association, and collective events and marketing materials such as a brochure, website, and local loyalty program. The group could also help to efficiently connect businesses and entrepreneurs with education and technical assistance.

Improve Community Communications

Expand communications among community members including an improved Town website, increased iPutney participation and engagement, and a print and online newsletter to share events and resources and keep residents informed. The focus in particular could be on communication between the school and community, as well as across generations in town.

Advance Trails and Pathways

A task force could form to celebrate current outdoor recreation assets and advance a variety of new walk and bike opportunities. The group could create walking loops with sidewalks and trail connections, hold trail maintenance days and group hikes, and explore the expansion of public trails including a bike path along the river and an ADA accessible trail for the community.

Increase Childcare Access

A group could come together to support early education entrepreneurs looking to open daycare facilities and explore other creative, community-based solutions to address the need for affordable childcare for Putney families.

Expand Community Support and Resources

Improve access to critical resources for individuals and families in need in the community. This could include bringing free mental health services to Putney, increasing outreach and building connections to resources, expanding and supporting the food shelf, and finding ways to address isolation and build connection. Additionally, a group could create a community fund to help address critical needs that arise in the community.

Engage Youth in the Community

Putney is a community with a wealth of educational institutions and resources. A group could form, led by youth in the community, to connect young people across the community to advance their ideas for the future of the town. The group could plan events for youth, advise the town on issues important to youth, and help to better engage youth on Town boards and committees.

Expand Arts in the Community

Putney is a community known for creative economy assets such as Next Stage and a large network of local artists and artisans. A Community Arts task force could form to build on these assets by expanding arts opportunities for local artists and ways to share art with the broader community. These could include the development of a gallery to showcase local arts and crafts, increased arts education, murals and public art, and the development of a local theater group to put on plays and performances.

Develop a Co-Working Space

Develop a community co-working space to provide shared office space for remote workers or entrepreneurs and serve as a central location to share business support and resources. In addition to providing office and community space, this location could offer internet access, educational opportunities, and workshops for businesses, entrepreneurs, and the broader community. It could also serve as a way to attract new people to Putney or a venue to connect with neighbors.

Support Aging in Place in Putney

Improve the ability to age in place in Putney by helping with internet connection and digital literacy, housing solutions, access to healthcare, and connections to resources and services in the community. A group could improve connection across generations and reach out to senior community members to identify needs.

Improve Bike and Walk Safety and Access

Many Putney residents expressed a desire to improve the ability to walk and bike Putney roads, but shared concerns about safety. A group could form to improve safety with added bike lanes, sidewalks, and crosswalks at key locations. The group could also consider traffic calming measures in the downtown, including signage and speed bumps as well as general road maintenance strategies.

Expand Access to Local Food and Farms

Increase community access to gardening, growing, and farming opportunities. Work could include the development of community gardens available to the public for growing, as well as creating programming and educational opportunities for all ages. A group could reach out to farmers and community members to identify needs, share opportunities for agritourism in Putney, and help community members connect to these opportunities.

Expand and Improve Community Recreation Facilities

Putney residents of all ages expressed a need for improved and expanded recreational facilities. A task force could identify the needs and build a plan and funding to improve existing facilities or develop new recreational options. Some ideas include a community playground, basketball courts, pickleball courts, an ice-skating rink, pool improvements, and a skate park. Residents expressed a need for a program to share and lend recreation, hunting, and fishing equipment and gear so everyone can take advantage of recreation opportunities.

Advance Social and Community Justice

A group could bring together community members, organizations, committees, and town leadership to advance social justice efforts, as well as bridge community divides. The group could work to integrate and expand existing efforts such as the local diversity, equity, and inclusion committee, and could consult with equity experts to improve access to community resources and services, restorative justice, and more.

Attract and Welcome Visitors and New Residents to Putney

A task force could form to identify and implement strategies to document, showcase, and market Putney assets, amenities, businesses, and attractions to draw visitors to the area. The group could develop a web presence, brand and marketing, improve signage (especially off of the highway), and curate visitor information. The group could consider a welcome center for visitors as well as a welcome wagon project to welcome new residents and share local services and resources. A local mentoring connection or “meet your neighbor” forums could help to welcome residents and build connections.

Advance Mutual Aid and Timesharing

Strengthen and build participation in mutual aid efforts and build out opportunities for sharing resources and time among community members. The community could create an easy portal or system for sharing volunteer time, skills, tools, recreation equipment, car rides, and more.

Improve Public Transportation

Identify and promote ways to increase public transportation options. The group could develop a ride sharing network and work with local and regional partners to explore other solutions to allow for improved opportunities and access to transportation in the region.

Advance Sustainability and Climate Resilience

A task force could form to identify and implement initiatives to improve Putney resiliency. The group could identify strategies to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and support the adoption of alternative and local energy sources. The group could bring EV charging to the community and explore community solar projects. Additionally, residents of all ages expressed a need for a local recycling center to address community waste.

Improve River Access

Celebrate the natural asset of the river by improving points of access with a bike path, river trail, and/or a pocket park with a bench and steps down to the river.

Two additional ideas for consideration were added at the community meeting on December 12:

- **Flora and Fauna Protection, Promoting Biodiversity, and Recommendations for Landowners**
- **Public Safety in Putney**

IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, January 17, 2023

Putney 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.

► Revitalize Putney's Downtown

Work with local property and business owners, and regional and state experts, on a plan to address vacancies in the downtown. A group could plan efficient use of space for housing and retail, as well as improve walkability and pedestrian safety. Additionally, the group could work to beautify the downtown with murals, public green space, other public art, and tree and flower planting. In filling vacancies, many residents expressed a need to focus on local services such as a salon, laundromat, café, and restaurants.

Community Co-Chairs: **Lyssa Papazian & Eric Bass**

Facilitator: **Alyssa Johnson, VCRD**

Resource Team Members: **Dan Groberg**, *Community Planning and Project Manager*, VT Department of Housing and Community Development;
Meg Staloff, *Southern Vermont Program Manager*, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation;
Sue Westa, *Windham Regional Commission*

Community Participants: Ariane Aumont, Janice Baldwin, Eric Bass, Caitlin Burch, Mara Burler, John Burt,
and Task Force Signups Laura Campbell, Lisa Chase, Sue Coakley, Jane Collister, Jaime Contois, Andrew Cooper-Ellis, Mike Cosco, Trattie (Katherine) Davies, Ted Dodd, Elena Dodd, Terry Ehling, Cullen Elwell, Swift Everdy, Marcella Eversole, Matt Ewald, Melanie Fletcher, Shana Frank, Kevin Freitas, John Grant, Jessica Greene, Alex Hiam, Bryce Hodson, Kate Hudson, Abby Jacobson, Hannah Lake, Deborah Lazar, Eve Leons, Paul LeVasseur, Ben Lord, Kurt Lynch, Ann Macdonald, Betsy MacIsaac, Eleni Maksakuli, Bonnie Mennell, Graham Meriwether, Lynn Meyer, Bob Meyer, Drew Mohr, Gail Murray, Amy Nelson, Katherine Nelson, Libby North, Greenough Nowakoski, Daniel O'Brien, Lyssa Papazian, Gabriel Thom Pasculli, Rod Payne-Meyer, Emily Peyton, Ed Powers, Charles Raubichuck, Jesse Ridgway, Alan Roberts, Nina Salvatore, Kira Sawyer-Hartigan, Virginia Scholl, Erica Schwabach, Christina Shin, Penelope Simpson, Kora Skeelee, Heather Small, Ellen Strong, Julie Strothman, Jessica Taylor, Willow Uth, Gayle Weitz, Nick Williams, Emily Wilson, Claire Wilson, Wendy Wilson, Julie Winchester, Zach Yeskel, Emily Zervas, and Richard Zucker

Current Status

- Numerous downtown businesses- all valuable! (E.g. Tandoori Food truck, Swirl Vintage, Moose on Main, Mockingbird Taproom, Coop, General Store...).
- The paper mill is important source of employment.
- Many community institutions and resources: Next Stage, Sandglass Theater, Community Center and Food Shelf, Family Health care, Community Garden, tiny libraries.

- Events: Halloween, Tavern concerts, Yellow Barn Music Festival, Community Suppers, free Library programs, Big Tree Quest, annual craft tour.
- Sacketts Brook - Gorge and Waterfall.
 - Public paths and trails – could be expanded in town (e.g. Sacketts Book).
 - River access is lacking/“meh.”
- Several underutilized properties.
- No public green space in downtown.
- There is not a known or consistent definition of where downtown is.
- Crossing Main Street is scary. There are no crosswalks.
- Main Street is a state road and has heavy truck traffic.
- There are no playground downtown.
- Some concerns about safety downtown, especially with the darkness.
- Limited bike and pedestrian capacity.
- There is no marketing strategy for Putney or centralized place to know what is going on.
- Parking is an important asset for businesses, and sometimes occupied.
- Putney does not have its own Chamber of Commerce or other support for businesses.
- There are limited (not enough) guest facilities in town.
- Overall street appeal is lacking.
- Putney is an in-between scale: “Too big to be small, too small to be big”.
- Exit 4 and Landmark College are important assets.
- Traffic island planting and street fair for the holidays.

Action Steps

1. Begin the research to complete a streetscape master plan to inform future design and beautification efforts. This could help guide the implementation of future efforts in areas such as:
 - a. Tree planting.
 - b. Pedestrian and bicycle resources (e.g. crosswalks).
 - c. Planters and other décor.
 - d. Lampposts, benches and other streetscaping elements.
2. Conduct an inventory of existing, assets, resources and stakeholders in the Downtown. In particular:
 - a. Public and private stakeholders.
 - Reach out to all relevant property owners, especially those who may not have participated in the Community Visit process.
 - b. Transportation assets, including sidewalks and crosswalks.
 - c. Parking resources and signage.
 - d. Businesses.
 - e. Events.
 - f. Greenspaces.
 - g. Funding resources.
 - h. Revisit ideas and past initiatives from the former Putney Business Alliance.
3. Research funding options and a job description for a paid position to serve as a point person for revitalization efforts.
4. Explore efforts to advance comprehensive community marketing/advertising.
 - a. Consider creating an Instagram or other social media account.
 - b. Create a website to capturing events and assets/marketing plan.

5. Align on a group vision/mission statement: Who is the Downtown for? Consider social and economic diversity, and the balance between livability and services for those visiting.
6. Share top Revitalization ideas from the group with the Planning Commission to ensure they are incorporated into the Town Plan update.
7. Consider defining an area for a downtown business zone. Consider initiatives such as a tax stabilization program, or enterprise zone to support this area. Research existing town policies and regulations, and consider the possibility of change town regulations to penalize unused properties, and/or changes in zoning to require first floor uses to be commercial.
8. For all of these ideas, reach out to other towns that have advanced these actions to learn about next steps any of the other action ideas. Similarly, research potential funding mechanisms for the work.

Additional potential action ideas:

- Create signage and/or a kiosk that advertises Putney.
- Work to ensure the Town Square is safe for kids.
- Work to rethink and redevelop the Old Fire Station and Basketville Buildings.
- Add more trees to downtown.
- Create an action plan addressing residential and economic needs- who does what.
- Explore ways to increase local public transit.
- Research parking ideas and solutions, and work to increase utilization of existing parking and/or create more parking.
- Work to increase events: create a car-free day planning team.
- Create a Putney Chamber of Commerce and/or partner with the Brattleboro Chamber of Commerce Create a chamber or downtown association.
- Focus on Eco-tourism highlighting business and agriculture.
- Create a Putney food map and trail map.
- Tear down Putney Pizza and make a landscaped parking area.
- Make downtown more sustainable, walkable, and bikeable.
- Add lampposts on Main Street to Kimball Hill and Old Route 5.
- Add electrical vehicle charging to downtown.
- Create a physical gateway to slow traffic.
- Have a Putney Trolley.
- Create a co-working space.
- Enhance historical tourism and partner with the Putney Historical Society for tours.
- Find town allies and resources and connect with other communities.
- Find funded town business support – avoid overusing volunteers.
- Explore instituting a 1% Local Option tax.
- Add planters and décor- and understand who is responsible for maintaining them.
- Recruit businesses, including a hair salon and less expensive restaurant.
- Close streets to cars.
- Connect Putney rowing clubs in Vermont and England for a “Green Mountain Head” or other race.
- Explore the creation of new development and additional spaces for new businesses.
- Make the riverfront and boat launch more of a destination.
- Host more community-wide parties on Kimball Hill.
- Work to make Putney more welcoming- yay Exit 4.

