

# What's Next Roxbury?

## Community Visit Report and Action Plan July 2025



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

## Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
II. The Roxbury Community Visit Process .....	3
III. Priorities Chosen and Other Opportunities .....	5
IV. Task Force Action Plans .....	9
Action Steps, Resources, Task Force Members, Resource Team Recommendations	
V. Forum Notes and Survey Responses .....	19
VI. Community Visit Participants .....	31
VII. Resource Team Members.....	32



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# Vision for Roxbury's Future

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

## Community members envision a future Roxbury:

- ❖ that is affordable and meets the needs of working-class community members of all ages, from children and young adults to older folks and long-time residents.
- ❖ with lots of interaction and support between older and younger residents.
- ❖ that is a connected and growing community.
- ❖ where Roxbury Village and East Roxbury are connected with walking and biking trails and shared activities.
- ❖ with day-to-day vibrancy in town where people get together through activities and events.
- ❖ that includes residents with all types of education, income, and life experience in town and community activities.
- ❖ that comes together through gatherings, events, and regular interactions between neighbors so that people get to know each other across town and across ages.
- ❖ that has indoor and outdoor community gathering places.
- ❖ that is welcoming to everyone who comes no matter where they are from, their socioeconomic status, or skin color – Roxbury is inclusive to all.
- ❖ where community members help and support each other, despite differences, without having to ask. Our community is resilient and independent because we can rely on each other.
- ❖ where neighbors recognize the humanity in each other and offer each other mutual aid.
- ❖ that maintains the cultural values and traditions of Vermonters, including preservation of Vermont culture and independence, resiliency, respect, and character.
- ❖ where our rich history is appreciated and celebrated, including the railroad, the Verde Quarry, and our historic buildings.
- ❖ with a thriving village, a beautiful town hall, churches, local businesses, and a tree-lined main street.
- ❖ where local farms produce affordable food and are supported by the community through farmers markets, community meals, and other opportunities.
- ❖ that inspires economic investment and brings in a variety of businesses scaled to our community that provide products, services, and employment.
- ❖ where the community embraces and celebrates its rustic, rural character and the benefits of wild spaces and working lands.
- ❖ that is seen as a hidden gem by locals, visitors and neighboring communities and is appreciated for the richness that is here, including wildness, farms, rural character, lifestyle, and intergenerational connections.
- ❖ where everyone who lives in Roxbury is proud to live here.

# I. Introduction

With its landscape of hills, farms, forests, and streams and its proximity to all that central Vermont has to offer while also being quiet and remote, the town of Roxbury has long been a place that people love to call home. Families, elders, newcomers and generational residents alike take pride in their community. This moment in its recent history has been marked with some difficulties including the closure of the town's local elementary school, but the residents of Roxbury are poised to meet these challenges with their biggest asset: each other.

Throughout the What's Next Roxbury process, VCRD staff and Visiting Team members heard in detail about a wealth of community assets. In addition to natural spaces, community members highlighted the deeply dedicated organizations working to provide social connections, and physical spaces like the library, town buildings, and the local store. At the kick off meeting, an installation of photographs, "Town Tales: Roxbury 1987-1989" graced the walls with generations of Roxbury residents, and the group sang a rousing chorus of happy birthday. Residents grappled candidly with the challenges of the school closure and all that it entails. There was also discussion of the possibility of new initiatives in the community, and the resources available now to explore them.

Community members throughout the process expressed a desire for connection, especially across generations, and support for more collaborative efforts for the future of their community. Residents also expressed a desire to pull together for the strength of the community, and to build a community that is welcoming to all.

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

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

- **Re-Imagine the Village School Building**
- **Boost Community Connection, Collaboration, Communication, Skill & Resource Sharing**

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

\*\*\*\*\*

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

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

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

We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of Planning Committee members who helped guide the process by identifying forum topics for discussion, developing the invitation process to start the effort, and helping with outreach at every stage: Jillian Abraham, Elizabeth Carney, Claire Chomentowski, Susan D'Amico,

Nathan Donahue, Tom Frazier, Kristen Getler, Heather Holter, Tammy Legacy, Ben Pincus, Don Randall, Craig Sullivan, Randy Whitney, and Ryan Zajac.

Outreach is an essential component of a successful Community Visit, and many people helped make that happen. Thank you to Tammy Legacy for helping with the town-wide mailing, to Heather and Randy for helping with signage and banners in town, and Susan D'Amico for distributing flyers. Thank you as well to the many other community leaders and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the event and make sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

The Montpelier-Roxbury School District was a key partner throughout this Community Visit process. Thank you especially to facilities manager Tom Allen for helping to coordinate the use of the school for all 3 of the meetings. We also appreciate Casey Searles of the Roxbury Bridges Afterschool program for their accommodations. Thank you to Assistant Principal Jessica Wells for helping to organize a youth forum with Roxbury students at Main Street Middle School. Their input and suggestions are included in the notes section of this report.

Coordinating the events and outreach was a team effort. Many thanks to Kristen Getler for coordinating childcare, and to Elizabeth Lassner, Shemarie Jeshurun, Hudson Bauer, Payton Donahue, and Adela Johns for providing childcare at the meetings.

Thank you to Nathan, Kristen, Jillian, and Heather for preparing the food and setting up chairs and tables for a wonderful dinner at the first meeting. Thanks to Sue D'Amico and the Northfield Fiddlers for a delightful musical performance.

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

Thanks must also go to the funders of VCRD's Community Visit Program who made this process possible: Community National Bank, Lintilhac Foundation, National Life Foundation, Norther Border Regional Commission, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Vermont Agency of Administration Municipal Technical Assistance Program, the Vermont Community Foundation, the Windham Foundation, and the Wisdom Connection.

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

VCRD especially wants to thank Randy Whitney for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Chair. Randy's deep dedication to the community is apparent and was emphasized in the comments shared by community members of all ages throughout this process. We appreciate his willingness to take on this role.

Getting things done is all about leadership, so on behalf of all who have participated in the process so far and will continue to going forward, our deepest thanks go to those who've stepped up to serve as chairs of the Task Forces: André Souigny for the "Boost Community Connection, Collaboration, Communication, Skill & Resource Sharing" task force and the team of Jillian Abraham, Kristen Getler, Heather Holter, and Heidi Albright for the "Re-Imagine the Village School Building" task force. These folks have already demonstrated tremendous leadership in supporting the work of their task forces, and we are excited to see their leadership continue to grow.

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

## II. The “What’s Next Roxbury” Community Visit Process

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



### Planning Committee Meeting: January 15, 2025

On January 15, 2025, 14 local community members met to plan for the launch of the Roxbury Community Visit process. This group came up with a name for the process – What’s Next Roxbury – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics and an invitation process. Through calls, e-mails, flyers, banners, and lawn signs this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Committee included: Jillian Abraham, Elizabeth Carney, Claire Chomentowski, Susan D’Amico, Nathan Donahue, Tom Frazier, Kristen Getler, Heather Holter, Tammy Legacy, Ben Pincus, Don Randall, Craig Sullivan, Randy Whitney, and Ryan Zajak.

### Step 1 ~ Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: February 18, 2025

What’s Next Roxbury kicked off with brainstorming forums held at the Roxbury Village School. Over 60 participants shared assets, challenges, and ideas for action in forum topics chosen by the planning committee and attended the free community dinner. Forum topics included: Community Connection, Coordination, & Communication; Town Pride & Identity; Community Spaces: Buildings & Green Spaces; Seniors, Families & Youth. Nine visiting team members participated, learning more about Roxbury and providing reflections to the community.

Visiting Team members included: Ted Brady, *Executive Director*, VT League of Cities & Towns; Lisa Helme, *Student Pathways Division Director*, VT Agency of Education; Ben Doyle, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Alex Farrell, *Commissioner*, VT Dept of Housing and Community Development; Taylor Goodwin, *Safe and Healthy Schools Coordinator*, Vermont Agency of Education; Christian Meyer, *Executive Director*, Central VT Regional Planning Commission; Nicole Miller, *Executive Director*, Vermont Afterschool; and Eli Toohey, *Planner*, Central VT Regional Planning Commission

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

## Step 2 ~ Community Meeting: March 24, 2025

After the kick-off, VCRD staff distilled the brainstormed ideas into 18 key areas of action. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, over 60 community members joined at the Roxbury Village School to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After lively dialogue and a dot-voting exercise, 2 action ideas emerged as key priorities: 1) **Re-Imagine the Village School Building** and 2) **Boost Community Connection, Collaboration, Communication, Skill & Resource Sharing**. Participants then signed up for task forces to move these priorities forward.

VCRD staff included: Lauren Brady, *Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Director*; Nick Parker, *Community Programs Associate*; and Jessica Savage, *Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives*.

## Step 3 ~ Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: April 28, 2025

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, over 40 community members along with facilitators and resource team members came together to develop action plans, identify resources, and form task force groups that will work in the months ahead to implement the priorities. From here forward, all “What’s Next Roxbury” action is focused at the task force level.

Resource Team members included: Julia Connell, *Community Development Specialist*, Vermont Department of Housing & Community Development; Peter Fairweather, *Fairweather Consulting*; Gregg Gossens, *Founding Partner*, gbArchitecture; Stephen Kredell, *Partner*, gbArchitecture; Breck Knauft, *Executive Director*, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps; Jason Van Driesche, *Chief of Staff*, Front Porch Forum; and Bonnie Waninger, *Federal Funding Assistance Specialist*, Vermont League of Cities and Towns.

VCRD staff included: Lauren Brady, *Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Director*; Dani Parkins, *Technical Assistance Coordinator*; Nick Parker, *Community Programs Associate*; and Jessica Savage, *Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives*.





### III. What's Next Roxbury Priorities

Determined by Roxbury residents at the What's Next Roxbury Community Meeting on November 19, 2024

*Through thoughtful conversation about the future of their community, Roxbury community members whittled down a list of 18 action ideas to these two priorities that offer opportunities to build on existing resources and strengthen the community. Residents then signed up for Task Forces to move them forward.*

**Roxbury residents selected these priorities for future action:**

► **Re-Imagine the Village School Building**

A task force could form to consider how the school building and grounds could support community needs. Some options include childcare, alternative school programs, leasing to small businesses, and providing space for town offices and services. This group could also work on expanding or improving outdoor spaces at the school. Ideas the community mentioned include community gardens, fields, and accessible playground equipment. The group would need to work with the Selectboard on next steps for the building.

► **Boost Community Connection, Collaboration, Communication, Skill & Resource Sharing**

A task force could form to consider and prioritize actions around the following:

- **Boost Community Connection and Communication:** Make Roxbury a more welcoming place where everyone feels included and connected. Create a welcome packet for new residents and find ways to help people connect and feel at home in the community. The group could expand on ways to communicate town information between neighbors such as a phone tree, a newsletter, a bulletin board, in person conversations, town wide emailing, social media to reach youth, and other ways to communicate, especially between people in parts of town that are not physically connected.
- **Collaborate to Share Skills and Resources:** Plan conversations, learning exchanges, and resource sharing between residents, especially youth and elders. A group could build connections between residents across a variety of interests, ages, backgrounds, and experiences. Skill swaps, tool shares, bulk buying, work exchanges on local farms, volunteerism generally, and weekly work parties were some of the ideas mentioned.
- **Support Neighbors and Property Improvements:** Find or create more resources to help people fix up their properties. Ideas could include providing funding, getting youth volunteers, or finding other ways to support property cleanup and improvements.
- **Support Places for People to Gather:** Identify what the community needs for gathering spaces and what is missing. Consider improving spaces we already have like the Country Store, the Community and Senior Center, the Library, and other buildings. The group could also explore new ideas like adding food trucks, a farmer's market, a café, or a diner.



