

One Burke Community Visit

Report and Action Plan ~ October 2017



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development
in partnership with the Vermont Community Foundation

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Vermont Council on Rural Development
PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384
802-223-6091 | info@vtrural.org | www.vtrural.org

Jon Copans, *Climate Economy Model Communities Program Director*
Paul Costello, *Executive Director*
Margaret Gibson McCoy, *Office and Communications Manager*
Jenna Koloski, *Community and Policy Manager*

Front and Back Cover Photos: CATHI FEELEY
Inside Pages: MARGARET GIBSON MCCOY

I. Introduction

From West Burke with its core anchor businesses and historic village center, to the scenic landscape of Darling Ridge, charming Burke Hollow and dynamic East Burke boasting world class biking and skiing, Burke is a town that encapsulates all of the beauty, grit, opportunity, and the unique connection between community and the land so iconic of the region. Each village is rooted in its own history with distinct assets and personality, but sharing one key asset -- residents with a deep dedication to the community and a passion for working towards a vibrant future for all of Burke.

On July 11th 2017, Burke residents from all parts of town and all walks of life packed into the Burke Town School. While the local Bald Mountain Boys played and the school served up a community barbeque, the room was buzzing with excitement and potential; excitement around the chance to highlight and celebrate the town's many assets, and the potential to build on these assets and seize the next stage opportunities for unity, community connection, and prosperity. The Community Visit Team was impressed by a strong turnout for this and other One Burke events, and especially by the energy and leadership in the room. Burke is a town ready to take on any task that will address challenges and build opportunity for the good of the community.

While community Visits are designed to help communities come together, review major issues, develop priorities and line up for action, VCRD has a couple of other goals behind these efforts. We look to build new volunteerism and encourage more local folks to get involved in moving the community forward, and to help build the connections of the community to human, technical, and funding resources from lead agencies and organizations in the state. In Burke, the Steering Committee identified another goal – to unite different parts of town in common purpose. From the “One Burke” name to the comprehensive and broad-reaching outreach efforts and the cross-village priorities chosen, this process was about building unity, collaboration, and connection across West Burke, East Burke, and Burke Hollow.

It is not easy to choose priorities, and there are many other good ideas for action listed in the ‘opportunities’ section of this report that can inform the ongoing work of the Task Forces, but in the end, Burke selected solid priorities for action that will lead to a stronger and more vibrant community and economy for all Burke residents. These initiatives set challenging but strategically achievable goals, and there is much work to do, but Burke is a town that is ready to take action and has the capacity, drive, and dedication to succeed. With over 150 local people from all parts of the community participating in the process and over 60 volunteers now engaged in active Task Forces to advance priorities, it is clear that there is great energy in Burke for forward momentum and progress.

We look forward to working with the Burke Task Forces as the priority projects identified in the process move forward efforts to:

- **Revitalize Village Infrastructure**
- **Expand Educational Facilities**
- **Improve Village Traffic & Pedestrian Safety & Build a Trail Connecting East and West Burke**

The Task Forces advancing these issues are already hard at work—please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chairs (listed in the work plan section of this report).

The Vermont Council on Rural Development helps Vermont citizens build prosperous and resilient communities through democratic engagement, marshalling resources, and collective action. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Burke as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to the

Burke Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Burke projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

VCRD provides leadership to facilitate the Community Visit process in partnership with the **Vermont Community Foundation** (VCF) which is devoted to the progress of Vermont communities; VCF supports and helps guide visits, and provides significant resources to community projects throughout Vermont.

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

We would like to thank the Burke Select Board who initially invited this process. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process from the beginning including; Alivia Bertolini Libby, Shelly Cole, Christine Emmons, Jodi Flanagan, Mike Harris, Des Hertz, Barry Hertz, Sarah Jewell Foster, Joe Kasprzak, John Kresser, Linda Lotti, Kevin Mack, Chris Manges, Carmenza Montague, Kate O'Farrell, Taylor Peyton, Stacy Rice, Jessica Sechler, Tom Taylor, Nancy Taylor, Cathie Wheeler, Jake Wheeler, and Karri Willy. Thank you also to all of the community leaders, groups, and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the event and made sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

We are very thankful for the use of the Burke Town School for all of the One Burke meetings as well as serving a wonderful community BBQ on Community Visit Day; to the students who provided childcare during forums on Community Visit Day; and to the Bald Mountain Boys for providing music at the community dinner!

Michael Moser and the UVM Center for Rural Studies are terrific allies in our efforts and we appreciate their help building a briefing profile for the VCRD Community Visit Team.

Thanks must also go to USDA Rural Development, the Community National Bank, the Vermont Community Foundation (VCF), the Northeast Kingdom Fund of the VCF, and the Edwin and Helen Lynch Fund of the VCF who all contributed funding to make this process possible

VCRD calls state, federal and non-profit leaders to participate in Community Visit processes. We are proud of the partners we get to work with—and especially the One Burke Visiting Team (page 38)—they are the best of Vermont's public servants.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Burke should be grateful to those who've stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Tammy Wagner (Village Infrastructure); Alyssa May (Education Facilities); and John Kresser and Christine Emmons (Village Traffic and Connecting Trail).

VCRD especially wants to thank Desiree Hertz for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Chair. From early conversations around a potential process in Burke to the final meeting to line up action plans and resources, Des has stood out as a strong leader with a passion for and dedication to the future success of her hometown. Des has an incredible ability to rally folks around a big picture conversation about the future, while also staying organized and able to take practical steps towards an identified goal. As VCRD steps back and community task forces take the lead, we are confident that Des will be an efficient and capable leader to maintain momentum, continue collaboration, and drive forward!

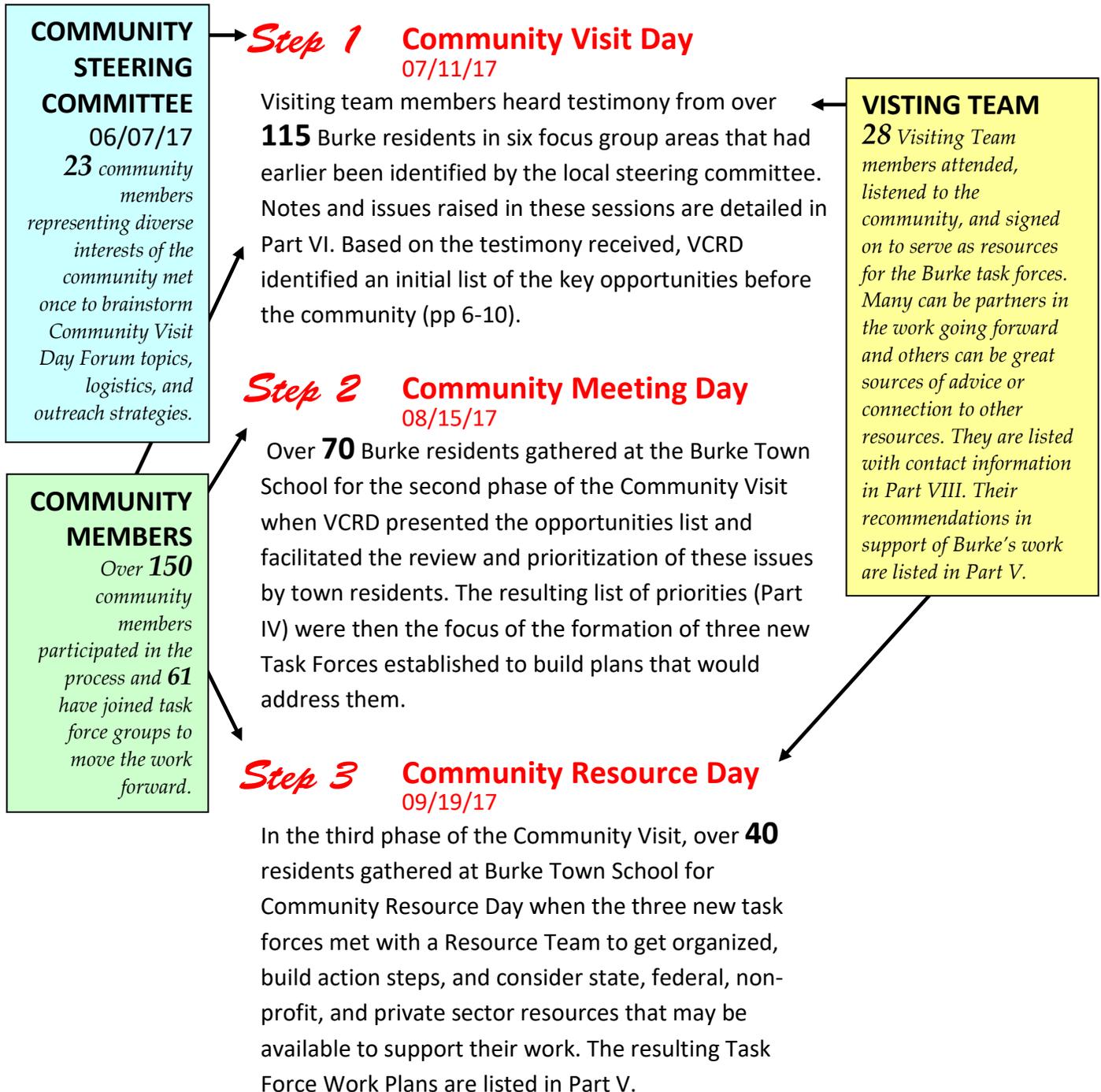
At VCRD, we are so proud each day that we work in a place where community is real and strong, and where local residents work together to get things done to make their communities the best they can possibly be. It was a great pleasure to work with the residents of Burke who stand up for the town and who are lined up for the common good and best future for this wonderful community. We are eager to continue following and supporting your success!