Resources

A Municipal Planning Grant could help fund a Downtown Master Plan. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant/applicant-guidance>. The Windham Regional Commission could help with an application to the program. Contact Sue Westa at swesta@windhamregional.org and learn more at <http://www.windhamregional.org/>.

Better Connections is another potential funding resource for planning efforts. Learn more at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>.

The Downtown Transportation Fund is another potential funding resource for planning and implementation of improvements. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/downtown-transportation-fund>.

The national Main Street Approach model of best practices is a useful framework for consideration. The four points in that model are:

- Economic Vitality
- Design
- Organization
- Promotion

The National Main Street Center has additional information about best practices and hosts an annual conference. Learn more at <https://www.mainstreet.org/home>. Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) may have funding to support folks attending the 2023 conference, which is March 27-29, 2023 in Boston. Contact Meg Staloff at mstaloff@brattleborodevelopment.com.

Other Towns with existing Economic Development support can be valuable resources to learn how their positions are funded, structured, and what types of projects they support. Dover and Wilmington both have existing Economic Development staff.

The Better Places program could be used to help fund implementation of projects. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/better-places>.

There is funding to support the remediation of Brownfields, and the Windham Regional Commission can assist with an application. Contact Sue Westa at swesta@windhamregional.org and learn more at <http://www.windhamregional.org/>.

The Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program may be able to assist with resources tree planting, and has some grant funding available. Learn more at <https://vtcommunityforestry.org/>.

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

At the next full group meeting, it may be helpful 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.

Expand the number of local people involved in this conversation, planning and work.

It may be useful to committees or even ad hoc groups (with volunteers whose numbers might fluctuate according to project) which would work according to the 'Main Street' approach. 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 framework 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, etc.

The group could find funding to support a part time coordinator. Explore funding options for the position- perhaps via a community fund drive, with follow up actions being instituting a 1% local option tax for a source of continued funding for community development, or reaching out to philanthropic partners. Having a part time coordinator is essential to support volunteers, and is often a great job for someone who wants to do meaningful work but needs a flexible part time schedule.

Consider increasing use of your local FPF. It's free of charge, Vermont based and proven successful in a majority of Vermont towns. FPF provides the Putney Forum, the Putney Directory and the Putney Community Calendar, all of which can be found at <https://FrontPorchForum.com>. In most towns in VT, more than 75% of households participate in daily conversation through FPF. Putney could get this same benefit if another 200 people would sign up online.

Engage with AARP to assure that accessibility is a key focus of this work.

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

Explore local, state and Federal grant opportunities for planning.

Putney 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>.

Consider the exploration of further designations, particularly the possibility of seeking a Neighborhood Development Area.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) has a Southern Vermont Economy Project (SVEP) that provides training opportunities for community projects. There is a wealth of information and materials available online at <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/svep/>.

Through SVEP there is a Chamber/Downtown Organization/Economic Development network forming and anyone from Putney is welcome to join. Contact Meg Staloff at mstaloff@brattleborodevelopment.org.

Content for downtown groups is being planned as part of the SoVermont Economy Summit on May 23. Learn more at <https://www.sovermontzone.com/summit> and ask the town about helping fund attendance to these events (and also always plan some money in the organization's budget for learning opportunities like these!).

There is a Main Street conference in Boston in March 2023. Learn more at <https://www.mainstreet.org/howwecanhelp/mainstreetnow/now2023>. Contact Richard Amore to see if there is sponsorship or group membership available for Village Center designees to attend at

richard.amore@vermont.gov. The Southern Vermont Economy Project may also be able to provide support. Contact Meg Staloff at mstaloff@brattleborodevelopment.org.

Learn more about the Village Center program: <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/designation-programs/village-centers>.

Contact current Vermont Designated Downtown organizations. Wilmington Works may be a particularly good fit since they cover a small downtown. Learn more at <https://www.wilmingtonworksvt.com/> and contact Program Coordinator Melissa Boyles at wilmingtonworks@gmail.com.

Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance (BFDDA) is the designated downtown organization for Bellows Falls. Learn more at <https://bellowsfallsvt.org/> and contact Executive Director Betsey Thurston at bfdda1@gmail.com.

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.

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>.

The National Main Street Four Points Structure is useful framework. The idea is to form an organization with sub-committees for Design (they can work on things like streetscape, beautification, art in downtown), Promotions (they can work on planning events in the downtown), Economic Development (they can work on getting an inventory of available spaces, working with existing businesses, and finding opportunities for new businesses), and Organization structuring how a board and committees and/or employees will work and get funding). Sounds like a lot of work, but in effect it spreads out some of the jobs so folks are working in their area of skill and interest. As long as there is a central place to report back (the organization) this really makes sense and allows for some looseness where folks can jump into a subcommittee as they are able and/or interested. Learn more at <https://www.mainstreet.org/ourwork/theapproach>.

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.

Windham Regional Commission can be a potential partner for planning and implementation and potentially assist with some grant applications. Contact Sue Westa at swesta@windhamregional.org or (802) 257-4547 x108 and visit <http://www.windhamregional.org/> to learn more.

Vermont Small Business Development Center offers robust services for small businesses including business advising, training and workshops, and additional resources. They can assist with business plan development and business support. Visit <https://www.vtsbdc.org/> and contact Debra Boudrieau at dboudrieau@vtsbdc.org.

Potential Funding Sources

Consider identifying a project that would benefit from a Better Places Grant. 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>.

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. Learn more at <https://www.vermontcf.org/>.

Consider pursuing a Bylaw Modernization Grant. Learn more at: <https://accd.vermont.gov/content/bylaw-modernization-grants>.

Vermont Department of Buildings and General Services has matching grant programs for Recreation Facilities and Regional Economic development. Learn more at <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants> and contact Judy Bruneau at judy.bruneau@vermont.gov or (802) 828-3519.

USDA Rural Business Development Grants can be used for a variety of purposes to support community and economic development. Learn more at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants/vt>.

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. BDCC 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 <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/cf-ta/>.

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.

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

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

The William G. Pomeroy Foundation funds historical or educational efforts, particularly historical signage. Learn more at <https://www.wgpfoundation.org/apply-for-history-grant/>.

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.

► Develop a Community Center

A community center or hub could provide a space for events, connection, gathering, programming, and sharing of information and resources. A group could form to explore the development of a new community space or a reinvestment in and expansion of the current Putney community center. Residents shared a particular interest in a community kitchen, indoor recreation space, as well as space for youth to gather and hold youth-focused events and programming.

Community Chair: **Katy Emond**

Facilitator: **Ben Doyle**, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont

Resource Team Members: **Matt Bachler**, *Senior Planner*, Windham Regional Commission;
Elisabeth Marx, *Senior Philanthropic Advisor*, Vermont Community Foundation;
Gail Nunziata, *Broad Brook Community Center*

Community Participants and Task Force Signups: Mark Adams, Alex Beyard, Linda Brooks, Caitlin Burch, Irene Canavis, Laura Chapman, Elizabeth Christie, Lionel Chute, Aileen Chute, Jaime Contois, Laura D'Angelo, Melissa Dawson, Kate Dodge, Terry Ehling, Katy Emond, Jenna Etra, Swift Everdy, Marcella Eversole, Matt Ewald, John Field, Jeff Giarrusso, Holly Hammond, Terry Keegan, Ruth Kibby, Marie Kim, Deborah Lazar, Ben Lord, Alioua Manuae, Mikaela Marmion, Ruby McAdoo, Susan Mello, Libby North, Carolyn Olivier, Nancy Olson, Amber Paris, Bill Peason, Hannah Pick, Simon Renault, Paul Renouf, Devin Rhodes, Trish Roberts, Nancy Shepherd, Nate Snell, Sheryl Sprague, Jorika Stockwell, Nancy Storrow, Jessica Taylor, Willow Uth, Jeanette White, Susan Yao, and Richard Zucker

Action Steps

1. Improve communication network among existing “community centers”.
2. Engage in asset mapping to identify:
 - a) Physical spaces in Putney that are considered “community centers”.
 - b) Activities happening in the various community centers or could use new space.
3. Survey/Engage the community about what they are looking for in a community center. This can't just be a simple survey, but an active effort to include folks from across the community.
4. Find/resource staff to help drive this project forward. Whether this ends up being a capital project (construction/renovation) or a coordination project (helping connect the dots among existing efforts), there will need to be a point person to keep the momentum up.
5. Visit other community centers in the area to learn about their process and see what works. Potential communities include Guilford, Rupert, Ludlow, Brandon, Pawlet, and N. Bennington.

Resources

Vermont Community Foundation may be a potential funding resource, including through Spark Connecting Communities and Community Impact Grants. Learn more at <https://www.vermontcf.org/nonprofits-and-grantseekers/available-grants/#OppGap>.

The Preservation Trust of Vermont may be able to assist with grants and technical assistance. Learn more at <https://ptvermont.org/> and contact Ben Doyle at ben@ptv.org.

Building Community Grants Program through the State Department of Building and General Services provides matching funds for shovel-ready projects. Learn more at <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>.

The Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) program at the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) may be able to assist with components of the project. Learn more at <https://www.vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at Mariah@vhcb.org or 802-828-1098.

USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Program may be a potential funding source for equipment or facilities. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/vt#overview>. Technical assistance for the program is available through Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC). Learn more at <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/cf-ta/>.

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

Discuss with the Town who would be best to own and operate a space: the Town, or a separate organization.

Undertake an assessment of the existing spaces and evaluate which approach makes the most sense (repurposing or creating new). Are there other cooperative tenant uses (child care? Regular Senior programs?) which might partner in a space if it were re-vamped or newly available? 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.

Decide if two parallel tracks would best serve the needs, or dilute efforts: 1) Improve the existing Community Center to create a focal point for community activities, while 2) Expending energy and resources to codify the Hub/Network strategy.

Asset mapping is crucial. Explore if the existing building is under-utilized, or under-programmed. A building conditions assessment report might be useful. Is the building accessible, sprinkled, sufficiently septic.

Broad Brook Community Center (BBCC), Guilford, developed partnerships with various groups for use of the building for a flat annual fee. These partners get first crack at the calendar for a set amount of dates; BBCC gets earned income they can count on.

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

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

Marlboro and Guilford's community centers have consistent programming. Reaching out to the people doing that work might be advisable, in the one-venue model.

Involve the local Area Agency on Aging (Senior Solutions) to determine how older residents may also be represented/served in this new center. Learn more at <https://www.seniorsolutionsvt.org/>.

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

Potential Funding Sources

Connect with the Dept. of Housing and Community Development to learn about Better Places grants. Better Places is a non-competitive, community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public places serving Vermont's designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, or neighborhood development areas. 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>.

Funding sources for this type of work is available through multiple sources (maybe even using some Town ARPA funding as a match).

The Spark Connecting Communities grant program provides grants of \$500-\$3,000 for "grassroots work that builds social capital." 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. Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) 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 <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/cf-ta/>.

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.

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 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 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 or mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org.

There is some Historic Preservation funding available. See <https://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/historic-preservation-grants>.

List of resources from ACCD (may be outdated!):
<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>.

► Develop Housing Solutions

Many residents see a need for more affordable, safe, and quality housing for seniors and people of all ages and income levels. A task force could come together to develop housing solutions that meet the needs and character of the Putney community. The group could work with regional and state partners and experts to assess current needs and explore options including new development, co-housing models, multi-generational housing, a Community Trust, and more. Additionally, the group could focus on a review of zoning and other regulations to improve housing development opportunities and identify any infrastructure needs there may be to support housing solutions.