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

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

### **Expand Mentoring and Volunteering Opportunities**

Roxbury could develop a way to find, train, and retain volunteers for civic opportunities. This could include building a formalized mentorship program, interviewing youth about their interests, creating a guidebook to local civic engagement, surveying community members about their skills, and more.

### **Develop Community Wastewater**

Community members talked about the lack of wastewater infrastructure in the village center as a barrier to business and other opportunities. A group could come together to plan for a new wastewater treatment system for Roxbury. This group could work with regional, state, and federal partners to assess current needs, evaluate the community's wish list for future growth, identify funding sources, and work with the Selectboard to design and implement a wastewater project.

### **Increase Youth Events, Leadership and Programming**

Residents of all ages are proud of Roxbury as a great place to grow up or raise a family. A group could form to increase the support for youth and expand their leadership opportunities. Ideas include developing a youth center, facilitating connections between youth and seniors, or lifting up youth voices in Town and School leadership. The group could work to expand afterschool and summer programs and coordinate with existing groups like the Library, Bridges program, and the Roxbury Rising parent group.

### **Improve Transportation Access**

A group could advance transportation options so that all community members have better access to nearby services and appointments, activities, job opportunities, or recreation. This type of support is especially important to youth, families, and seniors. Strategies could include adding Roxbury to the Northfield/Montpelier bus route, a local ride-sharing platform, organized carpooling, and more.

### **Support Community and Economic Development and Affordability**

Community members expressed support for the businesses in Roxbury and expressed interest in attracting new businesses as well. A group could support current businesses with writing business plans and securing resources. They could survey residents about other services they want to have in town, and explore which would be feasible. The group could consider hiring staff such as a grant writer, manager, or community and economic development staffer.

### **Strengthen Post Office Services**

A group could form to identify and advocate for increased services, hours, and amenities at the Roxbury post office.

### **Improve Local Outdoor Recreation and Trails**

A group could form to support local access to existing trails, businesses, and other resources. The group could also explore other community recreation ideas including improving or expanding outdoor spaces, parks, and fields in town.

## **Expand Community Events**

People expressed interest in adding events and opportunities for people to come together and connect. A group could form to inventory what's already happening in town, figure out what's missing, and come up with plans for new events. These could include events for all ages like storytelling, potlucks, arts activities, plays, and more.

## **Improve Roads, Sidewalks, Pedestrian Safety and Parking**

A group could form to advocate for improvements to roads, sidewalks, and pedestrian safety throughout the community. Residents expressed interest in connecting existing sidewalks, exploring reopening closed roads, adding or improving directional signage, and preserving or expanding parking options in the village. The group could also support municipal infrastructure and capital improvements to advance these goals.

## **Support Neighbors and Property Improvements**

A group could work on finding or creating more resources to help people fix up their properties, especially on Main Street. Ideas include providing funding, getting youth volunteers, or finding other ways to support property cleanup and improvements.

## **Explore Housing Solutions**

Community members were interested in how to make the most of the current and possible tax base in Roxbury. A group could form to explore a variety of housing options and survey current housing, including second homes. This group could work with the Town to do public engagement that would identify opportunities for housing solutions that fit the community's values and goals.

Three additional ideas for consideration were added at the community meeting on March 24:

- **Expand Community Gardens and Food Access**
- **Increase Voter Participation and Civic Engagement**
- **Develop Energy Independence and Climate Resiliency**









## IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, April 28, 2025

*Roxbury 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.*

### ► Re-Imagine the Village School Building

A task force could form to consider how the school building and grounds could support community needs. Some options include childcare, alternative school programs, leasing to small businesses, and providing space for town offices and services. This group could also work on expanding or improving outdoor spaces at the school. Ideas the community mentioned include community gardens, fields, and accessible playground equipment. The group would need to work with the Selectboard on next steps for the building.

Community Chair **Jillian Abraham, Kristen Getler, Heather Holter, and Heidi Albright**

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

Resource Team Members **Julia Connell**, *Community Development Specialist*, Vermont Community Development Program

**Peter Fairweather**, Fairweather Consulting

**Gregg Gossens**, gbA architecture

**Bonnie Waninger**, *Project & Funding Specialist*, Vermont League of Cities and Towns

Community Participants and Task Force Sign-ups Jillian Abraham, Heidi Albright, Misse Axelrod, Angela Bauer, Nathan Donahue, Tom Frazier, Mike French, Kristen Getler, Dotti Guiffre, Heather Holter, David Larcombe, Matthew Lipschutz, Judy Lusk, Ben Pincus, Jim Rogler, Boo Smith, Marguerite Souigny, Lucinda Sullivan, Karen Tassinari, Erik Wardle, Randy Whitney, Rhett Williams, and Hannah Zajac

### Current status and overview of the issue today

- A vote was held at Town Meeting on the future of the school. Three options were presented, and the ranking of options based on votes was:
- Renting the school while keeping use of Town Hall (most votes).
- Using the building for town purposes such as town clerk office, library, etc. (fewer votes).
- Selling the building (least votes).
- Lawyers from the town and the school district are in discussions regarding the purchase of the building for \$1 by the Town.
- State of Vermont is out of PCB funding for schools, but the Roxbury School was on the list. The cost for this testing is estimated to be \$20k. The school was on the list for testing later in part due to lower anticipated risk. The potential impacts of this testing on the Afterschool program is not yet known.
- The Selectboard is still in the process of determining next steps for the building, with unanswered questions about the time/talent/treasure the community is willing to contribute to support it.
- Cost to operate building is estimated at approximately \$50k/year, with electricity/heat being \$25k.

- There are unanswered questions about the staff needed to manage and operate the building. Those roles are currently being covered by school district staff.
- The building is approximately 10,000 square feet total, with 8,000 sq ft that is “rentable.” The town hall is ~1500 sq. ft.
- The current town uses at the community hall, town clerk’s office, and library are estimated to account for approximately 4,000 sq. ft. of space.
- Montpelier Roxbury District is funding afterschool program for 5 days a week through June 2026. Casey is also working on a middle school afterschool program.
- A potential budget/payment for that use, if the property was transferred, is possible as part of the broader MRPS budget, but the specifics are not yet determined.
- Andrew L was a former facilities manager at the building and has offered to be available as a resource.
- Roxbury Roots uses the Town Hall portions of the building for monthly community suppers, which serve 80-90 people. The group is also looking for kitchen space and has not been able to use the kitchen at the school.
- There are significant questions and varying perspectives on cost to taxpayers/community for the building (e.g. do prospective tenants need to entirely cover the operation of the building).
- The fenced playground and gardens at the school are community assets.
- A phase 1 environmental review of the building has not yet been completed.
- The Town Hall space would be challenging to replace for the community.
- As part of their Village revitalization planning work, gbA will do high level review of code compliance and rent opportunities for building. The timing depends on discussions with the school and other stakeholders.

## Priority Action Steps

1. Formalize relationship with Selectboard, and with the Planning Commission for Village Revitalization Planning grant. Clarify Selectboard and task force roles moving forward.
2. Develop list of places to visit/interview and a list of questions. Talk to organizations doing this now about what has gone well (or not!) and why. This can be used when touring other sites.
3. Gather all the current information on the building from the school district and others (PCB, lead, water and septic). This can include the annual facilities report from MRPS. Leverage community expertise to gather the information resource providers need.
4. Build out a business plan/operating numbers for the building.
5. Explore possible sustainable structures for operating the building, with a SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats) analysis.

## Other Potential Action Ideas

- Find ways to host special events in the Town Hall
- Gather additional information about the kitchen in the school building
  - Explore if a kitchen certification is needed for use by Roxbury Roots (or not)
  - What would it cost to have the kitchen available to community members
- Have a conversation with town about willingness to cover costs, such as kitchen cost above.
- Determine potential umbrella structures for the operation of the school
- Explore reusing the building as a school/early childcare. Consider exploring if there potential childcare places wanting to expand? (example: Turtle Island, which needs to move from its current building)
- Start building a list of prospective tenants, with special regard for those with the ability to pay
- Create a position to manage efforts/others in town and encourage follow up
- Read about hipsters! Research potentials for a destination attraction.
- What is the use of the building?

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

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

### Action Recommendations

Understand the carrying costs of the building and the long-term building investments that are needed and when they are needed so that you know how much income needs to be generated and whether/how much the municipality (taxpayers) will be asked to contribute. This is the start of a business plan for the building and recruiting efforts for space renting. It also will help the discussion about space the municipality needs (Town Meeting, etc.) progress.

What is the final “end use” of the building is the million-dollar question. Both the end use and operating structure (for profit, non-profit, municipal, etc.) can impact potential grants/funding.

Many communities assess the funding allocated and needed for all town buildings through a Capital Improvement Plan. This is most often completed as a project by the Selectboard to help anticipate future expenses for voters.

If considering a childcare program:

- Connect with First Children's Finance to develop a financial budget and business plan. Learn more at <https://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont/> and contact Jennifer Severance, [Jennifers@firstchildrensfinance.org](mailto:Jennifers@firstchildrensfinance.org) or 802-341-0338.
- Explore options to ensure a viable afterschool program can still occur on premises. This seemed like a strength in the community, whether operated by the school district or a separate entity as a fiscal sponsor for the program.
- Keep an eye on funding opportunities for the afterschool program, including State Afterschool and Summer Funding (Act 78), exploring child care licensing, etc.

Assess interest in building leases, starting informally. You could contact Let's Grow Kids to ask about childcare businesses that may be interested, Central Vermont Economic Development Commission and Vermont Small Business Administration for small businesses, nonprofits like Capstone and Central Vermont Medical Center for potential service uses, etc. Make sure you know what they'd need and that the building could provide it.

Apply for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) for “business” planning so you have professional help with the recruiting, development, and marketing process. You'll likely need more help than the Municipal Planning Grant planning team can provide. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants-8>.

Keep a running list of needs/wants/nice-to-have uses the community voices and how much space each needs. As your planning progresses, you may be able to fit some of these in the redevelopment project or help to find other spaces they can use in the community.

Learn more about the traffic that passes through the municipality. If there is considerable traffic to/from the Mad River Valley, are they pass through day skiers, weekend lodgers coming from NH and Boston, etc.? This can help you figure out what market might exist for businesses. Work with Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission for multi-season traffic counts for baseline knowledge. Contact Eli Toohey, [toohey@cvregion.com](mailto:toohey@cvregion.com)

Reach out to other communities who are working on repurposing former school buildings or who have already done so – Rochester and Barre would be good places to start.

Human capital is critical! As you start this heroic journey, commit to success, rather than any one specific vision.



## Technical Assistance / Peer Connection Recommendations

Other projects that you could tour and learn from (ranging from successfully redeveloped, struggling to redevelop, failed to redevelop):

- Ward 5 apartments in Barre: <https://downstreet.org/blog/community-support-for-granite-city-apartments>.
- Bennington and Springfield high schools are examples of larger projects. For Bennington, learn more at [https://benningtonvt.org/services/bennhi\\_redevelopment/index.php](https://benningtonvt.org/services/bennhi_redevelopment/index.php) and contact Shannon Barsotti, VCRD Board member and Town Economic Development Director at [sbarsotti@benningtonvt.org](mailto:sbarsotti@benningtonvt.org). For Springfield, learn more at <https://www.bricvt.org/>
- Brandon High School: <https://brandonreporter.com/2023/09/27/nonprofit-forms-to-rehab-old-brandon-high-school/> and Joy Marcotte at [joymarcotte@gmail.com](mailto:joymarcotte@gmail.com).
- Bridgewater Area Community Foundation and Childcare: Includes a childcare center and community center <https://www.bacfdn.org/>
- Granby Old Schoolhouse: <https://www.vermontpublic.org/vpr-news/2019-07-15/granbys-old-schoolhouse-repurposed-as-a-new-home-for-town-history>
- Pittsford Village Farm: <https://www.pittsfordvillagefarm.org/>.
- Rochester High School Repurposing project: <http://rhsrepurposingproject.org/>. Contact committee co-chairs: Kathryn Schenkman [kms@penstrokepress.com](mailto:kms@penstrokepress.com) or Vic Ribaudo [vic.ribaudo@gmail.com](mailto:vic.ribaudo@gmail.com).
- Wilmington Old School Community Center: <https://www.osccvt.com/>

Vermont Community Development Program Planning grant can fund environmental work, but the application requires having a final goal for the building in mind. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>.