From top: One of 6 Community Visit Day forums where residents shared ideas for the future; Dancing to the Bald Mountain Boys at the Community Visit Day Dinner; Free barbeque dinner provided by the Burke Town School on Community Visit Day; Community members took part in a dot-voting exercise on Community Meeting Day to select priorities for action.

II. The One Burke Community Visit Process

The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) Community Visit Program is a structured process that enables a community to identify and prioritize goals, fosters local leadership, and serves as a catalyst for the development and realization of concrete, achievable action plans. **The program in Burke consisted of three phases depicted here:**



III. Vision for Burke's Future

These points of vision were compiled from vision statements that were shared during Community Visit Meetings and supported by the majority of participants at the Resource Meeting and an online survey. The statements represent broad hopes that the majority of responding residents have for the long term good of the Burke community.

Burke residents look to a future for the community where:

- ❖ Burke cultivates a family and community culture.
- ❖ Burke's economy is diversified and vibrant.
- ❖ Burke is known for its exceptional educational facilities that are up to date and meet the needs of Burke's growing population.
- ❖ Burke residents have access to year-round, healthy, active, indoor and outdoor activities.
- ❖ Resources and infrastructure in Burke support families and the community.
- ❖ East and West Burke have equal access to resources and offer equal opportunity for residents.
- ❖ Our community is inclusive and welcoming.
- ❖ Burke is a town with economic opportunity.
- ❖ Burke is a place people want to come to vacation, recreate, and spend their dollars.
- ❖ Burke is able to maintain its rural charm and character as it grows.
- ❖ Burke is a community where our youth want to stay and/or return to when they grow up.
- ❖ Burke is a collaborative community where everyone works together on behalf of the town.



IV. One Burke Priorities

Determined by Burke residents at the VCRD Community Meeting, August 15, 2017

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Burke community members whittled down a list of 21 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with red and blue stickers, over 70 participants chose three action ideas that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the August 15th meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Burke residents selected three priorities for future action:

✓ Expand Education Facilities

Burke residents are proud of their strong school system, dedicated educators and volunteers, and active and engaged administration. However, many feel that new and expanded facilities are needed to ensure Burke children have what they need to learn and engage in constructive year-round activities. Facilities needs include a gym, middle school classroom space, and a location for a full-day preschool program. A task force could come together to identify and quantify the needs, build a plan for redevelopment, and connect with the community at large to share the opportunity new space could provide, and gauge feasibility for funding and development.

✓ Revitalize Village Infrastructure

Burke residents are eager to see village revitalization, new businesses including restaurants and bars in their village centers, and increased access to affordable housing. However, water and sewer capacity limit the ability to grow in East Burke and deeply undermine the restoration of historic buildings in West Burke. An Infrastructure task force could form to work with residents and outside experts to develop a comprehensive plan for water, sewer, and resiliency improvements, inventorying needs and costs, and identifying funding sources and experts to advance infrastructure goals.

✓ Improve Village Traffic and Pedestrian Safety and Build a Trail Connecting East and West Burke

In recent years, visitors have flocked to East Burke to enjoy Kingdom Trails, Burke Mountain, and the scenic beauty of the region. These visitors have brought with them economic opportunity and growth, but also challenges around traffic and pedestrian safety of residents and visitors alike. A task force could come together to explore traffic calming techniques, enforcement options, improved sidewalks and crosswalks, alternative paths, bike lanes, and strategic signage in both villages. The group could work with residents and outside experts to develop a comprehensive pedestrian and bike infrastructure plan to inventory what is needed, explore the cost, and seek out funding and technical assistance opportunities to implement the plan. This Task Force could also explore options, determine feasibility, and identify and secure funding and technical assistance to build a path or trail that connect West and East Burke to improve physical connection between village centers and connect Burke Town School with all three villages.

Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

Along with the three chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action that community members shared on Community Visit Day. Though these opportunities weren't chosen as priority projects through this process, community members may find the list useful as they look to expand on current projects or take on new ones.

Improve Community Communications

Burke Residents would like to find a way to share events, resources, and community information; post job opportunities; and sell or giveaway goods. A Communications Task Force could develop a platform for community communications including online forums such as social media or Front Porch Forum, a community calendar, and a newsletter or bulletin. The group could convene representatives from community organizations and businesses in town to build a collective plan for communications and information sharing.

Develop a Community Center or Gathering Space

Burke is an active and connected community, but some feel that space is limited to bring the community together for programming and events. A task force could come together to identify, develop, and/or revitalize a community space for multi-generational programs and activities including music, dances, community meals, youth programming, and more. A new space may be needed to accommodate community events, or it may be possible to use existing spaces such as the West Burke Universalist Church, the Burke Mountain Clubhouse, or the Burke Community Building that currently hosts Senior Meals and Bingo.

Start a Burke Recreation Program

A Recreation Task Force could come together to form a unified Burke recreation program to provide activities and events for Burke residents of all ages, and connect to activities and events around the region. A dedicated recreation program, modeled after successful programs in St. Johnsbury and Lyndon, could build summer recreation programming, hold community festivals and events, connect to Kingdom Trails for youth and family programming, and more. The Task Force could use community spaces including the school and Community Building, and would work to find funding to support their efforts.

Create Educational and Career Training Opportunities

Burke residents would like to see more resources and support for young community members to access education and career training, as well as assistance for adults looking for new opportunities or career growth. A task force could come together to identify and boost career development and skills training for Burke residents, and better connect to regional and statewide education and training programs such as the North Country Career Center in Newport and enrichment programs through the Lyndonville Library. The group could identify and dismantle barriers to access including transportation, funding, and availability. The group could also build a mentorship program for young adults to connect with area businesses to develop career skills and gain valuable workforce experience.

Build a Burke Community Garden

A task force could form to build a garden providing all residents the opportunity to grow food together as a community. The group could identify a location, develop a plan, and line up volunteers and funding opportunities for the garden. The space could even include a community greenhouse to extend the growing season.

Boost Business and Community Development in West Burke

West Burke is a village with deep roots in its mill town history, core businesses including Mike's Gas and Aldrich's Market, and recreation opportunities from snowmobiling to hiking, paddling, swimming, climbing, and more. However, many residents would like to see a West Burke revitalization – one that preserves the unique character of the Village, but brings new life to vacant buildings, improves affordable housing options, builds community, beautifies the village center, and highlights West Burke's business, historic, community, and recreation assets. Some ideas include attracting restaurants and bars to the village, restoring historic buildings, bringing back the tradition of West Burke Street Dances, holding music events in West Burke, revitalizing the community park, improving access and resources for ATV and VAST users, and branding and marketing West Burke as the gateway and hub for recreation in the northern lakes and forests.

Develop Alternative Kingdom Trails Access

With tens of thousands of visitors coming to Kingdom Trails each year, Burke residents wonder whether expanding access points to the trails would help to disseminate the impact on traffic and safety. A Task Force could come together, working closely with Kingdom Trails and other partners, to explore alternative access points. Work could include coordinating with landowners to expand trails into West Burke, developing a Lyndonville hub for trail access, or building a new climbing trail as an alternative to Darling Hill Road. The group could also explore infrastructure to make new access points attractive to bikers including sanitary facilities, ample parking, and a shuttle service that helps to shuttle bikes to and from key points on the trails and in town.

Improve Public Transportation

A Transportation Task Force could work with RCT to extend bus service from Lyndonville to increase access to activities and services in Lyndon, allow for transportation between the village centers, and provide transportation from Lyndonville to Burke Mountain, Kingdom Trails, and other Burke businesses and activities. The group could also explore transportation options for bikers and other visitors to Burke including a shuttle service or even an innovative pedi-cab service.

Develop a Business Incubator and Maker's Space

A business incubator and/or maker's space could be a way to attract businesses to the town, encourage local entrepreneurs, foster creativity and ingenuity, and boost Burke's economic future. A West or East Burke building could be renovated and revitalized to accommodate an incubator space. The incubator would include shared resources and utilities, mutual support, cooperative marketing, and technical assistance from local and regional economic development organizations. A maker's space could provide a place for people of all ages, with shared interests, to gather and work on projects while sharing ideas, equipment, and knowledge while seeding the economy of the future.

Expand Burke Community Meals and Nutrition

Seeing the success of the Senior Meals program at the Community Building and annual community dinners at the school, Burke residents would like to expand a community meal program to provide regular, multi-generational meals for the town either at the school or at the Community Building. A Community Meals Task Force could work with community partners and volunteers to offer regular community meals, start a summer meals site in West Burke for Burke youth, and could even find ways to couple meals with cooking and nutrition education and providing fresh, nutritious foods for Burke residents to take home.

Enhance the Burke Tourism Experience

Between the outdoor recreation opportunities, Kingdom Trails, Burke Mountain, VAST trails, Lake Willoughby, ice climbing, Burke Mountain Academy, weddings, and more, many people from around the world are visiting Burke each year. Burke residents expressed a desire to continue to provide a world-class experience and services to visitors, while also being careful to maintain and cultivate Burke's unique community identity. A task force could come together, in partnership with the Burke Chamber, local businesses, and other partners, to build a Burke tourism plan to celebrate and share the town's cultural and historical identity while providing quality information services, tours and guides, and year-round activities for all ages. The group could build and share the Burke brand and message, boost Chamber support and collaboration, create an information booth for visitors, and other activities to provide a positive tourism experience for businesses, locals, and visitors alike. The group could also explore partnership with Lyndon to collaborate on visitor experience along the Rt. 5, Darling Hill, and Rt. 114 corridors.