Community Chair: **Kathleen O'Reilly** (with kick off support from **Marcella Eversole**)

Facilitator: **Brian Lowe**, *VCRD*

Resource Team Members: **Chris Campany**, *Windham Regional Commission*

Seth Leonard, *Vermont Housing Finance Agency*

Pollaidh Major, *Vermont Housing & Conservation Board*

Community Participants and Task Force Signups: **Peg Alden**, **Steve Anderson**, **Josh Ascani**, **Karen Astley**, **Phil Bannister**, **Richard Berkfield**, **Morgan Broadfoot**, **Laura Campbell**, **Laura Chapman**, **Valentine Chute**, **Sue Coakley**, **Jaime Contois**, **Andrew Cooper-Ellis**, **Mike Cosco**, **Christine Couturier**, **Carl Crook**, **Laura D'Angelo**, **Swift Everdy**, **Marcella Eversole**, **Matt Ewald**, **Keith Fletcher**, **Louise Garfield**, **Kai George**, **Doug Grandt**, **Bryce Hodson**, **Ari Jackson**, **Dawn King**, **Hannah Lake**, **Miye Lampriere**, **Ledlie Laughlin**, **Ben Lord**, **Tehila Marks**, **Tom Meyer**, **Mike Mrowicki**, **Susan Nepveu**, **Kathleen O'Reilly**, **Mimi Oakes**, **Jim Olivier**, **Emily Peyton**, **Coni Richards**, **Bob Rolen**, **Marni Rosner**, **Susan Ruggles**, **Daniel Sicken**, **Elizabeth Stead**, **Burt Tepfer**, **Jessica Turner**, **V Vadim**, **Elizabeth Warner**, **Michael Wells**, and **Emily Wilson**

The Issue Today

- No regulation of vacant buildings or incentives to fill them.
- Not enough rental housing options.
- There are infill opportunities, but the capacity to think about them is limited.
- There are infill opportunities, but the regulations around them are confusing.
- Hard to find usable supports to create more affordable housing.
- Efforts to build new affordable housing units have been controversial – a current project by Windsor-Windham Housing Trust is in Environmental Court.
- Not clear understanding of terms among residents – “affordable” can mean different things to different people.
- Some feel like they don't know the details of the challenge – what has the town already tried, and what worked, what hasn't, why not?
- Very few regulations around rental costs.
- Tensions between creating new or more housing and the pressure it puts on the environment around Putney need to be discussed.
- Very few regulations seem to be put on second or third home-owners...are they paying their fair share?
- Desire to learn more about models like co-housing or new approaches to multi-gen housing ... could these fit well in Putney?
- There is existing Water and Wastewater in the village, and it is not at capacity.

- There are a lot of short-term rentals in the area – what is the impact?
- Habitat for Humanity has a history in the area.
- The town has 50 acres that could potentially be a housing site.
- There are some ADUs (accessory dwelling units) and many properties could also support one.
- There is Federal / State funding available for some things, and there is a small working group learning more about VHIP funding.
- There are some concerns about tenant safety.

Action Steps

1. Visioning: People have different ideas about what they want around housing in Putney, and the Town Plan offers a way to discuss and define that vision for the future.
2. Data Collection: Gather data, conduct surveys, a housing needs assessment, and/or a housing opportunity index (which captures both needs and assets in the community – like, how many empty buildings are there or where is there available land) to find out more about what the community needs, what is available, and what kind of gaps are missing. This could include data on short-term rentals. This would include input from community members of all ages from students to seniors, employers, town officials, and other experts to get a comprehensive picture of the current conditions. This work might build on data already gathered by the Planning Commission or Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.
3. Committee Education: Learn more about what is already happening and the history of the challenges in Putney, in particular connecting with the Planning Commission to understand the work they have already done around housing and the opportunities presented by an ongoing Town Plan process and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. What is needed and where could additional support be useful? How could the groups work together?
4. Committee Education: Connect with experts (maybe the Planning Commission or Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, maybe town officials, maybe the Regional Planning Commission, maybe other experts) to understand what is legally possible. What tools does the community have to act?
5. Convening: Plan a convening with members of the landlords working on VHIP funding, the Planning Commission, the co-housing and eco-housing communities, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee to learn about some of the different projects underway and where support is needed (this could also help address steps #3 and #4).
6. Explore creating a Community Housing Trust or a Public Housing Trust in town.
7. Consider engaging with or joining Town commissions/committees to ensure housing issues are connected to Town planning and other initiatives.
8. Engage Habitat for Humanity – they used to work in Putney.
9. Invite the Task Force in Londonderry working on Housing Options to come to Putney to share what has worked and what has been a challenge.
10. Using data, community input, and learning through committee education, work to identify potential housing solutions that can help to meet the needs and build action plans to move them forward. Solutions may include:
 - a. Explore adding or expanding rent-control regulations.
 - b. Explore models of rent-to-own.
 - c. Explore the use of potential zoning or property tax incentives for vacant buildings or to support different housing models (i.e., affordable housing, missing middle housing, co-housing, senior housing, etc.)
 - d. Explore local sustainable development practices.
 - e. Build a world-class eco-village in Putney on the 50 acres of open town land.
 - f. Engage the eco-housing community and Earth-bridge.
 - g. Look into options for Cooperative Housing.

- h. A look at zoning and policy in the town to open up opportunities for affordable housing development.
- i. Create a survey specific to seniors that helps understand the housing needs seniors in the community have.
- j. Engage the selectboard about changing the mission of the Housing Committee.

Resources

The Vermont Housing Finance Agency has created a comprehensive housing data website for Vermont, including detailed info on Putney (i.e., the # of short-term rentals in Putney). It is available at: <https://www.housingdata.org>.

There are housing task forces in Londonderry and Rockingham that were mentioned by members of the Putney Housing Task Force. VCRD can make connections to the chairs in Londonderry or Rockingham. Contact Alyssa Johnson, alyssa@vtrural.org.

The Windham Regional Commission knows about available State and Federal funds, can help to facilitate and coordinate conversations with other surrounding towns, and also has ideas about specific shortages (i.e., design contractors). Contact Chris Campany at ccampany@windhamregional.org.

With specific projects, and in particular renovation projects, the Preservation Trust of Vermont could be a useful resource. The President, Ben Doyle, has been to Putney multiple times during the Community Visit process to listen to residents. His email is ben@ptvermont.org.

Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) can be helpful down the line if a specific site has been identified. Feasibility funds can help to look at specific projects and can help explore opportunities. Contact Pollaidh Major at pollaidh@vhcb.org or Gretchen Rittenhouse at gretchen@vhcb.org.

The State Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) oversees programs like Vermont Housing Improvement Program (VHIP) as well as a variety of state designation programs that can incentivize new housing or other downtown and village investments. Alex Farrell, the Deputy Commissioner, was on the Visiting Team in Putney in November and can be reached at alex.farrell@vermont.gov.

There are statewide resources for landlords and tenants, including a recently updated tenant handbook. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/resources-rules/renters-landlords/education-materials>.

The Windham and Windsor Housing Trust can help with housing data and potential housing resources.

The Town Lister can help to find information as you survey the current conditions.

Meg Staloff, Southern Vermont Program Manager at the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) could help reach out to employers as well as share projects or initiatives that have worked in nearby communities. Contact mstaloff@brattleborodevelopment.com.

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

Several folks from Putney recently attended a local housing workshop held by Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC)'s Southern Vermont Economy Project (SVEP) and are now well versed in ideas about how local housing groups can move forward.

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

Include Universal Design principals throughout the work.

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)?

Check in with the Planning Commission through the process of updating the Town Plan to be sure there is language in the Town Plan that is in alignment with this goal.

Putney received a Municipal Planning Grant through Department of Housing and Community Development. They could consider pursuing a Bylaw Modernization Grant.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

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

Materials for the Southern Vermont Economy Project (SVEP) Housing Workshop are available here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sUyScHnpMk002PGHDXbuWDzqyLGAV1VP?usp=share_link.

Get in touch with SVEP and subscribe to the BDCC newsletter – we are always working on housing and can connect folks with other groups doing work in the area! Any planned workshops/events will be in the newsletter. Subscribe at: <https://brattleborodevelopment.com/join-mailing-list/>.

There are a variety of resources available at <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing>.

Potential Funding Sources

The Spark Connecting Communities grant program provides grants of \$500-\$3,000 for “grassroots work that builds social capital.” There are two upcoming rounds of Spark grant applications with deadlines on March 7 and July 18. Learn more at vermontcf.org/our-impact/programs-and-funds/spark-connecting-community/.

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>.

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>.

Connect with the Department of Housing and Community Development to learn about Better Places grants. Better Places is a non-competitive, community matching grant program empowering Vermonters to create inclusive and vibrant public places serving Vermont’s designated downtowns, village centers, new town centers, or neighborhood development areas. 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>.

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 Hoehl Family Foundation funds community projects in Vermont, and accepts grant applications until December 15th. The minimum for requests is \$5,000. The foundation requires that applicants have 501(c)3 status, so the task force would need to find a partner. Learn more at <http://www.hoehlfamilyfoundation.org/about>.



V. Our Future Putney Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held in-person and virtually with over 200 Putney community members and the VCRD Visiting Team on November 14, 2022, and through a paper and online survey.

Although the prioritization work of the Our Future Putney 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 & Aging

Visiting Team: Hannah Carpino (facilitator), Alyssa Johnson (scribe), Rebecca Ellis, Holly Morehouse, Monica White, Michael Wood-Lewis

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Putney Meadows.
- Putney Community Cares.
- Noise House.
- Putney Food Shelf.
- School! Is awesome.
- School Forest (associated with the school).
- Library.
- Sidewalk – allows students to get to the school walking.
- Unoccupied buildings.
- Thriving homeschool community.
- Motivated and passionate people under the age of 15 (young people and children).
- General store.
- Next Stage.
- Sandglass theater.
- Exercise program for seniors.
- Putney Rec League.
- Pool.
- Open green space downtown.
- Ski club for schools.
- Winter and summer farmer's market.
- The Putney Co-op.
- Pierce's Hall Contra Dances.
- Outdoor wooded place to walk or hunt.
- Beautiful wetland.
- Putney Community Center.
- Putney Mountain and Association for hiking.
- Yellow Barn concert hall.
- Community gardens.
- PEOPLE – when there is a tragedy, the communities rallies.
- Fire Department.
- Greenwood school, Grammer school, Elmeys Play School.
- Putney School.
- Signal Pine play school.
- Next Stage and Bangwagon concerts.
- Afterschool program at the school.
- Oak Meadow.
- Green Mountain Orchard.
- Landmark College.
- Halloween in Putney.
- Community Suppers – at Next Stage.
- Easy access to nature – lots of hiking trails.
- Green Mountain Orchard – and in general, business with strong ties to the community.
- Yearly lantern festival.
- Green Mountain Spinnery.
- West Hill Bike Club Access to the CT River for boating.
- Connected and passionate representatives in the state house.
- Pool and pool events.
- 4 sets of cross-country ski trails.
- Access to the highway/interstate.
- Putney Family Medical.
- Electric car charging station and parking.
- Bank and credit union.
- Informal trail systems – allow passing through people's property (fragile).
- Summer camp programs.
- Youth Ski League.
- Medieval Faire.
- Harvest Fest.
- Food Bank.
- Food for Kids.
- Green Mountain Orchard.
- River.
- Copper Field.
- Land donated to the town by Matt Nedrix on a hill.
- Friends Meeting House – Quaker.
- Roman Catholic Church, status unknown.
- Diaper and adult brief bank – collaboration between Putney Cares and Foodbank.
- iPutney.

What are the Challenges?

- Lack of affordable housing.
- Lack of a pharmacy and hardware store.
- Lack of a laundromat.
- Sidewalks are degrading which makes it hard to get around.
- Lack of affordable quality care for kids under elementary.
- Lack of a community program.
- Integrated programs that connect elders to young people.
- Lack of a park with picnic tables to gather.
- Lack of transportation, especially for elder folks who may not be able to drive – need for bus service.
- Need for volunteers to provide services – pool has dwindled.
- Afterschool programming for kids.
- Volunteers- great nonprofit activities, but keeping full of active Board members is hard. Also for rescue and fire department.
- Affordable childcare for younger children.
- Business that have shut down.
- Affordable housing – more housing the downtown/village is a challenge and need.
- Places for older kids to hang out.
- Teen activities in general – lack of hub.
- Distance from houses to High school in Brattleboro.
- Getting connected with kids who want to help or smaller contractors who do small jobs in a reliable way.
- Specialty medical services not available nearby.
- More community spaces for moms and kids indoors (besides the library).
- Concerns about kids crossing Route 5.
- For elderly families, don't know about services and what is available.
- Lack of coordinated social services, especially for the elderly.
- Need for crosswalks in the downtown area, like at the Post Office.
- Access to childcare especially under the age of 2.
- Larger distance with sidewalk or bike lanes so you can bike farther than downtown.
- Centralized resource for find activities and events not on Facebook.
- Need for more senior housing.
- More senior services – Meals on Wheels, but funding agency is having a hard time – 2 people, not full time.
- Playground/park – that can be used not just on weekends.
- Basketball courts – for kids not in school – recreation activity resources for those not in the school.
- Lack of internet connection for broader community.
- Wish the library was open earlier than 10:30 – morning energy.
- Spotty cell phone coverage.
- General feeling of distrust toward teens in the community from elders in the community which is breeding lack of community.
- Lack of places for people to meet, socialize and spend time together.
- Putney nightlife – what's that.
- Pandemic shut down a lot of businesses that were where folks gathered – economic drivers needed in the community.
- Save open space at the entrance of town.
- Need for spaces and structures for all ages to PLAY – all ages.
- Lack of river access.
- Lack of diversity.