Ask the Preservation Trust of Vermont to speak with your group about redeveloping buildings. They have experience that includes successes and challenges. Technical Assistance in knowing the building better, developing a strategy for rehabilitation, ADA and Code upgrades, explore funding opportunities, meet with other funders, etc. Contact Ben Doyle at [ben@ptvermont.org](mailto:ben@ptvermont.org) and 802-839-9914.

As you move forward with planning and development, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns can provide funding opportunity ideas to the municipality. Contact Bonnie Waninger, Project and Funding Specialist, [bwaninger@vlct.org](mailto:bwaninger@vlct.org) and 802-585-9174.

Nicole Miller, Executive Director, Vermont Afterschool can help with advice, technical assistance, and potential grant navigation. There are grants administered by Vermont Afterschool and the Act 78 grants administered by the Agency of Education. Contact Nicole at [nicole@vermontafterschool.org](mailto:nicole@vermontafterschool.org) or 802-472-2523.

## Resources and Potential Funding Sources

First Children's Finance is a potential funding resource for childcare businesses or those in development. <https://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont/>

The US Economic Development Administration, in the past has been a strong partner on projects that create jobs. A conversation with Economic Development Representative, Katherine Trapani, would be a good next step to better understand the programs that may have funding to support Roxbury in the future. She can be reached at 215-514-6572 or [ktrapani@eda.gov](mailto:ktrapani@eda.gov).

Northern Border Regional Commission Catalyst Program supports projects that have an economic development emphasis. Learn more at <https://www.nbrc.gov/>.

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission is available to help set up initial meetings or provide contacts at the US Economic Development Administration and the Northern Border Regional Commission. Contact Eli Toohey at [toohey@cvregion.com](mailto:toohey@cvregion.com).

The Vermont Community Development Program could potentially be a resource depending on the end use of the buildings. Learn more at <https://acd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp> and contact Resource Team member Julia Connell at [Julia.Connell@vermont.gov](mailto:Julia.Connell@vermont.gov).

USDA can be a funding resource for a Rural Business Development Grant for business planning (see previous action recommendation) and has an additional community facilities program that can provide grant funding through grants and loans. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program/vt>

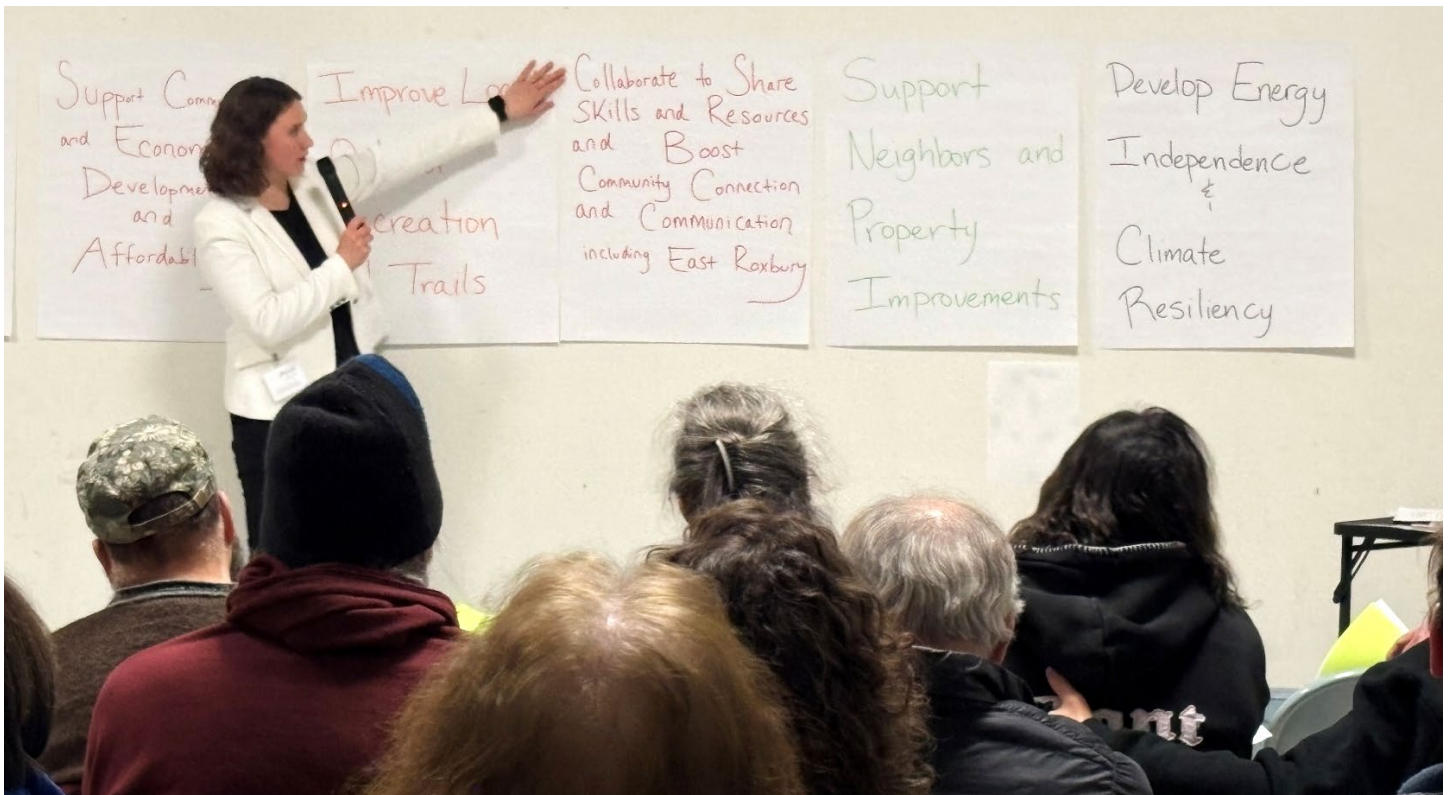
The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has a Rural Economic Development Initiative, or REDI program, which can pay for grant writers once you've identified funding sources. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at [mariah@vhcb.org](mailto:mariah@vhcb.org) or 802-828-1098.

VCRD will write letters of support for grant applications. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org).

VCRD has some seed funding through our Northern Border Regional Commission grant funding that could be used for modest one time expenses to help support the work of the task force. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org) or 802-222-6896.

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission have lists of potential funding opportunities that are searchable by topic. See <https://www.vlct.org/resource/open-funding-opportunities> and <https://www.ccrpcvt.org/funding-opportunities/>

Efficiency VT provides services like energy assessments, financial support, and energy-use project support, including for commercial projects. Learn more at <https://www.efficiencyvermont.com/services>.



## ► Boost Community Connection, Collaboration, Communication, Skill & Resource Sharing

This priority was the result of merging 4 opportunities during the prioritization process that the community felt should fit under one umbrella. This task force will consider and prioritize actions around the following:

- **Boost Community Connection and Communication:** Make Roxbury a more welcoming place where everyone feels included and connected. Create a welcome packet for new residents and find ways to help people connect and feel at home in the community. The group could expand on ways to communicate town information between neighbors such as a phone tree, a newsletter, a bulletin board, in person conversations, town wide emailing, social media to reach youth, and other ways to communicate, especially between people in parts of town that are not physically connected.
- **Collaborate to Share Skills and Resources:** Plan conversations, learning exchanges, and resource sharing between residents, especially youth and elders. A group could build connections between residents across a variety of interests, ages, backgrounds, and experiences. Skill swaps, tool shares, bulk buying, work exchanges on local farms, volunteerism generally, and weekly work parties were some of the ideas mentioned.
- **Support Neighbors and Property Improvements:** Find or create more resources to help people fix up their properties. Ideas could include providing funding, getting youth volunteers, or finding other ways to support property cleanup and improvements.
- **Support Places for People to Gather:** Identify what the community needs for gathering spaces and what is missing. Consider improving spaces we already have like the Country Store, the Community and Senior Center, the Library, and other buildings. The group could also explore new ideas like adding food trucks, a farmer's market, a café, or a diner.

Community Chair **André Souigny**

Facilitator **Jessica Savage**, *Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives*, Vermont Council on Rural Development and **Lauren Brady**, *Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator*, Vermont Council on Rural Development

Resource Team Members **Breck Knauff**, *Executive Director*, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps  
**Stephen Kredell**, *gbArchitecture*  
**Jason Van Driesche**, *Chief of Staff*, Front Porch Forum

Community Participants and Task Force Sign-ups Jillian Abraham, Heidi Albright, Misse Axelrod, Amy Barrett, Angela Bauer, JJ Boggs, Elizabeth Carney, Ed Carney, Bill Cecil, Cheryl Chittick, Liva Coe, Brett Cox, Susan D'Amico, Nathan Donahue, Chris Dorer-Williams, Dillon Edlund, Caroline Edlund, Carma Flowers, Kristen Getler, Jay Gilman, Cullen Granger, Michelle Hogle Acciavatti, Courtney B Jenkins Mesquita, Kasey Kathan, Robert Ketchel, Slap Martin, Ben Pincus, Jane Pincus, Carol Randall, Jim Rogler, Debra Rogler, Adam Sevi, Judith Shaw, Arthur Smith, Marguerite Souigny, André Souigny, Craig Sullivan, Ryan Zajac, and Christian Zinn



## Pre-Action Planning

Given the breadth of this effort, the development of this action plan included pre-work to help the group get organized before prioritizing action steps.

### Current Status

- A couple of grants to think about for community spaces.
- Neighbors Helping Neighbors is the local group helping to fix up properties and has already worked on a couple of properties
- Recently received a BGS/MERP grant for energy improvements to town buildings
- Summer camp in town has been a source of volunteers in the past, and might be interested in supporting community projects.
- Groups in town already working to connect people include the craft group, the Park Committee; Roxbury Rising (family/community group); Roxbury Bridges Afterschool group; Senior Group - Mondays at Community Hall; Church's monthly potluck; Roxbury Roots monthly dinner at school; monthly coffee at the Library
- No local youth group beyond the afterschool and the Roxbury Rising family group. All sports, etc. happened through other towns, despite the summer camp's facilities.
- ADA access issues at community buildings
- There is a small group getting started to help folks with gardening.
- The Selectboard is working with Otter Creek Engineering on assessing the options for wastewater in the village.
- The Selectboard is also working with Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, the Roxbury Planning Commission and consultant, gbA, on a Village Revitalization process as a result of a Municipal Planning Grant from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

## Priority Action Steps

1. Research communication strategies (websites, bulletin boards, calendars, etc) in other towns.
2. Inventory of events and groups in town.
3. Get the local groups together to build collaboration and cooperation between groups. At first meeting, make a plan for regular communication & cooperation.
4. Work with Roxbury Roots to host a skill/strengths/needs/wants potluck.
5. Identify neighborhoods and hand out flyers/invites for potluck.
6. Launch survey for skills/needs inventory @ potluck and distribute in neighborhoods and across channels/other methods.
7. Continue to build relationships with property owners whose properties might be candidates for working with Neighbors Helping Neighbors. Know that it's best for these connections to be built through personal and full relationships and it is a personal choice for someone to want to make changes to their property.
8. Know the funding options for property clean-ups and be ready to provide resources and labor quickly if asked for.
9. Make more use of the Park, possibly with farmers markets, food trucks, concerts, or other events.
10. Work with local farmers, Roxbury Roots, and Randy to figure out where and how to set up a Produce Fridge where local farmers can sell their produce.