Rebuild West Burke Park

Burke families love the availability of three community parks located in East Burke, at the Burke Town School, and in West Burke. However, some feel that the West Burke park could be improved and revitalized to be more welcoming and accessible to area children and families. A group could come together to develop a park revitalization plan and seek out community support, volunteers, and funding to bring new life to this community asset.

Increase Bike Access and Programming

Biking has become an integral part of Burke's community, identity, and recreation. Some residents would like to build and capitalize on that identity by expanding bike access and activities. Some ideas include building bike lanes and paths for road biking, building a BMX track, building more family-friendly trails and programming, or constructing an indoor bike park. Additionally, recognizing the expense of biking equipment, a Burke Biking Task Force could help to increase access to bike equipment for all including rentals, loans, subsidized or donated bikes, or finding a space for the "Link Program," a program currently in development that offers a free bike in exchange for work in a bike shop.

Beautify Burke

A Burke Beautification task force could form to improve the look and vibrancy of the village centers. The group could identify a unifying look for lighting, banners, flags, and signage that would highlight individual assets and identity for each village center, but with a unifying message or look that would tie the three centers together to celebrate and highlight a single Burke identity.

Support Burke Business and Economic Development

Burke is a town with many economic assets including a scenic location with endless outdoor recreation opportunities, an active and skilled Chamber of Commerce, a growing biking and recreation industry, and three Village Centers. From Inns, Hotels, and Campgrounds to cafés, restaurants, sporting goods retailers, and more, Burke has a thriving business community. An Economic Development Task Force could form to leverage those assets and implement a comprehensive strategy to boost economic development, attract new businesses and restaurants, redevelop underused historic structures, and fill vacancies in West and East Burke. The group could also help to foster growth in the business community by connecting owners and entrepreneurs with the startup and business growth resources and technical assistance they need to succeed.

Expand Community Events and Celebrations

Events and festivals serve as a way to both celebrate and gather as a community, and can attract visitors from outside of town to visit Burke. Burke events such as NEMBAfest, the Fall Foliage Festival, and others already bring people together in celebration, but many residents feel that more events could be a way to bring the community together more often, and showcase Burke's assets to visitors. An events task force could come together in support of existing events and to expand offerings to include weekly summer music festivals in West and East Burke, bringing back West Burke Street Dances, and other events and festivals that draw people to town to visit local businesses and stay overnight.

Build Community Capacity

Some residents believe that the task of promoting additional infrastructure in the village, managing traffic, and developing local access need more staffing support at the Town level. A Burke Community and Economic Development staff position could provide additional leadership for town communication, infrastructure development, grant writing, and business support to help the community as a whole move forward.



Burke community members read the opportunities list together on Community Meeting Day.

V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, September 19, 2017

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

✓ Expand Education Facilities

Community Chair: **Alyssa May**

Facilitator: **Paul Costello**, Executive Director, VCRD

Resource Team Members: **Jeff Francis**, Executive Director, VT Superintendents Association

Kevin Wiberg, Philanthropic Advisor for Community Engagement, Vermont Community Foundation

Burke residents are proud of their strong school system, dedicated educators and volunteers, and active and engaged administration. However, many feel that new and expanded facilities are needed to ensure Burke children have what they need to learn and engage in constructive year-round activities. Facilities needs include a gym, middle school classroom space, and a location for a full-day preschool program. A task force could come together to identify and quantify the needs, build a plan for redevelopment, and connect with the community at large to share the opportunity new space could provide, and gauge feasibility for funding and development.

Action Steps

1. The Task Force will educate itself about the current state of facilities planning at the school board and meet with the board to offer help.
2. Work over time to systematically communicate and educate the community about facilities planning to inform and to build support in the greater community.
3. Connect to the Burke Parent Teachers Organization and other groups throughout the community.
4. Build a timeline detailing the steps in planning, fund development, and potential community bonding to drive the process forward in a timely way.
5. Work with the school board and superintendent to evaluate the articles of agreement in the new school district merger for its implications for debt and school assets.
6. Explore the opportunity of designating some of the redevelopment as “multi-use space” for community activities for all ages and the ability to connect to multiple funding sources to support these community uses in the school.
7. Consider the integration of services—from health and wellness to daycare or family services as potential opportunities in the project.
8. Engage students, and especially 8th Graders to gather their ideas and visions and to expand communications.

Resources

1. The Superintendent can provide crucial guidance and the Supervisory Union Business Manager can potentially lend critically important help.
2. Potential partnerships can be explored with groups ranging from day care to pre-school and senior service groups around inclusion in the project.
3. The 8th Grade, with support and facilitation from the UVM Tarrant Institute, can provide vision and lend leadership to the functions and design conversation.
4. The Task Force recognizes that there are key leaders who should be involved in sharing ideas, planning, and, potentially, inclusion in the group from the Town Clerk to the manager of Burke Mountain Resort.
5. Philanthropy could provide leadership especially for functional parts of the project connecting to day care or services. The Vermont Community Foundation could provide advice about potential sources and strategies.
6. Donors could be attracted by naming opportunities for major parts of the project, or for brick by brick names in a prominent place for contributors.
7. USDA RD could be helpful in support of the community facilities aspects of the project.
8. Ultimately the full community of Burke is the greatest partner in the process...the community owns the school and for the project to succeed the community will need to rally to the next generation of school facilities through a bond vote that covers the majority of the project.

Task Force Members

Sophie	Branson Gill	sophiebg@gmail.com	
Marc	Brown	mbrown@cnsuschools.org	274-2850
Lauren	Grader-Fox	lgraderfox@gmail.com	274-3641
Chrissie	Heinrich	chrissieheinrichvt@me.com	745-7558
Des	Hertz	deshertz@gmail.com	535-1580
Carol	Krochak	cmhorizon@charter.net	467-3158
Michelle	Laferriere	mdlaferr@gmail.com	
Alison	Manion	alimanionmusic@gmail.com	207-650-1972
Morgan	Moore	morgan.grace.moore@gmail.com	203-241-2418
Taylor	Peyton	idlewildsup@gmail.com	535-0825
Erik	Phillips-Nania	ephillie@gmail.com	
Stacy	Rice	srice@cnsuschools.org	467-3385
Ryan	Strauch	ryanstrauch13@gmail.com	
Karri	Willy	karriattheinn@gmail.com; info@villageinnofeastburke.com	535-6204

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Expand Education Facilities” Task Force

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

The Educational Facilities Task Force could identify and interview other communities that have recently built new facilities for the number of students you envision serving in the long-term. This might help provide some info on subjects like roadblocks, opportunities, costs, and valuable lessons learned. Randolph is one community the group may consider connecting with.

It may be beneficial to take a close look at enrollment trends over time to determine what the anticipated need may be in the future.

Community engagement with the full community is going to be key. As the group knows, there are always pressures when asking people with fixed and lower-income to contribute to a community resource that they may not always feel entirely connected to. A strong communications plan will help to build connections and bridge the community ahead of time to gain universal support.

It may be helpful to identify an array of options for expansion and consider all alternatives. These might include leaving the school as-is, adding new traditional facilities, innovative or alternative models, or other options like busing, or collaborations with nearby educational institutions. This would help folks see that you're not just trying to "force" one perceived "pre-selected" idea at them, allow for public input in the process, and build ownership.

There are partners in the state who could help to move forward on preschool space. The Agency of Human Services Child Development Division may be able to help explore enhancing preschool possibilities. There could be potential to collaborate with Northeast Kingdom Community Action Agency’s (NEKCA) Parent Child Center as well. The Agency of Education could help to ensure that Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is being implemented in the best possible way in Burke schools and connect that service to the space.

The school could explore ways to create educational experiences to meet the curricula that would take place outside of the existing facilities (e.g., externships, community service experiences, classes held in other appropriate public spaces). This could both improve the educational experience of students while freeing up space for other needs. For example, York, PA’s high school principal reduced the classroom space available for seniors as part of an effort to ensure that all seniors had educational experiences outside of the traditional school building. Could Kingdom Trails and Burke Mountain host outdoor experiences for children to reduce demand for gym space or other kinds of instructional space?

Potential Funding Sources for Educational Facility Expansion:

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) planning grants assist communities on a competitive basis by providing financial and technical assistance to identify and address local needs in the areas of housing, economic development, and public facilities and services. Contact Cindy Blondin, Grants Specialist at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (802) 828-5219.

USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Grant and Loans provide funding for essential community facilities. Contact Ben Doyle at Benjamin.Doyle@vt.usda.gov or (802) 828-6042.

The Department of Education Full-Service Community Schools grant competition provide comprehensive academic, social, and health services for students, students’ family members, and community members that will result in improved educational outcomes for children and the community. Contact Elson Nash, US Department of Education at (202) 401-2091.

✓ Revitalize Village Infrastructure

Community Chair: **Tammy Wagner**

Facilitator: **Ben Doyle**, *Community and Economic Development Specialist*, USDA Rural Development

Resource Team Members: **Eric Law**, *VT/NH Loan Specialist*, USDA Rural Development

Misty Sinsigalli, *Community Programs Specialist*, USDA Rural Development

Dave Snedeker, *Executive Director*, NVDA

Burke residents are eager to see village revitalization, new businesses including restaurants and bars in their village centers, and increased access to affordable housing. However, water and sewer capacity limit the ability to grow in East Burke and deeply undermine the restoration of historic buildings in West Burke. An Infrastructure task force could form to work with residents and outside experts to develop a comprehensive plan for water, sewer, and resiliency improvements, inventorying needs and costs, and identifying funding sources and experts to advance infrastructure goals.