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

- Central number to call.
- Put a circle in front of the Coop where the intersection is – could also add sidewalks.
- 0.91 acres of open space by community garden – envision a place for adults to play with benches and a pavilion for bad weather and shady trees and walkways people in wheelchairs could use. Would provide a welcoming, open, natural, inclusive space for folks visiting the community.
- Boys and Girls club in the old Putney Pizza.
- Support entrepreneurs to open early ed programs.
- Support a robust aging in place infrastructure.
- Revamp and expand sidewalk system.
- Bike trails – bicyclist on Rt. 5 North – create an alternative route or get a bike lane (alternate route to get North).
- Protecting forest and wildlife folks Bike path on the river.
- Do better with trail maintenance.
- Create an accessible trail.
- Put boardwalks and a nature preserve and close Sand Hill Road.
- Have a recreation department that would be a place for kids to play sports – indoor space for people to get together for teens, younger, people. Community space that doesn't cost anything to rent out.
- Have access to the CT in River in East Putney.
- Putney could have more downtown housing that is specifically with a good development plan for multiuse.
- Retail fund to attract retailers to a Village – tie it in with its town plan that calls for downtown housing.
- Senior housing downtown that is walkable.
- Organized mentoring program to bridge youth and elders.
- Put more resources into the existing community Center to afford more programming – has been used in the past for a lot of the types of uses that have been described.
- Putney could the property across the street from Basketville to address some of the proposed ideas.
- Put a thermal cover over their swimming pool.
- Have a community maker space.
- Illuminated basketball court.
- Have access to the Forest for Learning for adults as well as kids and run programs for nature connection.
- Ensure that all of our neighborhoods have reliable, high speed internet.
- Annual workday people could sign up to do throughout the town.
- Make the Exit 4 mandatory for people traveling South and North – huge amount of resource and energy traveling close by. Could do more to capitalize on that.
- Putney could have paper mill with no poisonous emissions.

- Putney could have a non-Facebook based webpage with this type of information on it.
- Town skating rink as part of a park in the winter.
- Putney could have a safety complex with ambulance and police department.
- Putney could paint crosswalks across from the library and post office.
- Putney could add tools and machines to its library for borrowing.
- Create an exhibit showroom for all of the artists – history of a craft tour over Thanksgiving weekend. Year round craft show room for folks to show and purchase year round. At the Putney Inn, perhaps? Or on Rt. 5.
- Create a community center as a non-profit with indoor space. Website, playground.
- Create a network for cohousing – widowed elders and folks looking to move to town.
- Put lights on the soccer field.
- Community aid/mutual aid days.
- Make the Exit 4 ramp really beautiful – beautiful shrubbery, bridge of flowers.
- Childcare consortium that help elderly provide care for children and brings generation together.
- Fund to support those that need support with childcare – elderly and babysitters.
- Schools in Putney could work with volunteers who have things to do.
- Skating rink.
- Folks in homes are too large but challenging to reach out – shift those policies to use housing better, not punished for someone moving into their house - structural issues around housing.
- Crosswalks on Route 5 so safer on.
- Cooper Hill, Forest for Learning, and Sand Hill Road and Village connected – going up route 5 AND Crossing near landmark college. Walkable loops supported by sidewalks.
- Youth and elderly mixed age programs for community gardens not just in one location – through the downtown – raised planters and things not taking up too much space.
- Putney could have a way to slow vehicles down – calming traffic.
- Seek grants that could support free programming for kids and elderly – through Putney Community cares.
- Historical society have an actual facility to put history – in a facility besides the town hall – place to look at what has happened here.
- More events like the lantern supper where folks from different cultures economic backgrounds can come together.
- Program where young people help old people with the internet.
- Older people taught younger folks map reading, knitting+.
- Team of nurses. Nurse practitioners to help folks age in place.
- Have a younger families use community gardens in other folks backyard.
- Put more resources into summer camps/summer programs for kids.
- Putney could have a dancing school.
- Putney could have volunteers helping elders with pet care.
- Putney could have a community center with a teen center, youth care, teens volunteering with kids – shared resource where things can come together.
- Putney could open a gallery on the second floor of the town hall, which used to invite artists – reopen for arts, programming.
- Putney could restart community suppers.
- Putney could do an annual photo of people born in that digit year – 0, 10, 20, 30, 40 – have a collection of decades of. Way to have intergenerational connection.
- Start this year with 70! Or 3.
- Game of logging – programs go to some folks but not others – get that line of communication open – more outreach and advertising.
- Asset map for the town of Putney.
- Newsletter to better communicate the assets the community has.
- School districts are consolidated – resources for kids from the school, but only if they can get there. Can play sports with Brattleboro area middle school – could arrange transportation so kids can access resources.
- Have a kayak coop so kayaks could be shared instead fo back yards.
- Ski coop.
- Coworking space to encourage families to move here.
- Putney could keep the Black Lives Matter road mural always visible.
- Docents who would offer folks who move to town connection to the historic building they may have bought – introduced to folks who build the house, lived in the house previously.
- Putney could work on attracting a more diverse community for kids and adults – build the community to be a bit more diverse.
- Putney could prepare a plan to help welcome climate refugees.
- Putney could start an advisory youth council (with folks from Greenwood, Grammar School, Holden School community).
- Putney could create a permanent vertical art piece expressing hopes for the world.
- Putney could find ways to find connectivity between schools – isolation between schools – ways of building schools.
- Build school-community connection – welcome residents without kids, and kids to other community events.
- Communication – have a central website or newsletter – Putney School has open events but struggles to get the word out.
- Putney could explore indigenous culture.
- Have a community show/celebration that is different than other shows – about bringing Putney families and community members together – focused Created by Putney residents.
- Not without peril – produce a play based on Putney's first women settler – There is a script. Based on a book by Margaret Alice.
- Central list of all recreation resources.
- Putney could put all assets together – and share with new folks who move to the area.

- Welcome basket.
- Teen night – something at Next Stage that shows movies for teens and is about families coming together.
- Putney Conservation Commission could schedule hikes through different sets of Rivers and streams, fields.
- Putney could develop recommendations for landowners to keep a certain amount of property for native flora and fauna.
- Putney could reach out to town elders to see what their needs are – plowing, dog walking. Reach out to see what they need.
- Edible food forest designed for kids – something that is at their level.
- Film project to interview people in the community – institutionalize and have a commitment toward it.
- Putney could look at reopening the pub as a place for employment/connection – and help with hiring.
- Putney could have an annual talent show.
- Long wait for the tricentennial – but bicentennial parade – Putney could somehow fudge the dates.
- Put could on a parade – with floats and everything.
- Putney historical events – lots of stories.
- Organization where people help install rooftop solar installations – Putney could help create something similar.
- Putney could create more of a network for having community events that invite and bring everyone together.
- Putney could have more bed and breakfasts for travelers to stay.
- Putney could have a community bike program/bike share.
- Putney could have a community-utility to provide internet with the existing fiber loop (community run internet provider).
- Putney could have a firewood bank – Dummerston has one.
- Putney could have a LGBTQ+ organization to bring support and outreach to the community.
- Putney could work with out in the open and Root in Brattleboro – bring in chapters to Putney.
- Putney could invest resources in the diaper bank (currently supplied elsewhere).
- Support an entrepreneur to open a cloth diaper business.
- Putney is awesome.
- Putney could incorporate a sustainable agriculture method – corn brans and squash.
- Wheelchair accessible plots in the community garden.
- Putney could invest in creating a parking lot for the community center to make the building more functional.
- Putney could do a rideshare electronic bulletin board.
- Putney could build pickleball courts.
- Putney could have an electronic mutual aid form.
- Biker and wheelchair in front of you – way to experience nature. Putney could invest in that- significant investment. Org. in Northern Vermont that has one – Bellows Falls bike program one.
- Putney could coordinate with the State of Vermont to make the park and ride a really versatile space, multi-use, including canopy solar panels.
- One use could be a skateboard park.
- Or a pickleball court.
- Skills bank – somehow have a forum with skills folks could offer – flip side of mutual aid.
- iPutney – way to put things together – investigate – figure out how to consolidate communication and web presence so all communication and items in one place.
- Putney could have a timebank program.
- Putney could come up with some sort of financial coordinator to research getting grants and loans to support the programs mentioned.
- Youth advisory council.
- Putney could have a better way of engaging youth for ideas and concerns.
- Cabin similar to the one on the top of the pinnacle that folks could sign up to go to, rent out, sign up for.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Suggestions is a testament to the community – how many folks are here and offering ideas.
- Themes that jumped out – open green spaces, hiking, school library, motivated passionate people was a big theme. Power of community organizations really rang through. Access to interstate really high-level assets. Challenges around affordable housing and housing stock, improvements for sidewalks and crosswalks, biking, affordable childcare, increase for inter-age programs was heard loudly. Need for more volunteers, transportation. Reliable internet access. Lack of diversity. Ideas for action – more and affordable housing, including downtown. Intra-general community options – childcare, community. Additional opportunities for home sharing – mixed age gardens, and accessibility. Accessibility rang through assets, challenges and opportunities.
- Have done 15-20 community visits, and this visit has multiple superlatives: a record number of people at a meeting, and the best at following the rule of “Putney could.”.
- Theme seen in the group was the cross-generational theme – unique to the group.
- So many fun ideas – thinking of moving here.
- Set the bar really high.
- Recreation spaces – pages of just that. Not just sitting back, expanding on that. Theme of connecting to one and other. Physical connection to spaces, bike lanes, accessibility. Skill share, pet care, garden. Town page for information, Building docents.
- Idea of “What is happening at Exit 4” and the idea of Putney as a destination – park and ride differently, art pieces, art gallery, showing themselves externally. Picture of everyone, play of Putney. Cross generational around teams and use of voice.
- Didn’t hear about public safety – asset or challenge.
- Social capital or connectedness – era of heightened isolation, divineness – is that an asset or challenge.
- Programs – many other communities use it a lot, others don’t.
- Many municipal libraries have tool banks. HomeShare is a great nonprofit in the state. Dome over the pool – cool thing in St. Albans.

Housing

Visiting Team: Brian Lowe (facilitator), Kim Rupe (scribe), Ben Doyle, Katie Buckley, Alex Farrell, Gretchen Rittenhouse, and Meg Staloff

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Affordable housing has been magnificent for elders and young people who are struggling.
 - Infill sites (lots that are able to sub divide, alternative options for open areas) in town that are well known and understood.
 - Beautiful rural areas and downtowns that are close to shopping with variety and lots of diversity.
 - Resources (food shelf, bus line, accessibility).
 - Willingness to make this process work.
 - Putney General Store and Coop.
 - School system with amazing library.
 - International boarding school and local college.
 - Water and sewer infrastructure.
 - Trail access/systems.
 - Farmers market and community garden.
 - Arts and cultural development.
 - Sidewalks.
 - Optimism and sense of community.
 - The land in/around Putney.
-

What are the Challenges?