### Other Action Ideas:

- The big next step needs to be about creating community connections and a place where people gather without plans. Something like the grange hall or community dances.
- Have a digital sign in town that shares information about what's going on at the crossroads where people travel, especially for folks that don't have internet.
- More potlucks, crafting, work parties.
- Have some kind of forum to address challenging conversations, with the intention that it would lead to effective problem solving. Don't just talk about things.
- Build a directory or a list of folks in the community to call for help/support.
- Create a platform for skill sharing.
- Create a living inventory of needs and people with skills.

- A physical space with a great big bulletin board that everyone can go and see if they want and get more involved.
- Figure out what people who aren't showing up would need to feel welcomed: we all live here.
- Understand people's different ways of life.
- Hold community fundraisers like a golf tournament or chicken barbeque. Search for grants to help, too.
- Find ways to reach East Roxbury — maybe a picnic, food truck, or tea at someone's house.
- Expand Neighbors Helping Neighbors group.
- Partner with Windridge camp on service activities, project to beautify Town or something else.
- Share vision of "Gritty Elegance" fashion show.
- Partner with selectboard and regional orgs on grants and project skills.
- Find 4-5 people to volunteers to finish community hall renovation.
- Community food trucks (monthly?) travel around town, partner with Fire Dept, Roxbury Roots, and Park Committee.
- Start a Farmer's Market - could include fundraising.
- Concerts in the Park/school lot (Have done before!).
- Build on partnerships with Norwich (especially non-academic group and arch. dept) to support community projects.
- Get the local groups together to make connections (monthly? quarterly?) and build collaboration and cooperation between groups:
  - Work on centralized communication through town website, Front Porch Forum, and physical and online bulletin boards
  - Representatives from each can visit the other groups
  - Share with each other: What are you doing? What's the plan?
  - Coordinate to get all the events onto Town or FPF community calendar
  - Promote each other's projects
  - Names could be Stone Soup Group, Roxbury Roundtable, or Roxbury Connections
- Create a community dance.
- Use food and dancing to bring people out in parts of town.
- Create groups/events about what is happening around the world: community conservation.
- Roxbury podcast.
- Mapping the town by neighborhoods
  - who lives there
  - Neighbor to neighbor connections around needs/strengths/skills
  - self-identified neighborhoods
  - ID town as neighborhood
  - share info between neighborhoods
- Public and selectboard engagement & communication
  - AI notes at meetings for summaries and to keep track of what is happening
  - Increasing access/virtual access to selectboard meetings might support engagement and trust
- Conversation about town changing and divisions.
- Researching other towns with groups doing similar things.
- Plays/theater productions for kids/families.
  - Afterschool program is doing that! Get Jeannie involved
- Needs and Strengths workshop:
  - List offers/skills
  - List of needs, want to learn, help needed
  - More than one meeting in person
- Forum for challenging conversations (i.e. because junk ordinance)
  - Effective problem solving
  - Identifying neighborhoods
- Print flyers and surveys to hand out to identify neighbors and meet more people.
- Prioritize events that are good for the community, new people.
- Communicate to governance (municipal committees). Identify how to do this.
- Identify communication pathways, possibly:
  - expand town website
  - Front Porch Forum calendar
  - Library's calendar
  - Physical mailings and email
  - Improve on or expand bulletin boards
  - Skill share platform
  - Lawn signs or sandwich boards
- Connection to know each other.
- Create a place for people to gather, support physical spaces for events and people working on them.
- Create work parties.

## Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

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

### Action Recommendations

Coordinate with other groups in town, including with the task force working to Re-Imagine the Village School Building and the Planning Commission to connect with and provide input to the village revitalization process.

Consider forming a community lunch. The Worcester Neighbor Network hosts a Community Lunch every Wednesday, open to all.

Consider what youth and young people (up to age 26+) need to feel welcome in the community as well. Connect with Vermont Afterschool for support, including considering the Vermont Youth Project. Contact Nicole Miller, Executive Director at [nicole@vermontafterschool.org](mailto:nicole@vermontafterschool.org) and 802-472-2523.

Evaluate existing communication infrastructure in town and options that other towns use, look for communication pathways that will be low-maintenance. Front Porch Forum (FPF) might be a good option because the content is crowd-sourced and the maintenance is done for you. Community members could encourage new community members or businesses to join FPF – the forum is most powerful when there is a critical mass of people in town talking and sharing together. Peacham is an example of a similar-sized community that uses FPF. FPF enables:

- A forum where community members, businesses and the Town can share announcements, offer or ask for skills, tools, resources, share ideas and thoughts, and more. The forum has options to post several categories such as seeking or offering items (free or for sale), recommendations, assistance, or sharing info about announcements, wildlife, elections, housing, gratitude, and more.
- A community calendar which can also automatically post announcements to the forum. The calendar is visible to both people who live in town or who are visiting. The FPF community calendar can also be embedded into other websites so it displays on that website just as it does on FPF.
- A local business directory that is integrated with posts to the community forum.

The library is a valuable partner and resource that is already utilized by the community, consider bringing more community energy to that organization based on their needs to support their longevity and capacity. Depending on the library's structure, the organization may be able to draw on grants or other resources that this group doesn't have access to.

### Technical Assistance / Peer Connection Recommendations

This group could investigate skill and resource sharing models that other communities have created including:

- MakerSphere, a nonprofit organization in Waterbury that hosts a variety of classes, and manages shared spaces for artists, pottery studio, and a woodshop. They are happy to answer questions. Learn more at [www.makerspherevt.com](http://www.makerspherevt.com) and contact [makerspherevt@gmail.com](mailto:makerspherevt@gmail.com) or 802-595-9719.
- Sharon Connects is a community organization in Sharon that has hosted a Sharon Skill Swap and a number of community communication initiatives. To learn more, contact Nicole (Nic) Antal at [eloquine@gmail.com](mailto:eloquine@gmail.com).
- The Town of Bethel, Vermont created a "Bethel's Operator's Manual" with a variety of local resources that could serve as a model <https://townofbethelvt.com/operator-manual>.
- [Bethel University](#) (BU) is a free community pop-up university (annually in March) created by the [Bethel Revitalization Initiative \(BRI\)](#) in Bethel, VT. During the month of March each year, anyone can teach a course on any topic and the courses are free. Contact Lisa Sacks Warhol at [betheluniversityvt@gmail.com](mailto:betheluniversityvt@gmail.com).

- Hardwick State, a weekend long university in Hardwick much like Bethel University, organized by the Civic Standard. In addition, Hardwick's the [Civic Standard](#) is a community support and response organization that offers lots of services and events. Contact the team to learn more about what they do and how they formed at [thecivicstandard@gmail.com](mailto:thecivicstandard@gmail.com).

The Towns of Franklin & Albany Formed Task Forces related to community communication and connection through their Community Visit processes. Contact Alyssa to help to connect to the chairs of those task forces, [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org).

Connect with the Worcester Neighbor Network (WNN) to understand why they started their organization and how they keep it going. Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission can help make those connections if needed. Contact Eli Toohey at [toohey@cvregion.com](mailto:toohey@cvregion.com).

Reach out to Jason for any support related to Front Porch Forum: [jason@frontporchforum.com](mailto:jason@frontporchforum.com).

For support getting youth involved in community projects or to support youth taking leadership on the projects they are interested in, reach out to Vermont Youth Project/Vermont Afterschool. Contact: Matt Wolf, [matt@vermontafterschool.org](mailto:matt@vermontafterschool.org).

## Resources and Potential Funding Sources

VCRD's Community Leadership in Action Guide has a section on "Communicating with the Community" and a chapter on "Expand and Improve Community Communications" with ideas and resources relevant to this topic: <https://www.vtrural.org/guide/>.

VCRD has some seed funding through our Northern Border Regional Commission grant funding that could be used for modest one-time expenses to help support the work of the task force. Applying for the funds requires a description of the work to be completed and how it advances the work of the task force. Contact Alyssa Johnson at [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org) or 802-222-6896.

Vermont Community Foundation could be a funding partner. They offer the Spark Connecting Communities grant program, which provides grants of \$500-\$3,000 for "grassroots work that builds social capital." Learn more at <https://vermontcf.org/our-impact/programs-and-funds/spark-connecting-community/>.

An Arts Impact Grant from the Vermont Arts Council may be applicable to some of your work. These grants support organizations, municipalities, and schools in their efforts to create a more vibrant quality of life by providing equal and abundant access to the arts. Learn more at <https://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants/organizations/arts-impact> and contact Michele Bailey at 802.402.4614 and [mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org).

What's Next Middlesex and Revitalizing Waterbury have some examples of local communication resources: <https://www.whatsnextmiddlesex.org/> and <https://www.revitalizingwaterbury.org/>.

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

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission have lists of potential funding opportunities that are searchable by topic. See <https://www.vlct.org/resource/open-funding-opportunities> and <https://www.ccrpcvt.org/funding-opportunities/>.



There are several talented facilitation experts who might be able to help members of the Roxbury community practice holding difficult conversations and move from disagreements to productive conflict. These include the Center for Real Dialogue, Susan Clark, and many others. Contact VCRD staff for more information and to make a connection with someone.

VTrans has a Better Roads program and a Bicycle and Pedestrian Program both of which offer grants that may support road and sidewalk improvements to address walkability, connectivity of different parts of town, or flooding and erosion. Coordinate with the Planning Commission or Selectboard and reach out to the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission, see Eli Toohey's contact in the Visiting Team section at the end of this report. Learn more at: <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/better-roads> and <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped>

The Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission is a great resource for all things related to land use, planning, community or wild spaces, roads, infrastructure, and more. For example, along with the Selectboard, they would be a partner on any future municipal planning work. Find Eli Toohey's contact in the Visiting Team section at the end of this report.

The Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation can be a resource for engaging with businesses and employers and for large grant funding. CVEDC supports local organizations with projects to boost the local economy and resources for new businesses or existing businesses that are working on growth or sustainability. To find out more, contact Melissa Bounty at [mbounty@centralvermont.org](mailto:mbounty@centralvermont.org).

For youth and community engagement, there are several local and regional organizations with ties to Roxbury, these include: Norwich University; Windridge Camp; Central Vermont Career Center; and Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. Reach out to Lauren Brady at VCRD, [lauren@vtrural.org](mailto:lauren@vtrural.org), or Breck Knauft at VYCC, [breck.knauft@vycc.org](mailto:breck.knauft@vycc.org) for advice on how best to engage these groups.

Capstone Community Action is the regional community action organization and provides family services, housing, food, and heat resources, and so much more. They may be a good partner or advisor for the local Neighbors Helping Neighbors group. For more background about their services and supports, contact Linda Anderson at [landerson@capstonevt.org](mailto:landerson@capstonevt.org)

Review the Community Leadership Guide for outreach strategies and suggestions on best communication practices. See chapters "Inviting the Public: Practical Tips" and "Communicating with the Community" on pages 4-9. The guide is available at: <https://www.vtrural.org/sites/default/files/TheGuide.pdf>. For additional support and advice, email Alyssa Johnson at VCRD, [alyssa@vtrural.org](mailto:alyssa@vtrural.org).