Action Steps

1. Engage local leadership about having a community conversation around infrastructure. Ensure that both the Select Board and Village Trustees can hear from the community about its infrastructure needs.
2. Conduct some basic information gathering that can inform the approach and future surveys. Contact Northeastern Vermont Development Assn (NVDA) and review the State Natural Website (<http://anr.vermont.gov/maps>) to learn more about Burke's current infrastructure.
3. Develop various survey instruments to gauge citizens' infrastructure capacity and needs for the future. Survey can be disseminated in a variety of ways (paper, mail, online).
4. Based upon informal needs assessment, the Village Trustees should draft an RFP (Request for Proposals) for an engineer to perform study of needs/potential water/waste water systems in Burke.
5. Simultaneously work with USDA Rural Development to develop a Planning Grant application that can support the study or the contact the Vermont Agency of Commerce whose Municipal Planning Grant can also be used.
6. Throughout the process, call on technical assistance providers to help you navigate various steps and funding opportunities (RCAP, VT Rural Water, NVDA, USDA Rural Development).
7. Contact Clay Purvis of the Public Service Department to help the community understand the resources available to improve its telecommunications needs. He should be invited to a community meeting along with representatives from various phone/internet service providers.

Resources

1. USDA Rural Development: Rural Development has grant and loan funds that can support both the planning and construction of water/waste water infrastructure projects. Beyond that, they are happy to provide advice and technical assistance whether the community utilizes Rural Development projects or not. Contact: Misty Sinsigalli, Community Loan Specialist, Misty.Sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov, 802-424-3156; Eric Law, Community Programs Specialist, Eric.Law@vt.usda.gov, 802-828-6033; Ben Doyle, Community and Economic Development Director, Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov, 802-828-6042.

2. Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) Solutions and Vermont Rural Water: Both have provided free technical assistance to communities on water infrastructure planning and can identify potential funding opportunities to communities. Contact: Mark Johnson, Vermont State Lead, RCAP Solutions, mjohnson@rcapsolutions.org, 802-505-1037; Shaun Fielder, Executive Director, VT Rural Water, sfielder@vtruralwater.org, 802-660-4988.
3. Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) has a variety of resources and expertise that can provide assistance. A Municipal Planning Grant could be used to develop a detailed infrastructure plan. Contact: Faith Ingulsrud, Planning Coordinator, faith.ingulsrud@vermont.gov, 802-828-5228.
4. NVDA: The NEK's regional planning and economic development association. They will be a key partner in helping the community plan for and fund infrastructure improvement and can also provide technical assistance. They can also help with grant writing. Contact: David Snedeker, Executive Director, dsnedeker@nvda.net, 802-748-8303.
5. Public Service Department: A state agency that can provides information and technical assistance to enhance telecommunication infrastructure. Contact: Clay Purvis, Director of Telecommunications and Connectivity Specialist, clay.purvis@vermont.gov, 802-371-9655.

Task Force Members

Tom	Blake	tomblakeconstruction@gmail.com	467-3349
Scott	Chappell	smchappell@charter.net	626-3165
Dan	Flanagan	dyflan4agan@gmail.com	274-6606
Travis	Foley	folworks@gmail.com	
Rachel	Gilbert	raygilbert78@gmail.com	626-4565
Sue	Leskin	suusee@yahoo.com	467-8343
Kevin	Mack	kmack@skiburke.com	535-5855
Jackie	Manges	jackiemanges10@gmail.com	467-3928
Tom	Manges	tmanges@gmail.com	467-3928
Ed	Manion	velomanion@gmail.com	535-1966
Sean	Montague	couloir007@gmail.com	473-9798
Abbie	Montgomery	ae.montgomery@live.com	424-6617
Carol	Moore-Whitney	carolmoorewhitney@gmail.com	535-5378
Baylow	Ouellette	baylowcakes@gmail.com	535-9838
Taylor	Peyton	idlewildsup@gmail.com	535-0825
Erik	Phillips-Nania	ephillie@gmail.com	
Siobhan	Shufelt	sshufelt@skiburke.com	535-7306
Tammy	Wagner	wagnerco@myfairpoint.net	467-3372
Cathie	Wheeler	cathie.wheeler@gmail.com	626-5029
Jake	Wheeler	jwheeler@drm.com	626-5029
Karri	Willy	karriattheinn@gmail.com; info@villageinnofeastburke.com	535-6204

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Revitalize Village Infrastructure” Task Force

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

This priority might lend itself to a visual approach. The group could work with artists and designers who can assist the town in developing visual renditions of the villages as they are and various ways they could be in the future.

Contact Terisa Thomas at the Department of Environmental Conservation to support next steps at terisa.thomas@vermont.gov or 802-249-2413.

It may be helpful to start by identifying owners of the properties that the community is interested in revitalizing and have conversations to determine their willingness to be involved and their future plans for their properties. There may be challenges they face that the town or others could help address.

The Bethel Build a Better Block model might be a good model to explore for West Burke. They built a community driven weekend of pop-up shops, restaurants and events to help people in the community to visualize a revitalized village center. Visit <http://bethelrevitalizationinitiative.org> or contact Kelly Stoddard-Poor, Associate State Director of AARP at kstoddardpoor@aarp.org or 802-951-1313.

The team may need to contact and procure civil engineering services to evaluate existing water and sewer infrastructure and assist with planning for areas where no infrastructure exists.

If affordable housing needs emerge as a part of infrastructure improvements, connect with the following leaders and experts for guidance and resources:

- Agency of Humans Services Director of Housing Angus Chaney 802-241-0440 or angus.chaney@vermont.gov.
- Rural Edge CEO Trisha Ingalls, trishai@ruraledge.org or 802-535-3555.
- VHC Housing Director, Martin Hahn, 802-828-3259.
- Housing Vermont President Nancy Owens, nancy@hvt.org or 802-863-8424.

Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) staff are aware of most of the public resources available for planning and funding improvement projects of all types. The group should continue to connect to NVDA to help point the town and committees toward opportunities for assistance and funding. Contact Dave Snedeker at dsnedker@nvda.net or 802-748-5181.

The group could convene a meeting of potentially affected property owners to provide them with an overview of the potential benefits and costs of enhanced water and sewer capacity. This way, as the effort goes forward, no one will be surprised at the prospect of short-term rate increases and will understand that, as new development comes on line, those increases will be moderated and that a growing grand list will help control the growth in taxes paid to support municipal services.

The team could work with Vermont Rural Water Association to identify sources of funding to conduct a water and sewer infrastructure feasibility study / needs assessment. Contact Shaun Fielder, Executive Director at 802 660-4988 or sfielder@vtruralwater.org.

The group could partner with Burke Mountain to work together closely on water capacity and exploring the year-round infrastructure needs.

Contact Eric Blatt, Division Director of Facilities Engineering at the Department of Environmental Conservation. 802-828-1550.

Potential Funding Sources for Revitalizing Village Infrastructure:

The VT Department of Housing and Community Development for technical assistance, grants, and strategic planning. Contact Gary Holloway, ACCD, Downtown Program Coordinator, gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802-828-3220 or Richard Amore, Planning and Project Manager, Richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802-828-5229.

USDA Rural Development – There are a variety of grant and loan programs available to support infrastructure improvements (water, wastewater, storm water, transportation, and buildings). Contact Ben Doyle for more information: Benjamin.Doyle@vt.usda.gov or (802)-828-6042. Specifically, ask USDA about a Water and Waste Disposal Predevelopment Planning Grant, and a subsequent Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program grant and loan package (Burke may be eligible for up to a 75 percent grant due to the REAP Zone).

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board will be developing a plan to utilize a large housing bond authorized in the previous legislative session. This could be a potential funding source if housing is a part of the community discussion/need. Contact Martin Hahn at 828-3259.

Historic Tax Credits – This resource is available for building façade and historic preservation, improvements, ADA accessibility, code improvements and technology upgrades. Contact Caitlin Corkins from ACCD at Caitlin.Corkins@vermont.gov or 802-828-3047 or visit <http://accd.vermont.gov/historic-preservation/funding/tax-credits>.

Municipal Planning Grant – Downtown Master Plan or other implementation plan to help support town capital improvement plan and other future planning goals. Contact Faith Ingulsrud for more information at Faith.Ingulsrud@vermont.gov or 802-828-5228 or visit <http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>.

Northern Border Regional Commission Economic and Infrastructure Development Grant Program – up to \$250,000 to support a variety of economic and infrastructure improvements helping to add jobs to the area. Contact to Katie Corrigan at ACCD for more information at katie.corrigan@vermont.gov or 802-272-1420 or visit <http://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/Northern-Boarder-Regional-Commission>.

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) provides low cost loan financing to municipal and privately owned public water systems for capital improvements. To discuss options for village drinking water infrastructure planning contact Ashley Lucht at Ashley.lucht@vermont.gov or 828-1535, or visit <http://dec.vermont.gov/facilities-engineering/water-financing/dwsrf-water-planning-loan>.