- People can't agree on where to put the new housing.
 - Real challenges finding housing in Putney.
 - Affordability of housing (of all types).
 - Not enough rental properties, overwhelming presence of Airbnb in town.
 - Lack of housing options near Landmark College that are within walking distance for students.
 - Finding balance of where to place new housing and encouraging infill – slow progress.
 - The need to look beyond downtown for housing options.
 - No options for rent to own.
 - The desire to keep small town feel and culture when bringing in new housing.
 - Lack of capital to develop housing (specifically w/infill housing landowners) and lack of technical assistance to do this.
 - Lack available builders.
 - Lack of land access.
 - High property taxes.
 - Only 1-2 corporations that are rental property owners for affordable housing – not enough of them.
 - Limited number of water units available (limiting availability to build).
 - The negative narrative on affordable housing, a misunderstanding of who needs housing (& how bad it is) and community needs.
 - No available resources for people looking for housing.
 - Almost half of people in Putney are spending more than 30% of their income on housing – need to support these people.
 - Housing that is available is old stock with needed upgrades.
 - No limitations on Airbnb's.
 - Lack of reliable/affordable trade people to build units.
 - Act 250 makes building very difficult.
 - Lack of rent control with rising costs.
 - Not enough protection for eco-minded developments (lack of support for creative thinking).
 - Lacking comprehensive approach on how to develop housing work in Putney.
 - The need to look at current infrastructure as we invite more families and build more – need to plan ahead.
 - Not enough people volunteering on committees.
 - Lack of publicized information on housing.
 - Needing to prioritize Putney needs.
-

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

- Having an economic driver to support housing to offset taxes.
- New senior housing in Putney to allow those who are here to stay and allow other housing to become available for families.
- Regional approaches to housing with neighboring towns.
- Conduct a housing study to understand the exact needs are for Putney and work strategically.
- Review current zoning bylaws and rethink new bylaws with new creativity.
- Rethink how we bring new developments. How to manage waste, septic systems, communal housing, etc.
- Adding crosswalks and speedbumps to downtown and removing Putney Village Pizza sign.
- Weigh in on ongoing Town Plan for wants/needs of residents.
- Using model where first floor is commercial and upstairs is housing for downtown spaces (European model).
- Housing for seniors (congregate housing which is much more efficient) to increase available housing for younger families.
- Multi-generational housing projects.
- Provide resources and support to tenants to best care for rental units.
- Collaborative home building (similar to project in WRJ).
- Bring a laundromat back to town.
- More dispersed resources.
- Develop public transportation that can support people moving into any new housing developments.
- More overall public transportation (including less car intensive needed transportation).
- Increase Agri-tourism and a playground for kids.
- Complete streets model.

- Develop a clear plan for infill sights and determine how to get consensus on housing needs. Come together as a community to act on this and move forward.
- Develop Communal housing that allows for older generations to interact with younger generations (also provides opportunity for childcare challenges).
- Have transportation discussions at the regional level.
- West Road is terrifying as a biker.
- Landlord accountability and how this is impacting downtown.
- Be intentionally inclusive in all discussions and ideas to include as many people as possible.
- Learn and explore alternative funding for housing.
- Address infrastructure and crime before bringing in new housing.
- Match making service to help addressing and finding housing of multi generations.
- Condominium housing and working with local employers to ensure their employees are taken care of and that housing is in proximity to these employers.
- Ensure new housing is supportive to local employers (ex: inability to fill positions in school systems due to lack of housing).
- Ensure new and existing housing is energy efficient.
- Bring a recycling center to town.
- Development of a resource opportunity for people who are coming to town that connect all the ideas/resources in a central location.
- Preserve the village for business opportunities. Balance of commerce and residential in the downtown.
- Increase parking downtown (especially for businesses).
- Provide support and resources for people looking to purchase land – creative ways of accessing and financing land.
- Need to ensure environmental protection with thoughtful developments for the environment.
- Being mindful of wildlife and their needs.
- Sharing housing for individuals who have extra rooms. There are national experts that live locally on this topic.
- Energy efficiency by corporations that provide utilities (allowing them to work with apartments).
- Being thoughtful about climate resilience when building new housing.
- Look at existing models for housing development that could be used here in Putney.
- Create additional businesses for greater economic base.
- Support existing local businesses.
- Ensuring basic needs for individuals are met locally rather than having someone going outside of town.
- Thinking about working with federal government for new funding sources.
- Looking into land trust ideas/options that address housing locally and determine how a land trust could work with a private landowner.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Hearing consensus for creative solutions for housing and suggest exploring existing housing resources such as sharevt.org, VHCB, etc.
- Encouragement to residents to join housing committees and be involved with the town plan.
- Reminder that nobody is coming to Putney to fix these problems directly, they will be solved by everyone in this room. Have never seen this many people in a breakout session.
- Recommendations to get organized and create a housing committee, conduct a housing study, and look at alternative funding sources.
- Conduct a housing needs assessment, identify the needs and what the problems are and having data to support them.
- There is funding available from the state for zoning updates.
- Incredible energy in the room, Putney is a welcoming place.
- VHCB has a focus on downtown development and there are resources for multi and single-family developments.
- Work together to create solutions.
- Look at regional solutions and what other communities have done, Putney is not alone.

Community Connection

Visiting Team: Alyssa Johnson (facilitator), Hannah Carpino (scribe), Rebecca Ellis, Holly Morehouse, Monica White, Michael Wood-Lewis

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Mutual aid network.
- Putney Library.
- Next Stage Arts.
- iPutney website.
- Putney pool.
- Putney Diner.
- "I love Putney" Facebook page.
- Putney Craft Tour.
- Community suppers.
- Sidewalk in the downtown.
- Putney Food Shelf.
- Putney Cares.
- Annual town events- Medieval Festival, Harvest Hair, Halloween.
- All the schools.
- Putney Central School.
- The Grammar School.
- The Putney School.
- The Greenwood School.

- Landmark College.
- Putney's "Buy Nothing" Facebook page.
- Putney Co-op, and the Bulletin board there.
- People who are willing to show up, volunteer, share their expertise.
- School forest at Putney Central School.
- Putney mountain and all of its trails.
- Twilight on the Tavern outdoor music events.
- Putney Recreation League.
- Farmers market.
- Meals on Wheels.
- The river.
- Overall community "love of Putney."
- Post office.
- Incredible vital wetland that is easily accessible (Sand Hill Rd).
- Birds.
- Putney Friends meetinghouse.
- Thriving agricultural businesses that bring people together:.
- Green Mountain Orchards.
- Harlows.
- Hidden Springs Maple.
- More and more young people are staying in Putney. Lots of people moving to town, wanting to work and live here.
- Bill Koch ski program for youth in Putney.
- Swirl Vintage.
- Moose on Main.
- Green Mountain Spinnery.
- "Businesses that are more than just businesses."
- Places to eat: Putney General Store, The Gleanery, the Putney Diner.
- Bandwagon Summer Series- outdoor concerts through Next Stage.
- Yellow Barn classical music concerts in the summer.
- Local farms.
- Sidewalk is crucial for children going to school, downtown. "They're living their own lives on that sidewalk."
- Sand Glass Puppet Theater.
- Four Winds Nature Program at school that brings adults parents and community members into the school for fun, educational events.
- Fire Department and emergency services.
- Putney Cares barn.
- Community gardens.
- Swimming holes.
- Attractive buildings around town, interesting architecture.
- Town committees - amazing amount of hard work and engagement.
- Small size of the town fosters closeness, sharing, easy access to resources.
- People work in the same place that they live.
- Feeling of safety.
- Availability of crutches, wheelchairs, other medical supplies on loan through Putney Cares.
- Social worker and counselor at PCS that collaborate with the town.
- Sewing Bee (?) at library, monthly.
- Baseball field on Sand Hill Road.
- Numerous soccer leagues: SIT school league, Local pickup group, organized online.
- Green Mountain Care and Medicaid.
- Connection to neighboring towns and their resources.
- Bike shop loan program for youth.

What are the Challenges?

- Lots of incidents of arson.
- Not everyone feels safe in town.
- No real law enforcement coverage. Some during week and none on weekends. Spotty coverage through state police. Long response time as a result.
- You have to be on Facebook to know what's going on in town.
- No centralized form of communication.
- No newsletter.
- No collection of assets and resources available in a centralized location.
- Not enough volunteers. "Good intentions without enough follow-through."
- Class issues - big division along income lines in community.
- Lack of public transportation, both in town and regionally.
- "Siloed" - political affiliation, kids or no kids, class, etc. Not a lot of connection between different groups.
- Elders in community who need help aren't able to access it. Serious lack of outreach around available existing resources.
- Roads are impassable when it storms, making certain areas of town extremely isolated.
- Lack of town plan/resources around climate emergencies.
- Lack of shared space community such as parks. No year-round place for gathering and being active.
- No town green.
- Community members feeling "othered."
- Lack of restorative justice opportunities to intentionally repair relationships within community.
- Lack of space for people of all ages to play sports.
- Lack of connection between schools, which divides kids. Homeschool vs public vs private.
- No "youth service bureau" in Putney.
- Big disconnect between younger and older generation in Putney. Younger generation feeling unwelcome at town events, or in town forums.
- Serious lack of racial diversity.
- Lack of promotion of the town events, meetings, municipal processes.
- No benches around town.
- Upstairs of the general store used to be open, shared workspace for some, meetups with friends. Has now become someone's store and its less accessible.
- No indoor shared spaces for people to utilize.
- No eco village or intentional community.
- No neighborhood associations or councils.
- Lack of a weekly dance.
- Lack of affordable housing.

- No laundromat.
- Downtown feels a little dead.
- Challenge of absentee landlords - vacant storefronts, vacant homes.
- View of the dump from the main roads (?).

- Very strong sense of "Vermont Yankee pride." People have a hard time asking for help and reaching out for neighbors.
- No pub. "Huge L."
- Loss of Antidote Books and coffee shop.
- Loss of places to have a business, create business. No room for business in downtown.

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

- Putney could think creatively about how to handle future natural disruptions brought on from climate change.
- Putney could develop a community office space/shared workspace with access to the internet.
- Reutilize the Catholic Church.
- Putney could focus on efficient ways to communicate- newsletters, town messaging system.
- Putney could collectively invest in a multi-season indoor gathering space for all ages for recreation, games, and events. Also a kitchen! And make it walkable from downtown.
- could improve river access by adding benches, steps and maintaining the trails.
- Behind the paper mill, there's a plaque about the old mill- could this site become a "pocket park" or "parklet?"
- Putney could create little parklets with benches and chess along Main St.
- Putney could use more sidewalks, in addition to maintaining the existing ones.
- Putney could do something about the "stinky paper mill."
- Putney could open and staff a tool-lending library.
- Putney could add bike lanes.
- Putney could reopen the old airport and use the land up there.
- Putney could champion a "neighborhood pod system."
- Putney could better engage youth around what they want in their community.
- More spaces for intergenerational hang-outs.
- Putney could have a skate park.
- Putney could make a way for youth to create and promote their own events through the town, rather than having the town put on events for youth without consulting them.
- Putney could create a restorative justice practice the way Brattleboro and Bellows Falls have done.
- Putney could create a social justice center in the community to help address underlying bias.
- Putney could continue the work of bringing people together to have challenging conversations with mediation and facilitation.
- Putney could experiment with utilizing Front Porch Forum.
- Putney could create an outdoor meeting space with shade trees, a pavilion, and wheelchair-accessible walkways.
- Putney could encourage youth to get involved with town commissions and boards.
- Putney could bring students to board meetings for civic education.
- Putney could make an open community space with a bonfire.
- Putney could do town wide outreach to help vulnerable community members and assess their needs.
- Putney could set aside a town-wide emergency fund for helping families in need.
- Putney could form smaller governing groups, neighborhood by neighborhood for making decisions on micro level, and tackling small neighborhood-specific projects.
- Putney could create an asset map with different "layers"- people assets, skills map, town resource map, state resource map, event layer, cultural assets, etc.
- Putney could have phone tree or official way of getting phone calls or texts to community members.
- Putney could institute a "time bank" (transportation, housing, food) where members can give their time towards certain tasks, or people's needs, and "earn" time in response.
- Putney could develop its own website, with a committee that keeps it updated and attractive.
- Putney could purchase (or build) a space for a recreation department, open to the public with some kind of booking system. Basketball, pickleball, soccer, other community sports with lights for outdoor night games.
- Putney could create a town wide email list-serv.
- Putney could identify informal community leaders, have them share skills updates, and best practices.
- Putney could create a community kitchen with an oven, food storage, canning supplies, etc.
- Putney could figure out how to reach people who aren't connected to the internet or phone service.
- Putney could acquire a large parcel of land and work with the town to create an "autonomous zone" for an eco village system.
- Putney could develop a small business incubator.
- Putney could make better use of the existing community center. Repairs, outreach, volunteers.
- Putney could figure out how to provide public transportation, or integrate into regional public transit.
- Putney could expand access to the food shelf. Improve food shelf offerings by partnering with farms.
- Putney could have a "volunteer clearinghouse"- skill share, car share, people do offerings, people post requests, organizations could look for volunteers. "Mutual aid matching service."
- Putney could improve the existing town website.
- Putney could explore community internet access options.
- Putney could pioneer a car share system. Heavy equipment/farm equipment sharing system.
- Putney could help make internet cheaper for community members.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Lots of opportunities around combatting isolation through communication, using the internet.
- Struck by deep care expressed by community members.
- Desire to reach vulnerable community members, lots of ideas related to mutual aid.
- Also third spaces- where can people spend time with one another without spending money? Where is there open access to space? Both and indoor and outdoor.
- Big infrastructure theme- transportation, roads, sidewalks, airport.
- How do you bring in other voices? Lots of concern around lack of diversity, lack of youth representation.
- The idea of community connection as something broad- bigger than communication, centered around caring for one another.
- Lots of ideas and hard work, but also volunteer burnout being spoken about- would smaller projects be helpful.
- How do you incentivize people to engage with the community? Think about sustainability of keeping these projects moving.