# V. Roxbury Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 75 Roxbury community members and the VCRD Visiting Team on February 18, 2025, through a paper and online survey, and a youth forum.

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

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## Community Connection, Coordination, & Communication

Visiting Team: Alyssa Johnson (FACILITATOR), Denise Smith (SCRIBE), Ted Brady, Alex Farrell, Nicole Miller

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Lots of different groups.
- New groups have formed – Roxbury community trust, neighbors helping neighbors, Committee for Saving, Roxbury Roots, Afterschool Program, Lost Nation ATV.
- Randy – Roxbury Country Store.
- Library.
- Newsie that gets put out – newsletter.
- Church and Senior Center – Senior lunches.
- Fire dept. 4th of July BBQ.
- Population hasn't changed – a small town – size of Roxbury – get to know your neighbor.
- Small and Rural - underlying interesting connection that is relatively new in the last few years. Interesting connections happening more recently. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. positive movement in the other direction.
- Keep to themselves, but people jump into help if people need anything. People want to make those connections that feel genuine.
- Interactions between older and younger people – specifically the community dinners.
- Roxbury Community crafters creating intergenerational connections.
- Hurricane Irene was a time when the town really came together, the fire house doors were open, feeling of real connection. Essential to be connected during Irene.
- Railroad crash – people came and helped the travelers with chairs and baked goods.
- Group of families – very tight knit and keeping sense of community now that the school is closed.
- Food shelf – done very well and is ongoing for the small group – creating great volunteer opportunities – ie. Burritos at the food shelf.
- Variety of different list servs, email groups, FB groups, Chats – good and is a challenge because not everyone is inclusive – Good strength.
- Really great country store and if anything is going on – call him and he will share.
- Beautiful church – involved in the community even though it is a small.
- Library has very successful programs and includes the whole town. 90 people.
- Greenhouse in town and it is nice to see so much coming and goings.
- Farm on Grand Hill – keep the fields mowed and people comment on how nice the fields look.
- People paid attention – people notice that others are struggling and need help – e.g. Plowing others out.
- People checking in on folks during flooding a couple years ago.
- Roxbury Post Office – PO Box – see lots of people – definitely an asset and we are all worried about losing – like our school. Meeting place.
- TOM.
- Strong volunteer effort – people are ready to pitch in and be part of volunteer-oriented groups.
- Strong characters and voices in town, heard at select board meetings.
- State forest.

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### What are the Challenges:

- NO phones - Few people have landlines/phones these days. Cell phones are not listed, and people don't use phones for communication. No email loop to connect everyone in town. If there is an emergency, no way to connect/communicate.
- Dominating characters can be a weakness.
- Don't have a school.
- Limited amount of tax dollars and things are getting higher and higher, some people do not get the benefits of plowing roads, townwide water and sewer and sidewalks and only benefit few. How to make it more palatable.
- Severe revenue problem. Most towns rely on property taxes to fund towns and that is becoming much more difficult. Linked directly to expenses. Money doesn't solve everything.
- Geography – small town with small population scattered over a large geographic area. Infrastructure, taxation, etc. late for a reason – geographical layout of Roxbury is a challenge. Inherently a challenge.
- Timeline for how long Randy is going to want to run that Country Store.
- Struggling to identify all the groups in town – burning our candles at both ends. Reinventing the wheel. Everyone has the

best intention, but how do we get better organized, more efficient.

- Inclusiveness – how do we connect to others and work better together.
- Conflict in problem solving. Groups, selectboard, junk ordinance, how do we work things out instead of fighting and butting heads.
- Getting people to come out and participate – same people over and over. Hills are full of people – how do you get them all out.
- Challenge to have electrical power through utility lines, especially in the hills.
- Selling milk – raw milk farmer.
- No school – and the transition to that dynamic has been very challenging to parents – vocally critical and will continue to be. Changed very significantly – challenge for future generations of families that want to move here.
- Building as a whole – grieving process – hub for connection, building community capital, no map to move forward with the building.
- Affordability – communications to keep taxes down, food, firewood, propane, etc.
- Tax issue – percentage of land in Roxbury is State forest – land where people can build and they can't.
- Quality of buildings and upkeep and lack of, community hall, current town office, other buildings... should happen for people to use them.
- ECHO – public land is wonderful for access, gem, and difficult to not raise revenues on.
- State of septic and water there isn't an opportunity for the store to increase economic vitality of the village.
- Doesn't know access to the public lands – where to go, how to get them.
- 2 parks in Roxbury – beautiful new park.

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

- Roxbury fire dept could create an alert system.
- Unite the community – whole lot of people because VCRD sent out a flyer – getting the word into people's mailboxes – flyers, planning, etc. select board could help get the work to the greatest number of people.
- More opportunities for people to meet and talk informally. There have been increasingly more opportunities.
- Community and the definition of community is a very vague thing – can mean a lot of different things to a lot of diff. people – planned, governmental, emergency events... half decent humanity steps in and helps. One part of a community – general humanity in Roxbury. Do not have informal spaces for people to connect to foster connections and engendering communications. Bring community together. Humans and their interactions and communities you need to invest in you have to have the time, municipal, financial, etc.
- Town needs to invest in informal spaces without a planned interaction if we want to have a community – invest in it. Might all be working very hard, but never quite get there.
- Randy's store – best interaction in this community, would be terrible to lose it, should work together to support.
- Group of women – Red Tent Group Anita Diamant. People Identified themselves by what roads they lived on.
- Meetings at the Pot Luck – now is the community hall.
- Encourage Informal connections.
- 3rd space to interact with people in your community – random people coming together to get their coffee.
- Welcoming group so when new people come, you can direct them to who's who and where to go to get something.
- Invest in our Town Store so it lasts for the future.
- Municipal septic system would open up a lot of possibilities for current businesses and spaces – could be a very positive thing. Stepping stone to move to other potential outside meeting spaces. Various buildings could be reutilized.
- Roxbury – Village School more of a connection with long-time Vermonters and newer Vermonters – how does that get recovered. People tell their stories about how they ended up here.
- Put in a community septic system – townwide problem.
- Storytelling night to bring people together. Why you chose Roxbury or did Roxbury choose you?
- Toll road for out of towners.
- People don't know Randy's is there. Signs for Randy's.
- Signs for Exit 4.
- Revisit sign for people to get off – GPS. West Hill confusion.
- Enormous amount of traffic and money being spent on the other side of the hill. Spend money on – imperative for Roxbury to capture tourism \$\$\$. Without a septic system or capability of having a business – seems imperative for the town.
- Roxbury Fire Department – Roxbury needs to be put on the map or people are going to pass through the town because they don't know where it is.
- Food Truck!
- Farmer's Market on Sunday afternoons.
- Micro business group.
- How can the school be utilized for the town and capture \$\$ for the town. Not fast forward the process to have this happening – round table happening about the school.
- Local greenhouse – traffic from people. Café or diner... how many people ask where they can get lunch 100s of people.
- Community Development person to support local businesses.
- Giant car wash.
- Co-op in the early 70s – really brings people together.
- Mountain bike/hiking trails in the forest (NIMBY).
- Select board meetings have strengths and weaknesses – cultivate intergenerational connections – mentor through the process instead of criticizing the job people are doing. Constructive feedback to help support more volunteers, encouraging its next set of leaders.
- Light rail or train stop.
- Impacts of activities if we have more people coming to our town.
- Garden outside of school – summer garden program, kids into that space – community garden in the Doing more in summer for Roxbury kids.

- Central location with ideas that can be shared. Available on the state level and granting agencies we can get access to... look at what other communities are doing.
- Bulk buying for all residents who homestead on a small level – annual gathering.
- Tool sharing program for those who are homesteading in the village.
- Toll road on Warren Mountain Road.
- Playwright who lives in town and amazing - community wide outdoor theater and play.
- Community Dev. Coordinator - Solidify someone to raise revenues for our town besides property taxes.
- Town hall building is an underutilized space – art, painters, church, LOCAL cultivation of arts that we don't have to travel to Montpelier.
- ROCOR – Build on a lending library for outdoor equipment.
- Governance, transparency, accountability, at Town meeting and budget was slashed and there was no discussion – not enough information when called upon to vote on budget. Need more information to make decisions.
- Investing in some way of communicating in one place that is easy to navigate.
- Doing more in the church.
- Monthly potlucks.
- Support families navigating school and the changes that have happened, afterschool program, and rebuild relationship with Montpelier.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- VT Afterschool – Impressed at the number of people in this room and this size community – this is a huge asset for this community. Interest in coming together, post pandemic, and post floods, folks willing to help each other when help is needed. 3rd spaces and communication options. Small town – unique, but challenges are not unique, septic, geography, and school building.
- NO CELL PHONE SERVICE and no one mentioned it. Biggest thing he takes away – same topic... something is happening. School, fragility of Randy's store. Once in a generation type of opportunity. Married with moment of transition. We want it to be the way its been, but there is an opportunity for something better. Losing the school – great opportunity to bring village and hills together. 19 years with 3 dozen community visits – surprised that something won't happen next. Prioritize the ideas that are pulled out.
- 23 towns as an RPC – Favorite child. Planning Commission. What direction, right size, so many assets. Comes to Roxbury – econ and comm dev person – business, recreation economy, comm dev coordinator or committee. A lot of resources around arts, storytelling piece and connections – i.e. Hardwick... impromptu things – MOTH storytelling hour ideas. Energy around school and the youth – it is not lost. It is still in the community.

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## Town Pride and Identity

Visiting Team: Jessica Savage (FACILITATOR), Dani Parkins (SCRIBE), Jill Briggs Campbell, Ben Doyle, Christian Meyer, Eli Toohey

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- The park is a bright spot. Community project that was a real source of pride. Roxbury Village Park.
- There's a lot of young families that are getting together and it's helped a lot to get the community together. A lot of positivity. Lots of energy and a real plus for the O.
- Our ability to repurpose the school building is a bright spot. It's been controversial but there is a plan that could work with rentable spaces that community members would really appreciate. Child care is also a big push. Second group Vermont Farm and Forrest also wants to rent space from the school for their work.
- Pretty active food shelf in town. Also have a very confident and energetic librarian who has a lot of energy and keeps the library up to date with the latest and greatest. Brian.
- Roxbury community crafters in its third season 18+. Really brought a lot of people together.
- A very rich history and rich tradition of the archetypal rural Vermont town. There's a lot of passion about the energy and direction for the town.
- The people that are here are really vested in the community. They are here to stay. Folks who stay tend to commit to things and is a strong asset for human resources.
- A warm sense of community. Book club. Fun funk 4th of July. A sense of belonging. Crafters group.
- We have a lot of talent. Best known playwright, as well as internationally acclaimed writers living here. Lots of talent for such a small town.
- Has an excellent party scene. Not just your standup parties, but a mix of bands and skating and kids and the fireworks. Really key to bringing new community members and creating a space for belonging. Community/land parties.
- The new people and younger people immediately become a part of the community and are strong contributors.
- Dedicated multitalented fiscally responsible board right now. Went from 3 – 5 this last year.
- Roxbury recreational ROCOR is a new committee that are supporting and developing a ton of little paths and trails all over for snow shoeing, cross country skiing. Want to open up a map on Instagram to attract more folks for revenue. Not too big!
- Everybody has a part of the outdoors as a part of their job/recreation that unites everyone under one identity.
- Very informal. Neighbors helping neighbors. Helping folks tidy up and clean their properties.