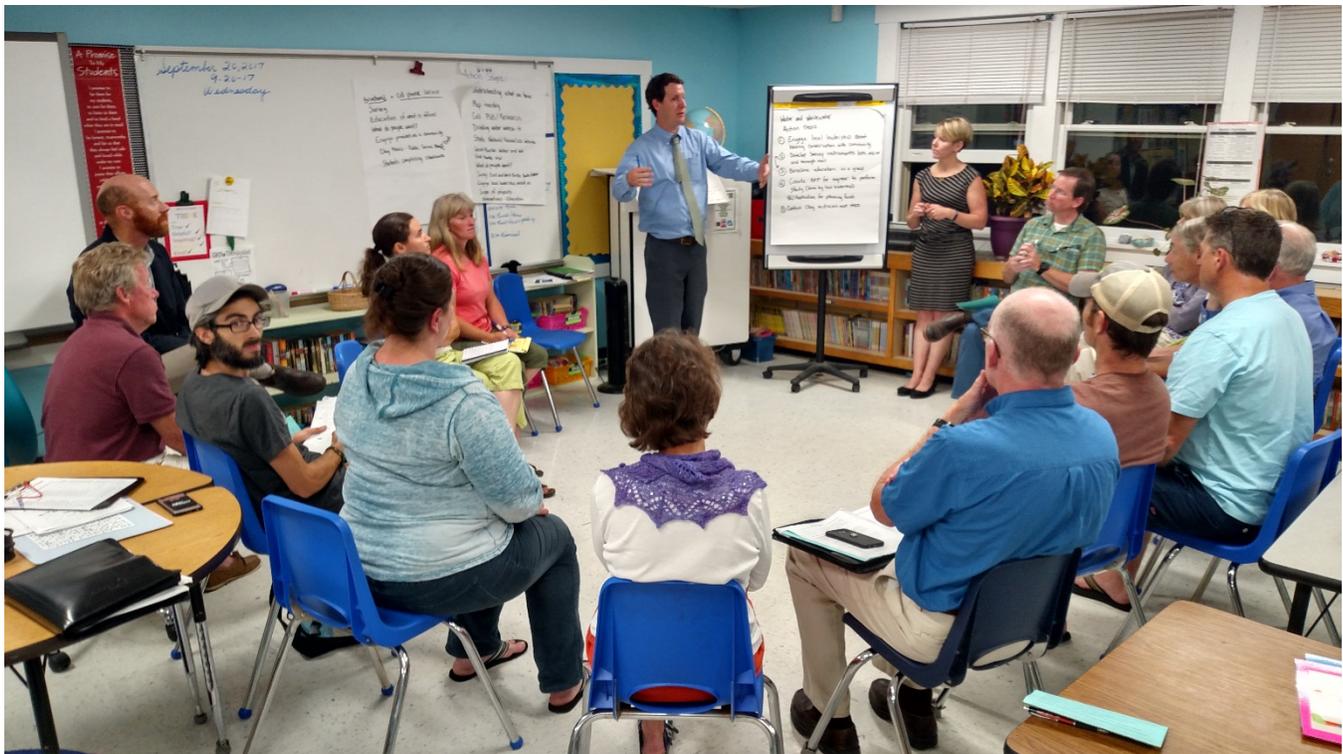
Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF). Wastewater and storm water low interest loans for planning, design and implementation. To discuss options for waste water and storm water infrastructure planning contact Tom Brown at Thomas.Brown@vermont.gov or visit <http://dec.vermont.gov/facilities-engineering/water-financing/cwsrf>.

Preservation Trust of Vermont is a great resource for preservation projects and other community initiatives. Contact Lisa Ryan at lisa@ptvermont.org or 658-6647.

Vermont Arts Council – Animating Infrastructure Grants can support a variety of projects to enhance buildings, trails, parks, and streetscapes. <http://www.vermontartscouncil.org/grants-and-services/organizations/animating-infrastructure>. 828-3291.

VTRANS Bicycle and Pedestrian Program for scoping studies, design and implementation grants for bicycle and pedestrian construction projects. Contact Jon Kaplan for more information at Jon.Kaplan@vermont.gov or 802-828-0059 or visit <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped>.

Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation infrastructure funding and financing programs: <http://dec.vermont.gov/facilities-engineering/water-financing>.



The Revitalize Village Infrastructure Task Force met on Resource Meeting Day to begin building their workplan.

✓ Improve Village Traffic and Pedestrian Safety and Build a Trail Connecting East and West Burke

Community Chair: **John Kresser and Christine Emmons**

Facilitator: **Jenna Koloski**, *Community and Policy Manager, VCRD*

Resource Team Members: **Richard Amore**, *Planning and Project Manager, VT Department of Housing and Community Development*

Doug Morton, *Senior Transportation Planner, NVDA*

Drew Pollak-Bruce, *Associate Planner, SE Group*

Joe Segale, *Policy, Planning, and Research Director, VT Agency of Transportation*

In recent years, visitors have flocked to East Burke to enjoy Kingdom Trails, Burke Mountain, and the scenic beauty of the region. These visitors have brought with them economic opportunity and growth, but also challenges around traffic and pedestrian safety of residents and visitors alike. A task force could come together to explore traffic calming techniques, enforcement options, improved sidewalks and crosswalks, alternative paths, bike lanes, and strategic signage in both villages. The group could work with residents and outside experts to develop a comprehensive pedestrian and bike infrastructure plan to inventory what is needed, explore the cost, and seek out funding and technical assistance opportunities to implement the plan. This Task Force could also explore options, determine feasibility, and identify and secure funding and technical assistance to build a path or trail that connect West and East Burke to improve physical connection between village centers and connect Burke Town School with all three villages.

Priority Action Steps:

1. Identify and pursue immediate safety strategies and traffic calming measures.
 - a. Explore crosswalks in all three villages with support from NVDA.
 - b. Identify, plan, and implement traffic calming/slowng strategies including flashing speed lights, rumble strips, creative signage, and more in key locations.
2. Develop a long-term master plan/vision for redesign in Burke village centers that focuses on traffic danger hotspots to improve traffic and pedestrian/bike safety. Work with partners such as NVDA, the Better Connections Grant Program, and Local Motion to identify a path forward towards a clear and actionable study and master plan.
3. Build a trail connecting East and West Burke. Structure a scoping study to explore the best routes, potential existing right of way (utility, VAST, rail) uses, and plan for a trail that improves safety and provides connection between all three villages and the school.

Other Potential Action Steps:

1. Explore transfer of 114 in E. Burke village to town ownership to increase options for traffic and safety management.
2. Develop alternative traffic and pedestrian routes in East Burke village.
3. Build a boardwalk in the wetland behind the school.
4. Expand Kingdom Trails volunteer bike ambassador program.

5. Open Hayden Bridge to reroute traffic from West Burke.
6. Build a roundabout in East Burke Village to improve traffic and safety.
7. Add pull off points for bikes and cars to avoid stopping on roadways.
8. Build a biker/pedestrian code of conduct in collaboration with Kingdom Trails.
9. Expand full service staffed Kingdom Trail access points to West Burke and other locations to reduce pressure on East Burke.
10. Develop a shuttle service for Kingdom Trails riders.
11. Explore enforcement options for traffic and safety.

Resources

1. NVDA could assist with conducting/funding a study to plan towards a road/traffic master plan. These services are provided on a first come first serve basis, and NVDA may be planning about a year out. Contact Doug Morton at dmorton@nvda.net or 748-1221.
2. NVDA could also be a resource to help with maps.
3. A VTrans Bike and Pedestrian Grant could help to fund a scoping study for the trail connecting East and West Burke. Contact Joe Segale at joe.segale@vermont.gov or 477-2365.
4. Local Motion could be a key resource and partner to help with road and pedestrian safety strategies and planning. Contact Jason Van Driesche at jason@localmotion.org or 861-2700.
5. The Better Connections Grant Program could be a good fit for this initiative. That program can help to design a master plan for the village and strategies for traffic calming and safety. The program also comes along with technical assistance and support. Contact Richard Amore at richard.amore@vermont.gov or 828-5229
6. Municipal Planning Grants could provide funding for a scoping study. Contact Faith Ingulsrud at 828-5228 or faith.ingulsrud@vermont.gov.
7. Kingdom Trails can be a resource and partner around signage and trail ambassadors as well as with sharing safety alerts and potentially in developing the trail connecting East and West Burke.
8. A recreation grant through Forest Parks and Recreation could help to fund a trail project, especially in collaboration with Kingdom Trails. Contact Jessica Savage at jessica.savage@vermont.gov or 249-1230.
9. The Northern Borders Regional Commission Grant Program could help to fund the implementation of a trail connecting East and West Burke. Contact Katie Corrigan at Katie.corrigan@vermont.gov or 272-1420.
10. USDA Rural Development could be a source for grant funding. Contact Ben Doyle at 828-6402 or Benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov.
11. Lyndon State College could be a resource for designing and building the trail in collaboration with their outdoor education program.
12. The Northwoods Stewardship Center could be a trail planning and building partner.
13. A study was done in New York State which built a set of best practices for signage and safety strategies where trail and roads meet. Contact Drew Pollak-Bruce for that study at dbruce@segroup.com.
14. Local volunteers are a key resource. It will be important to build excitement and engagement.
15. The Vermont Land Trust could help with right of way issues for a trail project.
16. The PTA and the School could be a resource. The group could partner with the school for volunteer/community work days.