Economic Development & Business Vitality

Visiting Team: Ben Doyle (facilitator), Brian Lowe (scribe), Katie Buckley, Alex Farrell, Gretchen Rittenhouse, and Meg Staloff

What are the Assets in this Area?

- General Store that keeps coming back, even when it burned to the ground.
- The Diner.
- The Coop.
- The gas station and shop.
- Next Stage Arts.
- Water features: the Falls, and the brook behind it...lots of natural resources.
- Putney Craft Tour.
- Putney paper mill – 180 jobs in town.
- Landmark College.
- The Swirl – been dressing me since 1987.
- The Putney Community Garden.
- The Yellow Barn Festival.
- The Putney Fort.
- Green Mountain Orchards.
- Exit 4 off I-91 & the Park and Ride.
- Some good water/sewer infrastructure.
- People with fortitude to be small business / owner operators.
- PCS and the vitality it brings to the community.
- Opportunities for Revitalization.
- Airbnb's for tourism that can help business, farms, people.
- Putney Farmer's Market.
- Vacant storefront as opportunities.
- Putney Inn.
- Grammar School.
- Green Mountain Spinnery.
- West Hill Shop.
- Two gas stations.
- Two banks in town.
- Harlowe's Sugarhouse and Orchard.
- Post office downtown.
- Lots of sugarhouses.
- Reputation nationally and further – SIT, Putney Travel.
- Connecticut River.
- Doctor's Office.
- Putney Library.
- Putney Mountain Winery.
- Putney Mountain Association.
- Proximity of Brattleboro.
- Lots of good craftsman.
- Dave's Tandoori Truck.
- Some young families.
- Hidden Springs Maple – brick and mortar presences fulfills a community need.

What are the Challenges?

- Parking the downtown.
- More of a relationship with Landmark College.
- Need people who can see the value of the old Putney Fort.
- Kimball Hill retail impacted by past recessions and hurricanes...and Amazon.
- We've lost a lot – pizza, book stores, salon. Been converted to residential, so few opportunities for new commerce, few retail spaces.
- Retail impacts of Amazon, changing economy in general are hurting the town.
- No understanding of how AgroTourism and outdoor rec could impact town...need coordination, clear plan.
- Need to look at problems holistically: Serve local community AND serve as value to bring tourists...need to build things that work for the community.
- Lacking a community space – in the town center, a major park, a thing that draws ppl in but also serves the community.
- Lacking ways to build a workforce in the trades...education not preparing people for known needs.
- Need signage or ways to better identify what assets are here.
- Need to have opportunities for people in Putney who can actually afford to shop there...tourism is all well and good but need to be able to afford things ourselves.
- Need clarity about what our Identity is as a community, and as a subset of that, a sense of community brand.
- Brand as the outward manifestation of what you believe.
- Need more ways to support businesses as they are starting...need some kind of welcome wagon or chamber to help as you are starting out.

- Small business owners trying to get a business alliance together, but need some kind of support...no way given the demands of the job...lack of capacity around business supports.

- Challenge around the fact that a State highway runs through Putney.
- Are we getting poorer folks thoughts about what they need.

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

- Bring money to town to restore the old Fort Putney.
- Bring activity to town, not necessarily through retail.
- Plans to improve coordination around businesses (share resources, support local entrepreneurs).
- Business owners association.
- Charging stations and fast chargers in places where people will come for 40 minutes.
- Marketing campaign for local people in Putney...there are people who live here with means. Remember how these businesses are people and families.
- Co-working space in the downtown.
- Loyalty program that rewards people for shopping in Putney...incentivize people to do shopping in town.
- Explore buyers' clubs as pooling individuals.
- Downtown gift cards for Putney.
- Businesses website that combines businesses in Putney in an easy way to see what's here and what options are.
- Concerted effort to help businesses use more social media more effectively.
- More signage on Rt 91 for Putney.
- More TA for businesses (DEI, or social media, or etc.).
- Discover Putney – should be the website and a tagline as the center...had 13 businesses, had Eleni on the Instagram.
- Community Center Hub / Events based around businesses...without using the business owners...maybe its also a co-working space, with brochures for farmers, with childcare...a PHYSICAL space. The church on main street is currently vacant. The food shelf space (in the front) is also currently open.
- Find ways to repurpose properties dragging the value and property down.
- What about public art? A grant to beautify the downtown.
- Strategize about what brings people to a village beyond "things" where we have to compete with Amazon (co-working space, specialized services like paper restoration or something else). The experience, not just the transaction.
- Improve the appearance of our downtown...old Gulf sign and the abandoned pizza parlor and a high hedge that needs to be trimmed...we gotta take care of these things to then build a brand.
- Adopt ordinances to focus on blights in the downtown.
- Make it feel like you are ARRIVING in Putney...sense of place, beautification.
- Look at the paradigm of economic development and community connection ... look at the BDCC economic development strategy that is already been built and could benefit us.
- Think of econ development in a new way – think about the ag lessons we've learned about CSAs and whether we could apply them in a new way.
- Ways to give businesses more time to build out and grow.
- Leverage the Exit 4 and RR tracks to build a cool outdoor ag / art / food market...mix the cool feeling that is good here ...maybe also adding in the outdoor rec opportunities.
- Enforce the permitting and zoning regulations or ordinances in a way that is being exploited by some landlords + also are there incentives for positive action.
- Basic things, us first, laundromat.
- What made us so successful in the 90s, and are there things that we could replicate – the wooden coins for the General Store, the index cards for kids that the families paid at the end of the month.
- Absentee landlords and unenforced regulations are hurting us...the illegal dump on Rt 5 near Westminster.
- Amazing mountain bike trails...way to attract people, because no one knows about them.
- Friends of Putney could make some new brochures.
- Pay it Forward Boards all businesses...leave some funds there for the folks locally / take it if you need it.
- Murals - lots of support for artist murals in town.
- Laundry clubs ... make doing your laundry also in a café and into a social club.
- People to step up into Boards and Committees.
- Change the state statutes – but need to have a charter or charter changes.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Better Places crowdfunding for murals.
- CDBG program – with a clear idea that program will help advance a specific project.
- Village Center designations, Neighborhood designation.
- Vermont Chamber of Commerce.
- Connections to Friends and Neighbors and how they are doing it.
- ARPA funding could help hire an economic development coordinator.
- Local option tax.
- Welcome center.
- Community Garden Program to help create planters downtown.
- Hire an economic development coordinator.
- Potentially very strong economic development task force coming together here...strong consensus of a need for a single POC coordinator person with volunteers supporting.
- Coordination with BDCC to leverage some existing resources.

Zoom Forum

Facilitator: Kim Rupe

What are the Assets in Putney?

- Strong history of unique and strong women.
 - Connections to the experiment for international living.
 - Appreciation for natural environment.
 - Strong sense of community.
 - Educational institutions (the most educational institutions per capita).
 - Support for the arts – artist rich community.
 - Art culture.
 - The green open space available in town.
 - Resiliency among the town.
 - Putney food shelf.
 - Mountain Association.
 - The Mills – a place where people were working.
 - Access to the CT river.
 - Wildlife corridor.
 - Wilson Wetland and the beaver community.
 - Resiliency and community support.
 - Local farms.
 - Putney Public Library and their ongoing programs.
 - The Yellow Barn.
 - Putney Community Cares.
 - NextStage.
 - The Pinnacle Association trails network.
-

What are the Challenges?

- Haven't been able to figure out how to do growth successfully in a small town.
 - Determining what is sustainable growth.
 - Valuing the small community size and retaining current assets.
 - Tension between wanting to keep developments sustainable.
 - Poverty across town.
 - Pressures of development.
 - Declining population.
 - People living in houses that are too large with too much space.
 - Affordable housing.
 - The need to utilize all the energy in the room.
 - Lacking involvement with town business/governance.
 - Empty seats on committees/boards.
 - Businesses leaving town.
 - Concerns about downtown.
 - Needing to make room for new people and developments but concerns about losing land.
 - Need to make room for more people but not wanting to lose land.
-

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

- Community suppers – things to bring people together.
- Bring a laundromat in town.
- Develop an Entrepreneurship Hub to bring people together and start businesses.
- Become more visible with one another and the activities you participate in (ex: Selectboard hosted a night for all volunteer organizations to share what they were doing).
- Address the technology divide among generations (online resources don't work well for seniors).
- Sharing "extra" food from individual gardens to process/harvest these goods back into the community.
- Develop a mentorship/pairing program for new residents with those who know the community well (also help funnel energy).
- Contact Keith at Next Stage and see if we can bring back Meet Your Neighbor Forums for informal conversations.
- Investigate best practices for preserving forests.
- Conduct outreach to farmers to find out what they're needs are to provide better support to them.
- Encourage more gardening and growing produce to share with the local food shelf.
- Research and learn heating incentives and alternative sources.
- Offer cooking classes with locally sourced foods with younger populations.
- Encourage community garden (plots available email pcgstewards@gmail.com).
- Exploring ways to attract younger populations (creating a public space for innovative, playground, game playing, community center).
- Create a climate resilient committee to prepare for climate emergencies rather than solely reacting.
- Get high school students more involved in supporting town volunteer efforts. Outreach to schools to explore ways to engage with students.
- Start a "Fix Up Day" to help neighbors, building a platform to exchange this information and how to help others.
- Look into policies and zoning bylaws to propose recommendations for better support new businesses.
- Bringing events to community center.
- Protect the downtown zoning and ensure businesses continue to function and try to thrive.
- Consider the village buying Putney Pizza to keep as an anchor store.
- Support local businesses.
- Involve Landmark students into the community.
- Bring a café to town and encouraging sit down places to reopen.
- Connect students at elementary school with Landmark College.
- Create a list of businesses that make a community work and think about the balance of what is here and what is needed for accessible space.
- Bring a pharmacy to town.