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## What are the Challenges:

- At one point, the town had sidewalks, but they are all broken down and no one is trying to fix them. The town needs to create at least one safe sidewalk through the town.
- Speeding through the town is also a huge problem.
- The state of disrepair throughout the town. Things look run down and broken and main street doesn't look good at all anymore.
- Roxbury has been a hard place to make inroads. Hard to promote change. A lot of resistance to newcomers. Can be very hostile to new ideas and new people. Feels like hazing to have to roll out the family tree to prove that I'm a True Vermonter. Need to shift from past Roxbury to what we need in the future. Everybody means really well but it's not been an open place.
- There's a class division between lower class and higher class that drives animosity/apprehension. Bridging that gap is really important.
- East Roxbury is geographically divided. There used to be a lot of roads that connected Rox to East Rox, but now there's not and we have to drive through other towns to get to the village.
- No town owned space in East Roxbury, so there is no community gathering space.
- Forums are always the same group of folks and we need to do more to bring in new residents to get new ideas and new energy, but they haven't been included very well and are estranged right now.
- We can have a lot of potlucks, but I think the lack of (it's a drive through town) daily sitting/greeting place within the town. No common ground to have a daily conversation with different folks across the town. A third space.
- There's a need for a healthy conversation about the village and the town. There's a lot of tension right now. Feel like folks are trying to clean it up for ski tourist to spend money here.
- We've lost our school as a school. Scary for most because it's got a lot of time and energy and history. Now we don't know what's going to happen to the school. Been the community heartbeat.
- Two different communities with folks going to very different community events, which makes it feel like there is less participation than expected. Need a rejuvenation for the fire department with a good successive planning. Need enough authority and respect to be listened to and not make it a political question.

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

- Don't want to be Waitsfield or a ski town suburb. Worcester is a great example model of a town we could emulate. Have town space and community space to bring folks together.
- Maybe could use this school building as a way to create a similar space.
- We need some sort of café so that folks can sit down and enjoy chatting with folks in the community.
- Reopen four mile wood road and Drown Road. One's trail status another owned by someone looking to sell their property. Opportunity to reopen these roads.
- Huge opportunity for renovating the school for revenue earning businesses that could pay rent.
- Daycare, Office space, food kitchen for folks. Need to keep the town active and have something to bring others into town.
- Roxbury community park could be a good way to attract more folks.
- We also need a better communication network so we are aware of all the projects/activities going on in the town. Needs to be a common ground that anyone can get involved to help get folks more aware of needs and actions and also help bring folks back together.
- Create a space in east rox where we can have community events. Maybe east rox folks would get more involved. Need to explore building/property options to create this space.
- Have a space like the Northfield library that is an open community space. A recurring theme that there isn't enough open community spaces for kids activities/clubs/programs. Need a bigger space.
- Really need that Third Place. Not church going, so we need something else. The park is a good start but we gotta do more.
- Having community dinners would help create community and build friendships.
- The best invite is the personal invite. It really requires getting outside the box for community outreach and engagement. Get more folks going out to personally invite new people to the conversation.
- A Community bulletin board would be a great actionable step forward.
- Very surprised about how active the Northfield fb page. Maybe we could do the same.
- A phone tree process and would be a good way to get folks engaged. When someone calls you, then you call two to three other folks.
- If we take community neighborhoods and get the outgoing folks in their neighborhoods to share/distribute information to folks in their community directly. Has to be good communication and it has to be personal.
- Succession planning and mentoring as a part of institutional change, is really important for future growth for the town. Encouraging mentoring programs could help bring in more youth.
- Creating good PR flyers and information sharing materials makes a big difference.
- Direct mailing is very effective. Could do a monthly letter to keep people informed and involved.
- Would like to see something more down with the south end of the park. Need to clean up the brush and take care of the work that wasn't completed last summer.
- Junkyard ordinance should be repealed because it's unconstitutional at the US and Vermont level. If you want to the town together this needs to happen. 177 to 179 vote so it really does split the town right down the middle. What we need to do is change the number of the junk ordinance which is 2242. But we need 2242 ordinance that prevents junkyard waste disposal activities.
- Plant a Christmas tree up in the School yard.
- Gotta save the school building. Have the town buy it back and maintain it so that we can use the space for the community.

- Bring 7th and 8th grade back to this school as a private school. We would need to fight the state and there's two possible ways that it could be done. First, a private school but the state still has a lot of control. Second, everyone in the town comes together to pay taxes for the school right here by the town.
- We have to vote to get out of the consolidation. Feel trapped and unable to take care of ourselves because we don't have control.

### Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The participation in this community is incredible. Do not sell yourselves short. One of your assets really is one of your biggest assets. The divides in Roxbury are very similar to divisions across the state of Vermont.
- Found some of the comparisons about what you do or don't want to be. As you take stock of your assets, you get a chance to start creating comparisons with what your town has. And then identify the quick wins that are going to keep your momentum going.
- Your greatest strength really was your people. As you look towards ideas to address the challenges that Rox has, some great ideas to consider is to cultivate Makerspaces and other gathering place to learn/share talents and getting more folks involved.
- The nature classes idea can create incredible programs and has been very successful. Vergennes Model is great. Trail ideas are wonderful ideas, but you have to incorporate more things that will attract new people in.
- Double down on the parties! There's a lot about the community and am really excited to see what comes out of the priority process.
- Your people is your power. It sounds like this school and this space could be something really great. Could make it that third space. And also a dog park is a great idea too.

## Community Spaces: Buildings and Green Spaces

Visiting Team: Jessica Savage (FACILITATOR), Denise Smith (SCRIBE), Ben Doyle, Christian Meyer, Eli Toohey

### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Parking in current state and if it is reduced – it becomes a challenge.
- State land to hunt, hike, cross country ski.
- Historic district to the village – looks like an old VT town and the municipality owns most of the quaint buildings.
- Green burial site – Vermont Forest Cemetery.
- Fish Hatchery.
- Green space at the school, the new park, and the other park.
- Community dinner every month.
- Committee working on green spaces, and trails that are available to promote access to local people - ROCOR.
- Economic development opportunity for potential skiers going to Sugarbush .
- State Forest.
- Downtown feeling in Roxbury.
- School playground to village common – safe place for kids to play.
- The school building – voting at town meeting whether we want to keep it and it is still our community.
- History and people think the village has always been this way – FB page of Roxbury memories. History with railroad, quarry, clockworks, hotel, railroad center.
- Building has so much potential – beacon. Grieving the loss of the kids in the school. Bring them back to daycare, childcare, private school.
- Facility in the Windridge Tennis Camp – history with the tennis camp – host weddings and events.
- Food bank – stable and secure and functioning so well for so long and keeping it alive.
- Library – unique – tiny library.
- Randy and the Country Store – going back a century or more.
- Community Hall, Grange, Roxbury Crafters.
- Committee – art projects, Roxbury Roots, very positive and brings people together.
- 17 miles of paved road – dirt roads accessible for mountain bikers, dirt bikers, local riders.
- Post office and ZIP CODE – on the chopping block.
- Congregational Church with steeple in town – amazing and underutilized space.
- The sidewalks – walkable downtown around the tennis camp.
- Proximity to part of VT – center of VT is in Roxbury. Centrally located to get to lots of different places in the state.
- Windridge has a septic system.

### What are the Challenges:

- Parking is not working – everything is full – if we lost any public parking, we couldn't host a community event.
- ROCOR – support trail building with having common trails. Not wanting trail system to be public – keep it to ourselves. Cross state mountain bike trail wants to go through Roxbury. Balance between preserving private nature of our land in contrast to Northfield who has more public access. For community and bring more people to Roxbury for economic growth.
- Roxbury State Forest – Management Plan is being evaluated to identify assets and resources before anything is done.
- Cutting trees – an active logging operation – left a mess and running tractor trailers through the roads where they should not have been.
- Flooding in the village – high water tables – causing issues with septic systems and drinking water wells and the inability for large dev because we don't have viable sewer system. Development in town – must address wastewater.

- Speeding in town – insane and worse on the weekends. People drive fast.
- Beavers – hot topic at the selectboard meetings. Should not have an overly complicit relationship with the beavers.
- Sidewalks – connectivity and repair.
- Warren mountain road – speeding and sidewalks – kids not safe to walk to the village.
- Post office – only open until 12. No internet.
- Steele Hill access and because they have to drive around the mountain to get to Roxbury.
- East Roxbury is disconnected from Roxbury - Geography.

- Ex-Urban - not rural, not urban, tension of how much of life we want to do just in town, or how much we want to do things outside of Roxbury – do a lot of life outside of Roxbury.
- Outdoor communities and outdoor spaces. Public lands – but do not have a say in what happens to the state forests.
- Does not want to see a lot of mountain bikes in town – nuisance and a problem s can develop.
- Trees – beautiful Elm trees – trees are everywhere else but downtown.
- Funding and delayed maintenance is a huge problem – town does not have the financial capacity to make that happen.
- Facilitation of what can be done to fix the building s. community hall – needs a lot of work.

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

- Town wide septic system.
- Coordinator of ideas, grant writer, community development, coordinator for these projects – project manager – paid position.
- Revisit the idea of zoning if they knew how it is going to be developed. Invest in the community.
- Junk ordinance.
- Not that many people – a lot of people came to Roxbury because they do not have zoning – very proud of and minority. Own business, nothing affects your funding for business. Act 250 – big asset for not having it.
- Renovations for historic preservations – explore vision for historic preservations.
- Redevelopment project, bury power lines, wastewater, etc.
- School is important to Roxbury's future – revenue neutral and facility is being used. Taking care of the building to maintain leases, and facilities within the community, etc....
- Create a strategic 3 to 5 year plan with tiers – cost, funding, etc.
- Rent or sell other town owned building. Outside of just selling and renting the buildings to consider other models of building management. Town control without costing a lot of money.
- Need a new town garage and it is a desperate situation – committee that is working on it. At some point presented to the town as a bond vote.
- Second home-owners tax at a higher rate than the rest of the community members. To get more revenue for the town. Feels like they are not contributing to the community.
- 600 people – small town. 1 million dollars – if we have 100 more people move into town – 500,000 – action item – Attract more people - how do we make Roxbury would want to move here? Buy some property – build a house... buy homes and pay taxes.
- Clean up Main Street – put the process in place – push the select board to clean up Main Street.
- Separate selectboard from the Town Clerk and take over the front office at the school and have the selectboard assistant manage the building. Town office does not work.
- Town purchasing land in the village and beautifying it.
- Tax the logging company more money.
- Community Access Root Cellar – Roxbury Roots – Network and system to support affordable foods, etc....
- Community Hall building – food cooperative and roots cellar.
- Harass the Federal Govt to keep the post office – politics.
- Kids asking for money from tourists or second homeowners. Fire department used to do this.
- Mother's built a school in Italy after the war – people come together to redefine this area. Beautifying part has been done before and we can do it again. Reggio Amelia.
- Selectboard needs to Hear from the people. More than 2 folks and a quorum. Can they attend the next meeting?
- 2 bodies control everything in the town – the selectboard and the schoolboard. Take the school away after listening to the town's people.
- Go forward with professional help to do it right. Harness that power.

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

- Rural Innovation Center – doers in the community. Have so many committees already and want to help one another. Great action items and there are professionals that do this for a living – very attainable. Lots of opportunities here.
- Third interview for the job was to imagine you were in a community visit in the town of Roxbury – and talk about PTV. The perfect town. So many assets to work with – the town in the Center of VT – so much potential here. What does this town want to be now!
- What kind of community do you want to be?
- Preliminary engineering report on septic in the community?
- Fight the post office – fight for your Post Office!
- Rec trails – remain undiscovered. Little but want to be undiscoverable. Model sharing that can happen to find a clear vision you want to pursue. Process works through its phases. You have people who want to help you and will guide you to decide what you want to work on/pursue.
- All fire and no water. Roxbury has both fire and water. Obvious to people who have seen and met with you. Cultivating your vision with this community.