Task Force Members

Joe	Allard	joea@ruraledge.org	535-4520
Tory	Amorello	tory.amorello@gmail.com	603-717-2601
James	Bentley	jtcbbentley@msn.com	626-5152
Millie	Chappell	smchappell@charter.net	626-3165
Michael	Cohen	mikecohen.vba@gmail.com	
Crosby	Coughlin	ccoughlin@burkemtnacademy.org	914-262-1448
Christine	Emmons	cricevt@hotmail.com	535-7595
Jodi	Flanagan	jflanagan@burkemtnacademy.org	274-4639
Travis	Foley	folworks@gmail.com	
Joel	Gilbert	joeltgilbert@yahoo.com	626-4565
Lisa	Grader-Fox	lrgraderfox@gmail.com	
Lilias	Ide	lil@kingdomtrails.org	535-6917
John	Kresser	jkresser@msn.com	535-0182
Sarah	Kresser	thekressers@myfairpoint.net	274-4174
Carol	Krochak	cmhorizon@charter.net	467-3158
Matt	Langlais	mattlanglais@gmail.com	
Michelle	Larocque-Tipton	michelle.larocquetipton@gmail.com	467-8787
Phil	Lawson	philiplawson14@gmail.com	603-965-6895
Chris	Manges	chrismanges@hotmail.com	
Erin	McKinnon	erinjmckinnon@gmail.com	467-1180
Mike	Michaud	mmichaudburke@gmail.com	224-0422
Morgan	Moore	morgan.grace.moore@gmail.com	203-241-2418
Daniel	Morse	dmorse@skiburke.com	
Susanne	Norwood	snorwood02@hotmail.com	626-3683
Tate	Norwood	william.norwood@stjlabs.com	626-3683
Erik	Phillips-Nania	ephillie@gmail.com	
Susan	Pierce	cliffsuehome@sbcglobal.net	274-7546
CJ	Scott	cj@kingdomtrails.org	626-0737; 274-1007
Addison	Tipton	addison.m.tipton@gmail.com	467-8787
Ben	Tipton	bensimpleliving@gmail.com	467-8787
Makail	Tipton	makail.tipton@gmail.com	467-8787
Tiann	Van Der linde	tiaan.v@hotmail.com	535-2358
Karri	Willy	karriattheinn@gmail.com; info@villageinnofeastburke.com	535-6204
Marti	Walther	mfwalthervt@gmail.com	

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Improve Village Traffic and Pedestrian Safety and Build a Trail Connecting East and West Burke” Task Force

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

Rather than create a large master plan for traffic calming, sidewalks, and other improvements that might sit on a shelf, consider creating a multi-stage strategy for jumpstarting change starting right now! One resource to guide that work is “Quick Builds for Better Streets: A New Project Delivery Model for U.S Cities” created by People for Bikes: <http://peopleforbikes.org/>. Local Motion might be a good resource to help build this strategy. Contact Jason Van Driesche at jason@localmotion.org or 802-861-2700 ext. 109.

Contact NVDA for planning and economic development assistance. They might be able to provide planning funds or assist with grant writing to obtain funds to plan and design village improvements. They could potentially also manage or facilitate such a planning project for the village and can provide a history of past studies, traffic counts and maps. Contact Doug Morton at dmorton@nvda.net or 802-748-1221.

The group could identify and learn from other community initiatives that have brought vibrancy and sense of place to village centers. Langdon Street Alive (www.langdonstreetalive.org), Waterbury’s Music in the Alley, or Bethel’s Build a Better Block (www.teambetterblock.com) are some good examples of places to start.

The Task Force could meet with Burke Mountain, Burke Mountain Academy, and Kingdom Trails early on to understand what their needs and issues are with regard to traffic volumes and routing. These groups may be willing to partner as they have a stake in the future and wellbeing of the village center.

The group might work with the Agency of Transportation and other groups to encourage improved signage and way finding. Some towns have created their own crosswalks, bike lanes, pocket parks and pedestrian areas and more to test ideas and strategies. Contact Joe Segale, Policy Planning and Research Director at joe.segale@vermont.gov or 802-828-3968 or Dave Pelletier, Transportation Planning Coordinator at dave.pelletier@vermont.gov or 802-595-9675.

It might be fun to work with artists and residents to create unique signage that could help connect the two villages. The Vermont Arts Council might be able to help with a project like this. Contact Zon Eastes at zeastes@vermontartscouncil.org or 802-828-5423. Craftsbury is working on a similar project to improve signage and traffic safety in their villages and are integrating art and community engagement. To learn more about their project, contact Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, Executive Director of WonderArts at 802-533-9370 or ceilidh@wonderartsvt.org.

The group might consider having two subgroups for this initiative; one that focuses on village improvements and the other that works on the connector trail concept.

The group could work to develop a village pedestrian plan with a prioritized project list of implementation.

Once a plan is in place for the East and West Burke Connector Trail, develop a display to showcase the work visually and to share at community events and gatherings. NEMBA-Fest (<http://www.nembafest.com/>) might be a particularly good venue to promote the initiative and there may be technical or financial resources among the attendees.

Continue to connect green spaces and activities to people of all income levels and make sure that access is affordable to all. Green spaces, outdoor and physical activity build resilience for families and children who have had traumatic events including poverty, multiple moves, divorce, mental illness, and substance abuse.

Sustainable Trail Works provides high quality trail planning, design, and construction services. Their portfolio of projects includes numerous complex design and build examples in Stowe: <http://www.sustainabletrailworks.com/>.

It might be worth reaching out to other areas to see how the issue is handled in other towns with “peak visitation” issues. This could include the other ski towns, Manchester, Stowe, or Watkins Glen, NY, which gets inundated with a major NASCAR race once a year, or other trail towns across the country.

The National Parks Service (NPS) has substantial expertise in trails. The group could bring someone in from NPS to provide technical assistance in how to organize and build the trail connecting West and East Burke. The Open Space Institute and the Nature Conservancy are probably worth contacting in this regard also.

Potential Funding Sources for Improving Village Traffic and Trail Building:

The Better Connections Program is an implementation focused planning grants to support transportation investments that build community resilience. Aside from the actual grants available to applications, Richard Amore of ACCD and Jackie Cassino of VTrans are both professionally trained planners and will have insights to share about how to frame and/or approach the issues. Contact Richard Amore from ACCD at Richard.Amore@vermont.gov or 802-828-5229, or visit <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections>. *Note: Pre-application meeting required by end of year 2017 and application due end of January 2018.*

Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) funds could be used to implement pieces of a traffic calming plan. The NBRC Economic and Infrastructure Development Grant Program can cover up to \$250,000 to support a variety of economic and infrastructure improvements helping to add jobs to the area. Contact Katie Corrigan at ACCD for more information at katie.corrigan@vermont.gov or 802-272-1420 or visit <http://accd.vermont.gov/economic-development/funding-incentives/Northern-Boarder-Regional-Commission>.

The Department of Housing and Community Development could help with technical assistance, grants, strategic planning, etc. Contact Gary Holloway, ACCD, Downtown Program Coordinator at gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802-828-3220 and Richard Amore, Planning and Project Manager at Richard.amore@vermont.gov or 802-828-5229.

A Municipal Planning Grant could provide funding for a Downtown Master Plan or other implantation plan to help support town capital improvement plan and other future planning goals. Contact Faith Ingulsrud for more information at Faith.Ingulsrud@vermont.gov or 802-828-5228.

USDA Rural Development has a variety of grant and loan programs available to support infrastructure improvements (water, wastewater, storm water, transportation, and buildings). Contact Ben Doyle for more information at Benjamin.Doyle@vt.usda.gov or (802)-828-6042. <http://www.rd.usda.gov/vt>.

The Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Program offers technical assistance, planning and construction grant opportunities. Contact Jon Kaplan at Jon.Kaplan@vermont.gov or 802-828-0059 or visit <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped>.

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) would be a potential source for village pedestrian infrastructure planning and improvements. Contact Scott Robertson at scott.robertson@vermont.gov or 802-828-5799 or visit <http://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/transport-alt>.

Vermont Recreational Trails Program offers recreation oriented assistance. It could be a source for East-West Connector trail planning, design, or construction. Contact Sherry Smecker Winnie at sherry.winnie@vermont.gov or 802-760-8450. <http://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/grants/rtp>.



VIII. One Burke Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 120 Burke residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on July 11 2017

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

The Future of Education

Visiting Team: Kate Ash, Hannah Carpino (scribe), Paul Costello (facilitator), Paul Dragon, Peter Fairweather, Michael Moser, Sheila Reed, Felipe Rivera

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Burke has a great teaching staff of dedicated teachers.
- The Burke PTO is active.
- Burke 8th graders have choice for high school to attend Lyndon Institute (most common), East Burke School, or St. Johnsbury Academy.
- We have a great administration.
- The community is supportive of the school.
- We have a strong school board that has been actively leading conversations on consolidation/Act 46 with 6 other area schools to explore the "Kingdom East" school district. This agreement would still maintain school choice.
- Some community members are worried about the consolidation decision and there is still a lot of discussion and questions.
- How do we define "Burke schools?" Older students go to school outside of Burke.
- There are many opportunities for kids to get outdoors in the surrounding area such as partnership to allow for biking and skiing, rentals to provide equipment, and consistent transportation for kids involved in activities.
- The school has a great facilities manager. There is a new soccer field and other facilities improvements are being made.
- 10 years ago, a grant allowed for a new playground at the Burke Town School.
- The school is located between East and West Burke in a "neutral place."
- Burke Mountain Academy is an educational asset.
- There are Higher educational connections such as Lyndon State College that could be more utilized.
- The community allows students to be balanced, healthy people.
- Burke Arts council has a strong presence at school.
- From grades 4-8, all students have technology access.
- 80-85% students seem to have reliable internet access at home.

What are the Challenges?