Additional Action Ideas

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

- Make the island across from the co-op a community space for all—a park with accessible walkways, native plant preserve.
- More sports programming and access to sports equipment for lower income people, especially kids.
- More affordable housing and social services for its tenants.
- Make a park with river access for swimming and water recreation.
- Community events on a more regular basis- events for environmental stewardship, community art projects, volunteer opportunities.
- Bring Habitat for Humanity into community to build more houses.
- Enforce zoning laws- buildings downtown are under various states of construction. They need to finish or be fined. “It makes Main St look like hell.”
- Putney could make a housing needs list to reflect which residents are losing housing, looking for housing, etc.
- Putney should connect its vibrant arts community to the town.
- Putney should have a tool-lending library.
- Outdoor park or green with building space.
- Create Putney Community Trust, a community development org that could purchase empty and derelict properties to redevelop. This would help the town support new businesses, and potentially provide a hub (coworking space). This would be funded by all businesses. Nonprofits, and individuals collectively.
- Putney should have a welcome center.
- Putney should have a town green.
- Putney should have more places like “Moose on Main.”
- Utilize craftsmen, Putney Craft Tour.
- Lack of parking is a real problem for creating and sustaining businesses in the village. Fix zoning requirements and create more public parking.
- Putney should create a paper map/brochure that highlights all of the businesses and services in Putney and/or a virtual interactive map.
- A playground downtown.
- No more vacant storefronts.
- More eateries.
- More services (laundromat, salon, yoga or dance studios).
- Community newspaper that features events, community profiles, local news to keep people engaged in town decisions and politics.
- Downtown potluck with a business focus.
- Developing recreational opportunities in a way that attracts tourism: path along river, services to support kayaking, biking, and hiking.
- Communally owned businesses and services- possibly a CSA model.
- Town center or communal green space- community garden, farmers market, artisan market, EV charging, food trucks.
- Rules against property owners having apartments downtown on the first level, commercial spaces only.
- More dedicated retail space.
- AmTrak service- Vermonter and Valley Flyer.
- Recycling center.
- Limited parking requirements.
- Infill mixed-use development.
- Putney could bring back recycling.
- Putney could start an anti-war movement.
- Free and reduced community mental health services.
- Housing: review regulatory impediments to expansion of private sector housing development, especially for middle-income home buyers.
- Village Center revitalization: review infrastructure capacity (water and sewer). To what extent does current capacity limit development of new businesses and residences in the village.
- Quality of life: restore police (part-time or full time) and recycling services, which Putney provided until about 5 years ago.
- Economy: does Putney have authority to change what is taxed, and what the tax rates are? The VT legislature is considering switching from property tax to income tax, at least in part. Would this result in a more progressive tax structure for Putney, and greater revenues.
- Expand the outdoor recreation economy. Consider the model of Kingdom Trails in East Burke.
- Promote Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU’s), to serve affordable housing and aging in place.
- Consider ordinances requiring facade improvements on Main Street businesses - and maybe a pot of gov’t program \$\$ to help defray the cost for business owners.
- Preserve the green entrance to town for the entire community’s benefit. The town is lacking public green space and a vibrant town green could serve as a community gathering space, and support food security, outdoor play, and create an economic driver for the town.
- Economy - do we want to be a tourist destination or a bedroom community.
- Community - How do we support residents that are self-employed.
- Quality of Life - protect the gateway property from development. Create an accessible and equitable community space that would be for visitors and residents. A centrally located space for play, accessible gardens and community gatherings.
- Build tiny homes (for sales and for rent) to people that actually want to live in community. Expand the community garden so people can grow more of their own food. Bring back the train station and expand bus service so people don’t need a car.
- As we look forward, we need to account for a different future. One where large swaths of the planet are marginally habitable leading to massive human migration and food system challenges beyond anything we have seen. We will need to live with less energy while simultaneously relocalizing our economy, growing more food and welcoming increasing numbers of climate refugees.
- We need to re-envision our transportation system to greatly expand public transit, be more welcoming to bicycles and create vehicle sharing pools. In addition, we should seek to have a “fast” EV charging station placed in Putney which will at

- least in the short to medium run encourage people from away to frequent local business while their vehicles are charging.
- Prioritize quickly expanding our local food systems. This would include the actual production of food, but must also address processing, storage and distribution.
 - Continue to prioritize the expansion of “green” energy, so that we have more local control and are somewhat buffered from the phase out of fossil fuels (or collapse). Coupled with this, we must look to ways to boost efficiency and reduce energy consumption.
 - Create a centralized sharing bank for tools, food processing equipment and other essentials. This would reduce material throughput and increase equity in allowing people to access things they might not be able to afford.
 - Housing is a priority for many in the community. I would just suggest that new development might avoid our most fertile lands.
 - With an emphasis on social justice and equity, as well as resilience in the face of climate change, develop plans for:
 1. affordable housing.
 2. EV charging capabilities and community transportation.
 3. maintenance and development of agricultural infrastructure that allows for climate refugees/farmers to become part of the food-production system in the area.
 - Creating an edible downtown with things like edible biking and walking paths and a community food forest with playground. We also need to preserve community green space (like across from the coop) and encourage homeowners to create creative housing options so our housing solutions are not relying solely on large organizations.
 - Find another location for WWHT’s next housing complex away from the community garden.
 - Find sustainable, affordable businesses for downtown.
 - Make use of space such as the Putney Rec Field for events & outdoor sports.
 - Welcome new residents with a basket of local goods, etc.
 - Have more community-based events such as The Lantern Supper.
 - I would like to add to “Assets” — the paper mill. “It keeps us honest” is a common observation with respect to the paper mill. Gotta hand it to them: they have repeatedly cleaned up their act over the years. And they are a HUGE recycler. All recycled paper — no trees.
 - Add the Putney Mountain Association as an asset.
 - There are a couple of landlords who own most of the downtown rental units—I am concerned about the conditions of some of the units and I know that tenants are hesitant to complain or advocate for improvement out of fear of eviction for “renovation purposes” with no offer of an alternative living space, as has happened recently. I would love to see local support for a tenant’s union or some sort of renter support system, including rent protection and laws for property maintenance.
 - Create a downtown that serves locals first, a downtown that works for us and that we can welcome tourists to. Putney does not need an expensive gift shop, new age health and wellness shop, or brewery. We need services like a pharmacy, a laundromat, and an affordable restaurant that offers dinner foods. Is a laundromat even feasible with our current municipal water/sewer.
 - Are there places in the community that can host informational kiosks/maps to regional businesses? This came out of the economic development conversation about how to introduce people to existing resources (both community members & visitors). Thinking of the covered sign board by the community garden, or something at the north end of town “welcome to Putney, here are the things you can explore here.” Maybe a farm tour map, a business directory/map, etc.
 - Environmentally friendly multi-generational affordable cohousing projects.
 - Someone had mentioned Black Lives Matter road mural and keeping it nice. I helped with it originally and it was hard to watch it be defaced with deliberate tire skid marks and felt weird for people to drive over it. It would be great if Putney could find a different place to demonstrate our deep belief that Black Lives Matter that can be repaired easily and feels more respectful than driving on it.
 - More food and beverage options in town. The current ones are either subpar or very expensive.
 - Build a good way for small businesses in town to promote themselves.
 - Better access to public or private services for seniors.
 - Housing in town that is affordable, but isn’t owned by a corporation or conglomerate.
 - It would be great to have someone start an agrotourism business to promote local foods and farms (e.g. wine and cheese tours, cider pressing etc) to help support our local businesses and help them have more income and visibility. Tourists will come for the experience. Coupling this with an edible downtown (think the Incredible Edible TED talk) would honor our strong farming heritage, would increase food security, educate people on their food and so much more!.
 - Lack of adequate affordable housing is a big problem. First, I hope the suggestions from our affordable housing committee will be used in developing solutions. Second, it would be great for the Town to appoint/hire (any \$\$) someone to work with non-profit developers and landowners to identify village area sites for additional housing (including the Exit 4/Dummerston area). All sorts of new or rehabilitated housing should be considered: apartments, mixed luxury and moderately priced condos, mobile home park—increased or new. Housing could be above commercial space, if commercial space was deemed viable. Town contribution to the initiative would be to secure state grants/loans to extend Town water and sewer systems to sites selected for advancement.
 - Perhaps large landowners would consider donating a piece of land to the Town to develop as housing in exchange for the Town building a road with water and sewer on the property (which, I assume, would increase value of the remaining land).
 - In regard to taxes: We need to disconnect taxes from appraised value of property. Recent property purchases by new people at crazy high prices are increasing property values in Putney at an outrageous rate. As the New England coastline goes underwater.....can’t even imagine what will happen here. This might have to be a state-wide solution.
 - Revitalize the downtown by putting derelict and/or empty buildings into constructive use including housing.
 - Encourage economic growth by supporting tourists and visitors to the area with quality and sustainable short-term

- accommodations (B&B's in Putney have closed; the Putney Inn is not appealing to all travelers).
- Provide more support and promotion of local arts programming.
 - Have an initiative that makes Putney appealing to people of diverse backgrounds to come visit and/or stay.
 - It might be helpful for older folks who are not connected to world by the internet, if places like Putney Com. Cares set up an automatic phone message system like Putney Central does.
 - Move the shooting range on Sand Hill Road further out of town. It is frightening.
 - We need more crosswalks on Kimball Hill and throughout downtown for safety.
 - We need more policing of speeders and very loud vehicles.
 - If we really want a village center that is accommodating for children and seniors, we need a sidewalk on both sides and a bike lane.
 - We need enforcement of leash laws for dogs.
 - Not sure, but would like to go back to Community Dinners where we got to know our neighbors pre-Covid.
 - Putney could make an effort to appeal to both short and long term stay BIPOC people--who often don't feel welcome in small towns that are 99% white without some articulated reach-out and welcome aimed toward them and an effort to diversify the board and staff of major establishments in town such as the Coop. That would open up more possible residents. (And it would help if some who feel they are the true locals by virtue of having moved here longer ago than newer residents, would no longer tell diverse families moving to town to "go back where they came from.").
 - Also, we need to face the reality that the entire state of VT is seeing slow to negative population growth and has an older workforce compared to the rest of the country. It's not easy to attract new residents, especially young families, even putting the diversity challenge aside.
 - The main financial issue is upstream from rentals. It's not feasible to buy and run small rental properties. I tried to get a loan to buy a downtown building with rentals, but was turned down because the rent roll didn't support the loan. This is because housing stock is very expensive compared to the rental income it produces. Until this equation works, who can make a go of renting units in town? Only someone who doesn't need to actually pay a mortgage or is willing to run it at a loss. Something must be done to make it possible for small time investors who might want to own a building and rent a couple units, but find that the numbers don't work.
 - Banning short term rentals won't change that equation. And if we push short term visitors entirely out of town through a ban, then they will not shop in downtown Putney and we'll undercut our goal of boosting local business, as well as undercut the benefit from a short-term visitor getting excited about moving to town and coming back to rent or purchase. How important is visitor spending to the town? It would be helpful to look at that variable before we undercut it.
 - High tax on short term rentals, ways to bridge wealth disparagement gap through charity, community events.
 - Often only a small percentage of community residents are aware of and take advantage of what any community has to offer and its available resources. I think awareness and engagement tools could be very helpful in connecting more people within our town.
 - Community Connection and Engagement - develop an insight study for the residents of Putney that would look at community-based quality of life issues that might include social connection, loneliness and isolation (physical and emotional) and access to healthcare. Perhaps have ranked choice questions to elicit preferences on how each community member would feel about possible engagement events and activities to bring them closer together: town social gatherings such as picnics and talent showcase, identifying public meetings spaces and events, multi-generational projects that might connect our local schools with area seniors, help-line phone trees and periodic town forums.
 - Community Awareness Program - ensure that community members have the best opportunity to be made aware of Putney resources, including public outdoors spaces and their features, event venues such as Next Stage and Yellow Barn and basic town services.
 - Putney could build a Public Market which could serve as a hub for all sorts of community-driven things to happen. It could be a vision that empowers farms, artisans, shops, brings in more affordable food access cuz the market theme allows for a lot more than just tourism. It can include 'need-based' retail and recreation along the river, train station. Thought to how to design it so that it feeds people into the downtown could be considered as well as the Abenaki and their culture as the original people of the land. Some examples of Public Markets include: Pikes Place Public Market <https://www.pikeplacemarket.org> and 5th Street Public Market <https://www.5stmarket.com>.
 - All actions should consider our climate crisis future. No one knows exactly where we are headed but big changes are coming that will inevitably reverberate throughout the world, even to small towns in Vermont like Putney. How can we become a resilient community? Both community gardens and eco-villages were mentioned at the meeting, and climate puts an emphasis on both. We definitely need more community gardens, which will also generate more community generally, a crucial element to becoming resilient. Also, the Transition Movement was alive in Putney several years back, and the ideal and practice of sharing practical skills is also an important response to climate.
 - Design and complete projects, mostly at higher elevations, that will reduce the destructiveness of water, increase the lives-supporting availability of water, and/or both at once. Slowing, spreading and storing of water are important for such results.
 - The paper mill is a source of jobs in the Village, but Putney could have a park for all ages in that location instead. Most small towns don't have a paper mill as the centerpiece. What if we could relocate the paper mill to a better location, while allowing the town and residents to take advantage of the water and downtown location by developing a park there, instead?

Ideas from Putney Students

As shared in a group conversation with Putney students on November 30, 2022

What's working, what do you like about living in Putney?