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## Seniors, Families, and Youth

Visiting Team: Lauren Brady (FACILITATOR), Dani Parkins (SCRIBE), Ted Brady, Alex Farrell, Nicole Miller

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### What are the Assets in this Area?

- Aftercare programs are great for our family. And also library community events. Would love to see more programs/shows/activities develop in the future.
- Roxbury seems to be intergenerational friendly. Felt good with the older generation when I was young and now feel very comfortable with the younger generation.
- Neighbors friendliness has been incredible. Never felt different layers at all. Would be very helpful and share skills with each other (especially pre YouTube).
- Going to intergenerational parties have been really great at creating friendships for folks.
- The whole community came together to fix up the park.
- Everyone knows everyone and folks have a great time visiting and hanging out with each other. It's ageless. Doesn't seem to be a differentiation.
- There's a great crew of kids that are really good at finding each other at community events and figuring out how to play with each other. They really know how to play together too!
- The old-fashioned kind of kid play and children's programs. The aftercare program in particular have been great at creating more socialization regardless of background.
- The forest program is a great example of neighbors letting kids play in the woods on their property. In the last few years, the forest program was run out of the school. Like the Farmer Forest Program.
- The D'Amicos had a huge party after the school closed and I feel like that opportunity for kids to be seen and known is really special. Really love that free style of childcare where everyone feels like one big family.
- It seems like there is a new wave of younger families and kids that are actually sticking around. It seems like there's some momentum there.
- The young families love this town so much and are willing to contribute money. Really compassionate caring group of friends that grew up in town.
- The 4th of July parade is a great community gathering. The park has activities. The library has good activities, and even the firehouse.
- The older generations and the whole community of neighbors are part of the personal inner landscape of anyone who grows up here. Great memories of our community.
- Watched the community grow up and surge into a larger town and there was even a baby boom at one point. And the kids do leave for school and other things, but they do come back.
- Community suppers has been a real asset and helps us feel a part of this community.

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### What are the Challenges:

- One of the beauties of the school, is it minimized class differences over the years. I'm worried that this national division of groups and towns is going to affect us and make the class divide more apparent.
- Roxbury became a state champion in chess, but we are concerned that there isn't a school/community space for kids to get this kind of experience.
- The challenge is that kids can play together well when they are young, but it's harder as kids get older. And now there's this strange limbo where the kids don't feel connected to the town and they also don't really feel like they are a part of Montpelier either. Don't know how to help them feel a part of the community. Really need things for middle aged older kids to stay engaged and participate. Even carpooling is really hard.
- There's a mentality of seeing Roxbury as a ghost town and youth want to stay but don't really feel like we have a reason to stay.
- East Roxbury kids struggle to fit into any of the communities as well, and now it's even harder. Kids played soccer in Northfield, went to elementary school at a catholic school. Finally found their footing in Montpelier middle school, but then covid happened. Even though there are all these barriers, they still feel grounded in Roxbury.
- Montpelier parents won't bring kids out to Roxbury—don't even know where it is.
- It was really tough when kids were sent to the Northfield middle school. Didn't feel welcome.
- Without a group of people getting together, there's not a lot of activities for kids. We don't even know how many kids are in town! Have a really hard time reaching out to find kids.
- It's great to keep the kids around, but how do the seniors get around and how do they stay so long.
- As a senior, I hear about things happening, but I don't really know what is going on or what the programs are really about. Gotta have a better way to communicate and share info with seniors so that we can get more involved with the community and share the assets and resources.
- A big challenge is getting more people to join the programs we already have.
- We have a senior center, but it's not really functional. We've aimed for that, but haven't gotten there yet.
- We are in a job opportunity desert and a transportation desert.



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

- When I grew up, there was a community center that we could go to as kids. We could play games, listen to our own music, and play popcorn. Really want a community center that kids can go to now.
- Afterschool is great at accepting kids and kids are great at playing with different age kids. That said, it's really tough after a long bus ride. So we need to have activities and programs that can cater to that. If we had an aftercare program or something like it for high school kids, maybe they would come into town more.
- Giving kids leadership roles is something that can really help the youth get involved and start to connect with each other. The youth leadership program at the schools was incredible. Really watched kids work together to achieve a goal. Really like the teen center as well. Let's create things in Roxbury that are just for kids in Roxbury.
- Roxbury Rising was an initiative born out of the school closing in order to keep kids connected and families connected. Trying to get funding so that all kids can participate and make sure our kids and families can stay connected. We had a silent disco and it was awesome! We went totally rogue and by the end of the night, the fire department had to come. When we brought the headphones for the kids to listen to music individually, the kids just freaked out they were so excited.
- Let's create more activities and programs that keep kids and families here in Roxbury, and also provide options for families to have fun without having to drive 45 minutes. Been working on this for afterschool, specifically, but really just creating programming for kids to have fun.
- A teen center could be a great program to get going.
- Connecting kids with seniors to help seniors take care of their lawn/garden/house/meals would create a connection between youth and seniors and also gives seniors a better chance at staying in the community much longer.
- Seniors need to be better informed about what the youth are doing and the youth need to be better informed about what seniors need. Can create small "jobs" for kids. We have a newspaper that we use to share local jobs and where people need help. Would love to know when kids need a job to do. We have all kinds of things to do, but our age doesn't always allow us to get everything done. If kids don't have the skill set, we will show them how to do everything. Also a great time to have that perspective talk. It's better for someone else share wisdom with kids other than parents because kids listen better when it's someone else.
- What about a matchmaking program between youth and seniors. What about collecting stories and past experiences from seniors to share with youth. Kids have said they would love to hear wisdom and stories from seniors.
- We have a historical society that isn't used as much now, and I think it's ripe to bring that back to our community now. Use the historical society to keep the town more connected.
- Maybe get the bus/train systems back into working order. The closest bus service we can use is in Northfield. Can we extend that to Roxbury with a weekend route to help our kids have a way to get to Montpelier and back on the weekends as well as visit friends and be able to get to jobs.
- We could also set up a ride sharing platform that the town could get on so we can work together to get kids/seniors/people where they need to go easier. People used to pick up neighbors that were walking.
- There's a great opportunity for oral history/storytelling. Could start a storytelling program in the town library where kids/folks could go to learn about their elders and all the interesting things that they have done.
- We need more volunteers, particularly at the library. Could be a kind of public service. Like a bulletin board or poster to catch people's eyes. If we had more volunteers, we could run more programs. We've had that in the past, but we need the people.
- Need to plan/coordinate/combine activity events so that folks aren't competing for others to show up at their event.
- Loving the idea of storytellers and community members come in to share their experiences. The library does a job for a day activity, but this could be a really cool activity to encourage more volunteering. There's some really amazing people in this community and it would be great to get youth/people to get together.
- Finding ways for people to bring others in to share their experiences would be a super cool, nice way to provide a better connection to Roxbury. Have done things like this at the middle school, the high school, the library and other places too. Could get folks at the schools to share out this info in their school newsletter.
- Really need to put together a long-term plan for aftercare and a long term plan that involves youth a lot more and creates a space where kids can really feel included and have an identity of Roxbury is something our kids can be proud of and want to stay in. Lots of kids getting really bad feedback about how rural Rox is and they don't have the skills to not internalize those things.
- Really got to get the kids involved with the planning of programs and activities so that we hit the mark more often.
- Need to do more to develop better relationships with Northfield so that our kids can have more spaces to play and grow and learn. There is a love/hate relationship with Northfield, where NF thinks Roxbury is a ghetto.
- Really want to reinforce this matchmaking idea and bringing together other ideas like skill sharing, storytelling, or any other local activity. Making bread, picking grapes, all the different things that we do here.
- Skill sharing and bus field trips to different family farms in the area.
- A weekly work party would be great for kids. When you show up with 40 kids, you can get things done quickly and they loved it when we picked potatoes because it's not an experience they have had a lot. Even kids that worked on farms are starting to come back to our town because that's what they want.
- Having a town wide email where we can get the word out to everyone would help bring these different ideas/activities together.
- Organize the kids with their cell phones to share information through a coordinator that can direct what info needs to be shared.

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## Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Thanks for letting us listen in. We have this stack of data about Rox and it's really incredible that Roxbury has a larger percentage of youth than the village, the county, and even the state!
- Really close to a lot of different major population centers. Why is it so important to maintain and teach our kids to maintain the identity and culture of Roxbury. How come kids can't play with kids in Northfield / Randolph / Mplr.
- Really focused on creating better community connections because Rox wants more programming, activities, a third space, and just to have fun! Many towns want better connectivity to respond to local crisis like the opioid epidemic.
- It's nice to come to these and leave feeling like a community really likes one another. Roxbury is right up by the top. Y'all like each other a lot. And it really comes through with this intergenerational desire Roxbury has. I think leaning into the more informal strategies to stay connected is really the right way to go.
- You might want to think about if you want your population to grow. Do you want another business in town. Do you want kids to go somewhere else to work? Do you want more homes in Roxbury. If you start seeing gaps as you look into these questions, you'll have a better idea where the pain points are.
- Do a lot of community development and it's really heartening to see a whole community come together and pull for the same team. Will be bringing in economic dev after cv process.
- Hear a community that doesn't just like each other, but you trust and respect each other. You're a community that really knows your values. We always had check in points in my community as a kid that really builds a rootedness and confidence for kids. Heard some talk about the class divide. And it's so valuable to not have that class divide. Heard a lot about matchmaking and storytelling, and being able to pass on the knowledge/wisdom/experience. And the kids seem receptive to that and want to learn more.
- Love the ride share idea and could do some really great matchmaking there that could be really intentional.
- Things that stuck out was a real sense of belonging and a desire for youth to have that as well. It's great how Rox talks about how to connect with the middle age group as well. Childcare is critical, but middle-aged youth sometimes get left out of that.
- There's something happening right now in Roxbury. You've had some rough years with the closing of the school, and there's now this momentum in the town and I really want to see that continue.

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## Youth Forum

These are notes from a forum with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Roxbury students conducted by VCRD staff at the Main Street Middle School in Montpelier.

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### What we like about Roxbury

- I like that it's small here.
- A lot of people show up. Helped create boxes of food with eggs and milk for people in need. Community reaches out to people who need help.
- The greenhouse and playground. Claire at the church does a lot.
- Historical society "a lot of old stuff in there."
- Community dinners - people show up and contribute. People know each other, contribute, help each other out.
- Fraiser's Greenhouse.
- Claire at the church.
- Bridges program "Casey is awesome!" "She's working really hard to make it happen." Kids can help out.
- Randy at the Store! Staple of the community.
- Fish hatchery, quarry you can hike to. Park with ping pong, gazebo, table tennis, chess. Greenhouse and plants.
- Randy recently installed a cell phone booster at the store. Not everyone can get cell service at home. A few hotspots in town such as the library. Doesn't take that long to get places.