- The school facilities need some attention. We need better indoor spaces and a gym.
- Multiple different buildings make up Burke Town School. A new school addition was added to the old school 20 years ago. A temporary building was also added as a temporary fix 20 years ago.
- The School board has worked during the last year and a half to envision a gym and better facilities. They have looked at options for a new gym as well as middle school building.
- A community space is needed.
- Capital is saved/reserved to propose building more.
- Enrollment has been steady over past 15 years at about 220 students pre K to 8th grade.
- The creation of a new school district could cause loss of local control. There will be one board with two people representing each area.
- We need time for recess and for kids to move around.
- We have a lack of extracurricular activities.
- Kids turn to drugs if they have nothing to do.
- We have strong after school programs with town and federal support and before school programs with town support.
- Better communication is needed between the community and parents. Especially around recreation activities.
- We need more focus on grade 7-12 activities within the community.
- There is a lot to do, but they are expensive sports such as biking and skiing.
- The park in West Burke is used, but could be utilized better. This could be a potential space for community use.
- Poverty is a challenge. Socioeconomic divisions very deeply felt in the student body.
- There is no community center in town for people to come together. There is community space attached to the town hall in West Burke, but it is used more for senior dinners and bingo and not as much for youth and family activities.
- Lack of internet access in some parts of town is a challenge for students and families.
- Deciding on a clear curriculum can be a challenge and finding balance so that kids with limited resources can still compete.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We need a central communications hub for the town so everyone has access to knowledge about town activities and resources.
- We need a transportation link between Burke and Lyndonville to access more activities. The RCT service could expand to come to Burke.
- We should design a plan for the future with a larger school district.
- The town needs a central place to congregate such as an all-purpose gym. This could serve as a potential hub for summer programming.
- We need a State-of-the-art middle school. Kids are currently in trailers.
- The Newark/Sutton population is small and has staffing difficulties. We could potentially merge with those two towns to maximize use of resources. Sutton is 100 students total with about 12 graduating each year. The building is currently only half-full.
- Create a Recreational Department for town like in Lyndon and St. Johnsbury. This would take responsibility away from the school for all extracurricular activities. In St. Johnsbury they have a separate director who manages summer programming.
- There are several independent schools in Lyndon. The barn is used for summer camp programs, staffed by educators and administrators.
- We need to develop educational opportunities for adults.
- Any building/program that has been passed by the existing board will garner support when the merger is put in place. The merger date is set for next June.
- Make Burke a lab school. We can tie with education department and send apprentices from universities to teach.
- Currently, there is high turnover rate in teaching for certain subjects.
- Develop an advocacy group to hold onto school choice. Choice for 8th graders has been threatened in the past year. Organized advocacy would be effective.
- The Preschool program is amazing, but full day preschool option would be beneficial as most community members are full day working parents. Preschool is possible, but currently, the lack of space limits pre-school to half-day sessions.
- General upgrade in curriculum is needed to improve concentration. We also need to improve nutrition available to students and incorporate meditation and mindfulness or yoga.
- Other preschool or daycare centers could open up, but challenges with state licensing makes it difficult. State standards for the universal pre-K curriculum create barriers to starting new programs.
- We need a tool for the town to protect the teachers' methods of teaching. Alternative middle school allows teachers/curriculum to have less restrictions, many parents support it.
- We can develop a committee to help communicate with the town about the importance and value of a new school to take preemptive action and help to answer questions.
- There is an amazing support systems currently in place for kids in need.
- There is a definitive East Burke/West Burke divide. Poverty is town-wide.
- The same faces are at every town meeting. It is scheduled in the middle of a work day which makes it difficult for those in labor or farm jobs to attend. Can we connect the PTO to town meetings? Reach out to specific people and families?
- We need to clearly identify drivers that influence student outcome and create an action plan.
- The single largest driver in student outcome is teachers. We should invest in teachers.
- Use summer time for educational opportunities that don't necessarily align with state education standards. Find a space and funding mechanism to support summer programming.
- More community dinners and student showcase to allow students to show their work and bring the community together in addition to the two that happen per year now.
- West Burke could share in Kingdom Trails if loop included town. The challenge is that some landowners do not want biking on their property.
- The School wrote a grant to access the KT trail system. They have plans, have landowner permission, but didn't get the grant. A different funding mechanism is needed.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Does the Food security system in schools address socioeconomic differences?
- It is imperative that those on the margins are included in town efforts.
- Special needs services?
- School-based health clinician can help to address prevention and recovery from the school community.
- Peer-based supports offer valuable advice.
- Using community meals and/or the universal meals program could be an asset to students and the community.
- The need for physical space was continually emphasized. This seems like a critical challenge to overcome.

Advancing Tourism

Visiting Team: Ted Brady, Ben Doyle (facilitator), Gary Holloway, Wendy Knight, Jenna Koloski, Pollaidh Major (scribe), Frank Maloney, Dave Pelletier, Lisa Ryan, Jason Van Dreische

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Kingdom Trails' 100 mile network of mountain bike trails that receives 90,000 visits per year.
- Burke Mountain that receives 75,000 skier visits per year.
- We have nordic and backcountry skiing on the KT trails and elsewhere.
- Outdoor recreation programs through Kingdom Trails and Burke Recreation.
- We have adventure camps for kids. For example, the Film and Bike Camp.
- Adventure tours throughout the Kingdom get people out of the Inns and into the Kingdom with biking, kayaking, paddle boarding and other outdoor recreational activities.
- Snowmobiling – Mike's Gas in West Burke is a destination/stop for snowmobiles.
- The VAST Trails bring people to Burke.
- Wheeler is a destination for rock climbing.
- Ice Climbing.
- Golf Clubs.
- A lot of yoga offerings.
- The new paddleboard business in West Burke.
- Fly fishing on the east branch of the Passumpsic River.
- A broad range of outdoor recreational activities allow the community to appeal to a broad range of visitors.
- Mike's Tiki Bar. The bar creates a culture, scene and experience that attracts customers.
- We have specialty foods and breweries like Next Trick Brewing in West Burke is a new brewery that recently opened and Burke Confectionery.
- Mountain View Farm Animal Sanctuary adopts animals and allows them to live out their natural life. People come to visit the farm.
- There are several wedding venues at the Inn at Mountain View Farm and Burke Hotel, as well as others.
- Thursday Night Volleyball across from Mike's Tiki Bar brings folks to town.
- Fall Foliage Festival, NEMBA Fest and other events attract visitors.
- The men's softball league brings people to town.
- The Inn at Mountain View Farm, a historic in recognized by the National Historic Trust and the Preservation Trust is an asset for visitors.
- The campground in West Burke.
- Darling Hill is scenic.
- Lake Willoughby and Crystal Lake. West Burke is the gateway to both of these lakes.
- A working landscape that is attractive, cultural, and historical that attracts visitors. For example, Wildflower Inn's Belted Galway.
- The Field, Farm and Forest Pre-School is an educational asset.
- Lyndon State College's Mountain Recreation program brings skilled students to the area.
- Burke Mountain Academy and its new relationship with the US Ski Team.

What are the Challenges?

- The condition of the roads. Many paved roads need upkeep. The increase in visitors causes congestion.
- Safety is a concern on roads with bikers and poor conditions.
- Signs are required to communicate to bikers that Burke is not a state park.
- We need better safety signage on the multi-use roads. For example, the intersection at the top of Darling Hill needs more visible stop signs and right of way signs.
- Inadequate parking in East Burke.
- The Act 250 permitting process is challenging and prevents growth. For example, the process made an addition on a business difficult negatively impacting the business's ability to expand. The process is hard to navigate and costly.
- The permitting process and state regulations are too complex
- Town ordinances may hinder development, but not as much as Act 250.
- West Burke does not currently see the economic benefit from East Burke growth.
- Tax policy adversely effects the ability of the trail industry to grow. High taxes that offer no tax relief to landowners who allow trail networks on their land. This makes it difficult for the large landowners who are a critical asset to the trail system.
- The tax burden on the ski industry.
- Burke Mountain is under receivership and there will be an upcoming transfer of ownership. Building a good relationship between the new owner and the community will be critical.
- Burke Mountain's new hotel offers rooms at a lower price than local inns. This is putting stress on local inn owners.
- Poor broadband and cell service. Poor internet connection inhibits the ability of people to work from home. Poor cell service is a challenge for tourists who are trying to navigate through town.
- We need to figure out how to manage the fast pace of recreational development while preserving the sense of place. How to develop as a recreational destination without 'becoming Stowe'.
- Scenic byways are underutilized.
- Burke no longer has a local constable with enforcement capabilities. Police presence is limited because they come from another town.