- Not many "junky" places.
 - A lot of other places have McDonalds and "disgusting stuff."
 - Putney doesn't have big box stores or giant companies.
- Living near your neighbors and community.
- Putney Public Library is so great, walkable, pretty awesome place.
- Putney Co-op.
- The Gleanery.
- The people.
- Putney is small, feels like a real community.
- General store.
- Small town— parents can let kids walk where they want.
- People here are friendly.
- "Everything we need is in walking distance."
- More family-run farms than other places, "no robot-run farms."
- Giant sycamore tree next to the ice cream place is really big and pretty.
- Not a city with tall buildings, there is also forests to hike and camp.
- Town public pool.
- A lot of schools around.
- Fresh water.
- Location - in the center of Brattleboro, Westminster, Bellows Falls.
- Able to walk around without an adult.
- Next Stage and Stained Glass Theater.
- A lot of woods – can go outside and take a walk.
- Walking around in the woods.
- Lot of fresh swimming holes.
- Biking down Putney Mountain.
- Putney Mountain – lots of trails to bike and hike.
- Kayaking on the CT River.
- People who let you ride on four-wheeler trails, or land for something.
- Enough roads to access to everything, but areas with roads – forests and fields.
- Small but can't explore everything- so much land, outdoor access.
- Ski trails at the Putney School.
- Right Road – scenery of cows.
- Houses are close together – get to know your neighbors.
- Putney Mountain – short nice hike, really pretty.
- Santa's Land.

What are the Challenges of living in Putney

- Housing costs.
- Not too many places to play sports (yeah).
- Bugs during the summer.
- Heat.
 - "Sometimes it's really warm out."
- Emergency healthcare.
 - Nearest is in Brattleboro.
 - Have to drive half an hour or more to any major medical facility.
- Downtown has abandoned buildings, empty storefronts.
 - Putney Village Pizza.
- Potholes.
 - Roads farther out away from downtown are not as well maintained.
- Can't get off the mountain because roads are bad in the winter.
- No public access skate park.
- Not much to do in colder months.
- So many Putney activities are outdoors, no indoor places to hang out.
- Not many places where you get groceries quick.
- Nowhere to "just hang out".
- No travel sports teams, or baseball team.
- Sidewalk doesn't go up farther on Route 5 – less than a quarter of a mile past the road.
- Paper mill.
 - Smells really bad sometimes.
 - Very loud.
 - In the middle of downtown.
- No nearby gyms.
- Plowing issues.
 - Plows don't always make it to more remote neighborhoods in time for kids to get to school.
- Mud season is really muddy and ruts are really crazy.
 - Terrifying to go down Putney Mountain.
- Dam with beavers.
 - Might flood the road.
- No laundromat in town.
 - Takes a really long time to do laundry and go back.
- Lack of sidewalks outside of one smaller area.
- Litter and trash around town, on roadsides.
- Not enough places to safely hunt.
- Spot where deer jump in front of cars – "the corner near Harlow's."
- Mail takes a really long time around Putney.
- No police department or EMS services in Putney.
- Some people drive extremely fast up the hill at night.
- AirBnb has caused the rental/housing market to suffer, prices are jacked up.

What are your ideas to make Putney a better place to learn, live, and play?

- Deer crossing sign near Harlow's.
- Develop a teen center.
 - Place to hang out with friends.
 - Easy public access.
 - Accessible indoor space is important in colder months.
- Community music and arts access.
 - Music room where you can practice instruments.
 - Public stage for plays, community use (if NextStage is booked).
- Community Center.
 - Indoor recreation fields.
 - Sports complex.
- Nice place to get married (no churches in Putney).
- Some sort of urgent care or healthcare center with an ambulance.
- Music practice room with instrument loaning.
- Laundromat.
- Vet clinic.
 - No emergency animal hospital in the area.
- Public outdoor skating rink for the winter.
- Grocery store (other than the co-op).
- Pizza place.
- Sidewalk could go further past Basketville.
- Indoor skating rink.
- Skate park in the downtown area.
- Public recreation/intramural hockey team.
- More ways to recycle.
- Bottle redemption center.
- Institute population limit for Putney.
- Team sports offered through the town.
- Maintained trail system for 4 wheelers.
- Basketball court.
 - Maintained well.
 - Open for public access, not at a school.
- Arcade "or something so it's less boring."
- Bike lanes on main road.
- More stores, services.
- Roller skating rink.
- Better ADA access at East Putney Falls.
- More ADA-accessible trails generally.
- Public playground available outside of the school.
- Better playground at PCS.
- Maintaining the dirt roads better – only maintained after winter, people get stuck – more frequent road maintenance.
- Indoor soccer field.
- Pine Banks Road needs paving and maintenance.
- More town sports and a place to do them.
- More little festivals – Lantern Fest and town suppers are really cool.
- Visitor Center or information center (could be part of the information center).
- Better sports field.
- Bookstore.
- More winter sports camps.
- More funding for arts events, public art classes, etc.
- More funding for the Putney food shelf.
- Better road maintenance generally.
- More maintenance for the town pool.
 - "a little gross sometimes."
- More sidewalks.
- Night skiing.
 - Lighting the cross-country paths/trail system for night use.
- Big slide at the Putney Pool.
- More funding into winter maintenance on the roads.
- Car wash.
- Downhill skiing.
- Roads repaved.
- Bowling and arcade.
- Fix the culvert.
- Community building or indoor open space.
 - Quiet building where you could read or draw where there isn't a lot of noise.
- Place where you could rent skis for an affordable price.
- Better maintained board ramps = brushy and hard to get done (by the converting plant).
- Hole should be deep enough so we can jump off from the top.
- Swap shop or tool library for reusable things – place to bring items you think you are going to use once.
- Art store or art classes.
- Café.
- Lighted sidewalks.
- Daycare for tiny children.
- Build a couple more houses- not too many.
- Better public transportation.
 - Train station here.
 - Better bus service that can take you farther than Brattleboro.
- Better hotel.
- People who have AirBnBs should legally have to live in the house.
- Movie theater.
- Younger families should have access to houses for sale before older people who are looking for second homes.
- Theater classes.
- Art gallery.
- Outdoor gear store.
 - Fishing and hunting equipment.
- Pharmacy.

VI. Our Future Putney Community Visit Participants

Mark Adams	Jane Collister	Christine Grutta	Cheryl Joy Lipton
Peg Alden	Kevin Connors	Paul Gudewicz	Sylvie Littledale
Justin Altman	Jaime Contois	Gail Haines	Ben Lord
Steve Anderson	Andrew Cooper-Ellis	Holly Hammond	Kurt Lynch
Josh Ascani	Mike Cosco	Stah Harty	Ann Macdonald
Karen Astley	Josh Coursen	Nader Hashim	Betsy MacIsaac
Ariane Aumont	Christine Couturier	McKenna Hayes	Sarah Maes
Matthew Bachler	Carl Crook	Steve Hed	Marion Major
Janice Baldwin	Laura D'Angelo	Susan Heimer	Eleni Maksakuli
Phil Bannister	Trattie (Katherine) Davies	Susan Hessey	Alioua Manuae
Eric Bass	Melissa Dawson	Kim Hewitt	Keith Marks
Ines Bass	Evan Delgado	Alex Hiam	Tehila Marks
Richard Berkfield	Ted Dodd	Deirdre Hiam	Paul Marlisa
Alex Beyard	Elena Dodd	Tom Hinckley	Mikaela Marmion
Richard Bissell	Kate Dodge	Bryce Hodson	Claudia Matta
Ezra Black	Will Donohue	Matthew Hoffman	Ruby McAdoo
Alex Bodel	Charles Doyle	William Homestead	Emily McAdoo
Mark Boutwell	David Eggleton	Karl Honsaker	Alex McCullough
Deb Bozetarnik	Terry Ehling	Miriam Honsaker	Eric McGowen
Justin Bramhall	Elizabeth Ehrenberg	Daniel Hovss	Daniel McNamara
Elizabeth Bridgewater	Robin Ekstrom	Kate Hudson	Susan Mello
Morgan Broadfoot	Cullen Elwell	Bonnie Hudspeth	Bonnie Mennell
Jacki Brook	Katy Emond	Christopher Irion	Graham Meriwether
Linda Brooks	Joshua Emond	Ari Jackson	Tom Meyer
Candace Brown	Jenna Etra	Abby Jacobson	Lynn Meyer
Caitlin Burch	Swift Everdy	Erik Johnson	Bob Meyer
Robert Burch	Marcella Eversole	Lorne Johnson	Drew Mohr
Shannon Burke	Matt Ewald	Owen Karr	Eva Mondon
Liza Burns	Carey Fay-Horowitz	Jane Katz Field	Katie Morrison
John Burt	Ben Ferguson	Terry Keegan	Meg Mott
Laura Campbell	John Field	Mike Keim	Mike Mrowicki
Irene Canaris	Keith Fletcher	Ann Kerrey	Gail Murray
Rene Carranza	Melanie Fletcher	Ruth Kibby	Robert Nassau
Matt Casabona	Shana Frank	Marie Kim	Amy Nelson
Laura Chapman	Kevin Freitas	Dawn King	Katherine Nelson
Lisa Chase	Nancy Gagnon	Hannah Lake	Susan Nepveu
Matt Cherry	Louise Garfield	Miye Lampriere	Nick Noce
Brian Cheverie	Rochelle Garfinkel	Maggie Lamps	John Nopper
Elizabeth Christie	Kai George	Daniel Lang	Libby North
Valentine Chute	Jeff Giarrusso	Josh Laughlin	Greenough Nowakoski
Lionel Chute	Michael Goldberg	Ledlie Laughlin	Patrick Noyes
Aileen Chute	Doug Grandt	Deborah Lazar	Daniel O'Brien
Diane Clementine	John Grant	Chloe Lee	Wendy O'Connell
Christina Clough	Debby Gray	Eve Leons	Anne O'Connor Chapman
Sue Coakley	Jessica Greene	Paul LeVasseur	Kathleen O'Reilly
Elizabeth Cohen	Ross Gronvold	Jessica Lindorfer	Mimi Oakes

Christopher Oey
Maria Ogden
Jim Olivier
Carolyn Olivier
Anna Olivier
Nancy Olson
Eden Orr
Whitney Packer
Lyssa Papazian
Louise Papowitz
Aidan Paradis
Norman Paradis
Amber Paris
Gabriel Thom Pasculli
Rod Payne-Meyer
Andrew Pearl
Bill Peason
Craig Peterson
Emily Peyton
Karen Phillips
Hannah Pick
Ken Pick
Ed Powers
Sally Prasad
Ellen Pratt
Cole Predom
Howard Prussack

Mary Quinn
Sam Quintal
Charles Raubicheck
Simon Renault
Dara Renault
Dana Renault
Paul Renouf
Rachel Rhein
Devin Rhodes
Katie Rice
Coni Richards
Jesse Ridgway
Lisa Roberto
Alan Roberts
Trish Roberts
Bob Rolen
Jared Rolston
Marni Rosner
Susan Ruggles
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Nina Salvatore
Kira Sawyer-Hartigan
Bill Schmidt
Virginia Scholl
Erica Schwabach
Nate Sebold
Bari Shamas

Karen Shapiro
Nancy Shepherd
Christina Shin
Daniel Sicken
Penelope Simpson
Kora Skeele
Heather Small
Susan Smallheer
Nate Snell
Ellie Solomon
Kirt Sorensen
Sheryl Sprague
Elizabeth Stead
Alan Steinberg
Jorika Stockwell
Nancy Storrow
Billy Straus
Ellen Strong
Julie Strothman
George Tarmy
Julie Tamler
Jessica Taylor
Burt Tepfer
Harriet Tepfer
Jason Touchette
Dale Troutman
Jessica Turner

Juanita Urrutia
Willow Uth
V Vadim
Wendy Wallas
Elizabeth Warner
Lynne Weinstein
Gayle Weitz
Michael Wells
Rhy Wepāloki
Susan Westa
Anne Wheeler
Jeanette White
Nick Williams
Emily Wilson
Claire Wilson
Wendy Wilson
Julie Winchester
Jennifer Witherell
Ashley Wohlford
Guy Wood
Susan Yao
Zach Yeskel
Emily Zervas
Richard Zucker
and many more...



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