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### What we don't like

- There was some uncalled for behavior around the school closing, something that came up a lot.
- The situation was really messy and hardcore. Like something goes out of business and you don't know what to do with it. Letting the school fall into disrepair (holes in the wall). School going away and what to do? It shook up the community. Guaranteed to be messy.
- Personal writing on cars parked and junk is unwelcoming / unappealing.
- Mentioned the bus situation is a strain on families. Sometimes part of the bus will be packed because high schoolers and middle schoolers are only allowed to sit in specific places on the bus. The bus broke down on the way here (to school)! Snow day challenges.
- Sometimes the bus says it's going to be there at 7:05am but doesn't show up until 7:45am (got to the bus stop at 6:40am). One student said a girl wanted to get off at a specific stop and the bus driver refused. Sometimes bus drivers will only drop off at the school.
- Bus is super packed and can't sit with siblings (or other trusted people if things happen). Could make more room so don't have to triple up in bus seats.
- Some people sit alone but others are crunched due to assigned seating.
- Challenges with the bus monitor/safety on the bus. If the bus driver also has to pick up kids in East Roxbury it adds another 30 minutes to the drive.

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## What to change/see for Roxbury's future

- Complicated schedule with Bridges and getting folks from their houses. Hard to access hanging out with friends because it's far from Montpelier.
- Better busing system.
- Some people live far away from Roxbury, it's hard to have access to hang out with friends. We live so far away from our school. I'm not allowed to sit (on the bus) with my sister. She's in high school and I'm in middle school and she sits alone every day.
- Something like Shark @ Sugarbush - pool, gym, hot tub.
- Clean ups in town.
- Clean up some houses. Came up before and voted against/not followed. Need community updates and support.
- Would be good to fix up some houses. Racist houses and signs. "Public displays of signs that are unwelcoming." Some houses are racist. "People normally stop at Randy's or like, oh well, I can go 10 more miles to Northfield instead and just hope I can make it because (Randy's) is not really inviting." Writing on cars that are parked nearby with messages that are racist/unwelcoming/unappealing. "Maybe get a giant dumpster for the trash in the yards."
- Maybe you can't change how people feel about (racism)" but maybe have different opinions about how it's displayed.
- A lot of trash outside. Piles of trash everywhere and on the sidewalks too. At least they're putting up fences. Houses with trash and things outside and cars and piles of trash (goes into the sidewalks and roads). Trash in the park and woods.
- A coffee and bagel shop. Not a Starbucks. Some kind of woodshop. Something like Birchgrove Bakery or Capitol Grounds in Montpelier.
- Find something to do with the school - anything! Really wanted to see something done with the school. There is still a kitchen at school, could do the bagel shop there. Art store.
- Two parks - one on 12A by the river, would be good to fix it up.
- Renovating the school - people use the playground and basketball courts. Big deal for younger kids in the community. Renovations to the basketball court, fixing picnic tables. More engagement in the community for younger kids.
- Child care - driving to Montpelier.
- Keeping school for kids.
- Overusing dirt roads (during mud season) when a paved one nearby as a shortcut. But in reality it's just going to ruin the road for everyone.
- Would be good to publicize community suppers so more people can know about it.
- Ideas about buying books for the senior center. Brought some books with dad and brother but had to be really careful because the senior center building is in such disrepair. "Maybe ways to get more use out of the senior center." Senior center is a cool building that would be good to capitalize on and renovate. Roof is falling in. Building is in a good spot but could be put to better use.
- Mentioned the historical society and "all the cool" things that are there. I didn't even know about it (the historical society) until last year. Another student thought the historical society building was a shed. Don't think they have a sign? Make a sign to show what it is.
- Issues with the post office. The hours are awful. Frequently the postmaster is away; very difficult to access the post office.
- Almost all the students have lived in Roxbury their entire life. Three students have grandparents who live in Roxbury.

**These are notes from Roxbury 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students conducted by VCRD staff at the Main Street Middle School in Montpelier.**

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## What we like about Roxbury

- The quietness!
- Small town everyone knows each other.
- Welcoming,
- Amount of woods.
- In the summertime.
- The river and the nature. Afterschool Bridges. Tennis courts.
- D'Amico's pumpkins, maple dogs.
- Train waking you up.
- Variety of places can go and hang out. Sometimes I like to go on a little walk, hang out with friends and go for a walk. Art bus.
- Having a school that's chill. Small town where everybody knows everyone (a lot of people).
- Community events and joining together to help.
- 4th of July parade.
- Halloween.
- Having fun.
- Nature! The amount of woods. Like to run around in the field at school.
- Randy's! The store.
- The park.
- Afterschool - Bridges.
- Community does Halloween.
- Rivers.
- Tennis courts.
- Nature and rivers and grass.
- D'Amicos: pumpkins! Maple dogs, party.
- Train waking you up.
- Variety of places to hang out with friends and go for a walk.
- Art bus and Fraiser's Greenhouse. Ruby the dog at the Greenhouse.
- Library, church, school.

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## What we don't like

- Rivers (flooding worries?).
- I don't like how we get 5 feet of snow.
- Trash cars in front of houses and everywhere, trash all over the roads, the junk.
- Junk people have
- Beavers (flooding?) and oldness of buildings with scratched paint.
- Bridges program only 3 days a week.
- Abandoned houses (Carter's? Some taken down?).
- Old creepy house by the school.
- Sidewalks aren't cleared/sidewalks hard to see (Grandpa cleans them).
- Some kids are homeschooled instead of coming all the way to MSMS. Some friends homeschooled so don't get to see them.
- Shutting down the school, don't like that it happened. Some kids are homeschooled and don't get to see friends.
- Closed school took away life of Roxbury.
- The bus ride is so long.
- Woods aren't clean, trash in them.
- Only certain sidewalks have sand/gravel - hard in places.
- All the trash in front of houses.
- Air isn't always clean.
- Town garage road - someone actually made a joke to me about hitting me with their truck.
- Yard upkeep.
- Weeds on the side of the road and sidewalks.
- Plows plow everything next to the driveway.
- Holes in Randy's driveway.
- One way street.

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## What to change/see for Roxbury's future

- Skate park.
- Animal shelter/aquarium.
- Waterpark in summer with indoor trampoline.
- arcade /gym in the school.
- Amusement park / trampoline park.
- Better sidewalks.
- Fill in the potholes at Randy's.
- Fill in potholes in general.
- Upgrading playground equipment.
- More playground equipment for disabled folks at the school.
- Restaurant.
- Domino's pizza.
- Small grocery store.
- Roxbury appreciation day on April 26 with gathering and food.
- We should have all the doors open, open house. "Wild open house day."
- Founding day - have fun and talk to people.
- Caroling and fire at the park in the winter.
- Outdoor lounge at the school.
- Better garden beds at school.
- Lower taxes.
- Bus ride go to more places than just school.
- Have a place to stay during a flood like at school or church (had to go to the school during flood, needed water).
- Better parking at the school.
- More afterschool and different activities.
- More sports like Montpelier has.
- Be able to get off the bus at school.
- Wi-Fi on the bus, shorter bus ride and eating allowed on the bus.
- Real internet connection not just Wi-Fi.
- Free bikes.
- biking/hiking trails.
- Bigger fish hatchery.
- More types of fish.
- Mini pond for fishing.
- Randy's Day to thank him and write cards - March 22 birthday.
- Pool.
- Open space to hang out and stay there if needed.
- Elderly shelters.
- Field days for the whole community.
  - Amusement park/fair.
  - Gigantic theme park.
  - Games, water balloons with Ms. Chandler, face paint, slide, snow cones, bouncy house with water.
  - Summer fair with zero gravity ride.
  - Giant merry go round.
  - 24/7 bouncy house.
  - A bouncy house with water connected.
- Soccer nets at school.
- Trampoline at school.
- More parking at the school.
- Garden beds at school.
- More afterschool programs.
- You should be able to get off the bus at the school.
- airplane/helicopter to school.
- Concrete pad at school. Wi-Fi on every single bus.
- Free bikes, shorter bus ride. We should be able to eat on the bus.
- Mini train that goes through Roxbury and picks up kids.
- Get a juice box and yogurt when you get on the bus.
- Zoo.
- Automatic dinosaurs.
- Science lab.
- Hotel.



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## Additional Action Ideas

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

- Keep going on the cleaning up. It would be good to have a little coffee shop. How about opening up a small donut business?? The school has a beautiful kitchen. There is definitely a need for more donuts since “koffee kup” went out of business. Create a community garden where each person has their own plot. All of these ideas would create community, contribute to our quality of life, and potentially contribute to the economy.
- Find a way to better communicate when there’s a new group in town. Community Crafters and Roxbury Roots do a good job of getting their info out. I have no idea what Roxbury Rising is and it feels a bit exclusive (just an example).
- What I like about living in Roxbury: quiet, mellow location, no traffic, feels safe, like Randy’s store, 4th of July celebration, fish hatchery, park.
- What I would change about Roxbury: clean sidewalks, cleaning up yards and roadsides, full-time post office with more realistic hours for the working class, quicker response time for emergency services.
- Ideas for the future: more community wide events (love the sense of community during 4th of July), better playground equipment for those with disabilities, indoor/outdoor facility for recreational activities, better street lighting, more police coverage, Saturday morning farmers market in the park, annual craft fair in Town Hall, bike/hiking trails somewhere.
- Simple action ideas for myself and family for quality of life is not allowing developers to come in and build any neighborhood development. We moved here for rural life. For economy, if small businesses wanted to come into town that would be allowed and welcomed. Ie a little coffee deli cafe in the old church. What happened to the farmers market talks? For community, the community dinners are amazing and wish they were moved around on days of the week as well.
- Be fiscally responsible, sometimes you’ll have to be creative. Plan for the worst and hope for the best. Reading the Annual Report has my head spinning - my wife and I are overextended as it is and an increase in taxes may put us over the limit. Whatever happens, try to keep any tax increase to a minimum. I feel very isolated from the village of Roxbury living on Drown Road (I live next door to Nate Donahue) and really am not connected enough to know how it all works together.
- Including and engaging East Roxbury residents! Hosting community events such as hiking, skiing, fishing our local town forests, etc. Creating a story trail with elementary students. Connecting seniors with volunteers; middle/ high students interviewing residents and creating a Roxbury video and/or book.
- We need to communicate better! Regular community “round table” discussions -planning and collaboration among town groups and entities and publicizing nonprofit/committee work. More invitations and inclusion of all voices in decision-making.
- Plan community center events; include RFL, Roxbury Rising, Roxbury Crafters, Roxbury Roots, Park Committee, ROCOR, Roxbury Community Trust, Neighbors Helping Neighbors.
- Junk Ordinance reboot: town discussion on how to come up with a creative alternative to the junk ordinance. Town Safety/Aesthetics - illegal dumping of oil in flood plain?
- Decreasing burnout among select board members/volunteers/local nonprofit work.
- Support/promote local businesses/economy/nonprofits. Roxbury could invest in village wide water & septic by tying into school system, allowing homes and businesses access to an asset that helps town thrive. Expand tax base! Making Roxbury more affordable beyond keeping taxes low.
- Make Roxbury welcoming to new and current residents. Mutual aid network! Creating a resilient and sustainable community in which we help/support each other. Increasing access to nutritious/affordable food.
- More climate resiliency discussions.
- Increasing transparency and accountability in local governance. Increase collaborative decision-making skill on the basis of common values and creatively working with disagreements. Values-based decision-making that is town wide.
- Increasing civic engagement /awareness about local politics. More forums for civic engagement outside of select board/town meetings. Reduce polarization over issues like the Junk Ordinance
- Advocating for our school so we can get it back as an active school!

## VI. What's Next Roxbury Community Visit Participants

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Mary Bouchard  
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Elizabeth Carney  
Sandra Carrillo  
John Carson  
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Bill Cecil  
Cheryl Chittick  
Claire Chomentowski  
Liva Coe  
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Jay Gilman  
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Nifer Hoen  
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Bailey McLaughlin  
Edgar Mesquita  
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Karen Tassinari  
Matthew Thomas  
Patty Vincent  
Erik Wardle  
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and many more...



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