- Many visitors loiter and don't abide by traffic and land rules. However, there has been no noticeable increase in crime rates because the visitors are mostly families and middle age men that aren't causing problems.
- There have been thefts. Two picnic tables and wreaths have been stolen.
- The fire station needs updating to increase response times to the Mountain and Kingdom Trails to handle the increased demand for services. However, Kingdom Trails noted that they have not had an issue with response times.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Develop new, geographically varied, access points to the trail network in order to spread the economic impact of recreation throughout the town.
- Create an arterial connection between West Burke and East Burke. This could be a trail, or shuttle service.
- Start a local pedi-cab (tuk-tuk) service to transport visitors between Burke attractions and villages.
- Create a bike path connecting West Burke and East Burke like the rail trails around the state.
- Expand Kingdom Trails' network into West Burke.
- Explore ways to incentivize landowners to participate in a trails network, possibly through a change in tax policy. Landowners who allow trails on their land are contributing to economic wellbeing and should be recognized for this through tax relief similar to the working lands current use tax relief.
- Explore ways to financially compensate landowners. However, Vermont has liberal liability laws that protect landowners if their land is donated, if they profit from recreation on the land, then they must have their own liability protection.
- Start a business incubator in West Burke. West Burke has underutilized buildings that could be redeveloped into business incubator space.
- Showcase West Burke as a recreational destination with its own attractions such as ATVs, VAST trails, water sports, climbing and hiking.
- Increase restaurants in the area, particularly in West Burke. Attract a bar to West Burke.
- Explore methods to foster more economic vitality in West Burke.
- Explore redevelopment of underutilized buildings in East Burke.
- Diversify tourism attractions by highlighting historic and cultural tourist attractions. For example, the exhibit on the demise of the dairy farm.
- Highlight 'rainy day activities': movies, arts, theatre, cultural entertainment, a film festival, porch music.
- Emulate Friday Night Live in Island Pond.
- Attract events and festivals that attract overnight visitors.
- Promote the area and encourage safety on multi-use roads by designating areas a 'recreation zone.'
- Improve town signage – directional, safety and place making signage.
- Identify the community's vision for the optimal level of tourism that will protect public safety, promote economic development and be accommodated by local infrastructure. Establish corresponding safety and infrastructure development plans. Kingdom Trails is currently creating new five-year plan. Think long term.
- Obtain more safety enforcement, possibly through re-establishing the constable.
- Establish a method to communicate opportunities in town.
- Establish a common place to post opportunities in town for tourists. Create village message boards in village centers.
- Utilize bulletin boards at stores.
- Create a community calendar and use kiosks, the radio, the chamber's website, and social media to reach people.
- Create a community map highlighting business, events and what to do. Businesses in town could even have screens with scrolling info on area events and attractions.
- Create a guidebook.
- Utilize the digital list maintained by the Chamber.
- Establish an information booth in Burke.
- Improve the ability of businesses to refer tourists to other activities.
- Connect with similar communities across the country to share development ideas.
- Brand West Burke as biking and water sports, looking at ways to activate water assets more successfully.
- Develop a facilitated tour experience. Offer services such as shuttling and pre-built tour plans that highlight cultural and recreational activities.
- Change the interstate sign to say Burke, rather than East Burke.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The East/West conversation and how to explore connections was a recurring theme. How to integrate the two and capitalize on the water-based opportunities in the west is important. Safety and multi-use roads was also a theme, signs can play a major role here. The concierge service and the pedi-cab ideas stood out.
- Burke's assets include a sense of place, diversity of outdoor recreation and cultural assets that accompany the outdoor activities. The Governor wants to leverage outdoor assets to grow the economy and Burke is well positioned to be a leader in that vision. There is a challenge accommodating growth.
- Inspired by the 'One Burke' theme. Critical is making it easier to get from one part of Burke to the other without having to drive. Tourists like the sense of reaching their destination, they don't necessarily want to feel like they have to travel once they get there.
- A theme was the West Burke/East Burke divide. There is opportunity in West Burke including the doorway to water and

- an adorable down town. There is a desire to build the connection and build a visioning for a united Burke.
- There is more opportunity for winter activities including highlighting the VAST network. Burke competes nationally and globally for visitors, however, Kingdom Trails has the advantage of being a pioneer in mountain biking and having a very well established reputation.
 - How to make this work for the entire community, including landowners? Even development that benefits everyone will increase Burke's strength and success. The goal of advancing tourism should be creating a sector that serves the needs of everyone, the tourists and the local residents. Focus on attracting Canadians.

- East/West conversation was a theme. Focus on developing interconnected individual assets. Kept hearing about way finding, signage, and the opportunity for creative place making. The town can't rely on technology.
- It sounds like there are more assets than challenges, but a need to develop shared voice. The community can understand the assets around the town and better direct visitors to them with the goal of getting tourist to spend 'five more dollars' in the community. This is the 50th anniversary of Act 250. A study group is examining the act and needs input from communities like Burke on what works and what doesn't.

Communications and Town Unity

Visiting Team: Kate Ash, Hannah Carpino (scribe), Paul Costello (facilitator), Paul Dragon, Peter Fairweather, Michael Moser, Sheila Reed, Felipe Rivera

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The School serves to unify East and West Burke being physically in the middle and as a mix of students from both locations.
- The Facebook group "Burke Community Forum" was started about a year ago and has a lot of subscribers.
- The Kingdom Trails website has information for both tourists as well as local information.
- The Chamber of Commerce site has good tourist info, and a monthly email (for members only) that highlights events.
- The Town website includes minutes from select board meetings and announcements.
- The Town has a Facebook page.
- The Local Caledonian Record paper is "ok."
- Burke has community meeting places (cafes, bars) that host events and gatherings.
- The Library in Lyndonville is heavily used by Burke residents and they share fliers and announcements.
- Area businesses are supportive and provide a lot of bulletin board space.
- Large scale events work hard to invite businesses to participate.
- We have a school phone system to share information.
- The East Burke library does mailings, community events, and meetings.
- Farmers markets (now hosted in Lyndonville) are unifying events.

What are the Challenges?

- We have no common thread of communication.
- Generational differences make universal communication difficult. We need to be inclusive with our communication methods.
- There are different groups with similar problems, but they are not communicating.
- Town offices are not heavily involved with town communication. There were two important votes last year, but only 17 people came to the first one and 12 came to the second. There was a lack of awareness about the events.
- Language barriers makes communication with tourists challenging.
- We don't have reliable internet access.
- Three distinct villages make up Burke. That division also presents itself socioeconomically. People in town are feeling disenfranchised and certain groups are not being represented at these meetings.
- People concerned about high level of taxes within Burke and underrepresented.
- There is some tension between residents of Burke and visitors/tourists.
- People make assumptions due to lack of communication/knowledge about decisions being made.
- Some in town seem to be apathetic. There is a feeling that "Nothing's going to change", "it's not worth my time."
- East Burke has an identity, but does West Burke have an identity? Or Burke Hollow? Is there a vision or identity for whole of Burke?
- In West Burke, the population is older and folks are less connected to the school or mass recreation lifestyle in East Burke.
- There are fewer activities available to residents in West Burke.
- West Burke used to be the hub, and many remember it that way. People have watched town disintegrate and vibrancy has moved to East Burke.
- West Burke lacks an area for social gathering.
- The Chamber of Commerce has one paid position, volunteers, and is about to fall apart. Some feel at a loss for future plans.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We need more businesses and more room for parking.
- West Burke can be a great location for employee housing.
- However, West Burke has no sewer system and no place to put septic waste which makes development difficult. The

Town could potentially be filled if infrastructure was developed (housing, water, sewer).

- Is there potential for REAP funding?
- We need to use the term “we” rather than use of “us vs. them.”
- Modifying Exit 23 sign that says “East Burke” to just say “Burke” or “Burke Area.”
- We should create a task force for communications/inter-town discussion to take leadership in working to get problems out in the open and discussed.
- Redevelop the Community garden in West Burke that once existed.
- We could connect older and younger generations by providing an opportunity/space for gathering and camps, dinners, and events.
- Selectmen are underpaid and overworked and need incentive to start new task forces.
- Farmers markets have come and gone in both East and West Burke.
- We could develop an effective online forum to serve as a central hub for communications.
- Hire town community development officer for One Burke to act as a town manager or community facilitator.
- Offer the opportunity to vote by mail in special elections.
- Create incentives for people to invest in the development of West Burke.
- Put Kingdom Trails sign near Bugby Crossing road.
- Mail ballots would decrease interaction between different parts of Burke.
- Hire a young intern to run social media/online presence for town.

- Develop Sidewalks, crosswalks, and public bathrooms in village centers.
- Improve paved roads with a bike path.
- Develop nice housing in West Burke to hold employees and businesses.
- Create a map, website, or app with one unified resource notifying visitors of all recreational opportunities in town.
- Hold more community events in Burke village to bring community together and bring tourists in.
- Revive the old tradition of street dances in West Burke. Make it a new series through the summer.
- Explore the zoning for West Burke to encourage growth in line with community vision.
- Historic structures are currently unused in West Burke. Build a task force for determining use of older properties in West Burke and determine whether structures are worth salvaging/redeveloping.
- Planning Commission exists, but it is staffed by volunteers. This results in sporadic ad-hoc efforts but no sustained, concentrated effort.
- Identify ways to utilize Village center designation tax incentives.
- Build a better park for children to families together.
- Find ways to better utilize the Senior meal site in West Burke.
- Keeping mailing lists up-to-date for town mailing.
- Many community-dedicated groups working to better Burke. We need to build unity needed within those groups and better communication. Representatives from each group could meet for forum on communication
- Need for paid position to oversee community’s economic development
- Use Friends of Burke Mountain forum for communication.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It sounds like there is a real need for a mechanism to address conflicts.
- West Burke needs to be able to participate in economic development of town.
- One unifying shared vision is needed.
- There is no participant here under age of 20. There could be a real opportunity here to engage the younger generation.
- It sounds like there could be a need for a foundational discussion around planning and a vision for the future.

Roads, Trails, Walkways, and Safety

Visiting Team: Ted Brady, Ben Doyle, Gary Holloway, Wendy Knight, Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Pollaidh Major (scribe), Frank Maloney, Dave Pelletier, Lisa Ryan, Jason Van Dreische

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Two major state routes run through both sides of town. The area is easy to access.
- Rt. 5 coming into West Burke has wide shoulders.
- There are good dirt roads and road biking loops that tie into a statewide biking network.
- The roads are well marked, it is easy to navigate and to get and give directions.
- The Scenic Byway.
- Kingdom Trails is well designed for Kids
- There are four season uses for Burke’s trails
- Kingdom Trails.
- The VAST network.
- A professional trail crews keep the Kingdom Trails open and there is a good stewardship ethic among trail users.
- The trails are multi-use.
- Innovations in biking (fat tire biking recently) draw people from all over the world to Burke’s trail networks.
- The Burke Mountain hiking trails are wonderful, but don’t receive as much attention. Lake Willoughby also has good hiking trails.
- Back country skiing is growing. A new group has formed in the Kingdom to develop and maintain backcountry ski trails.

- Many trails are on private land. Landowners who would like trails have a good opportunity to get them.
- Darling Hill is a good and accessible feature point for the town.
- The Burke Mountain Toll Road and fire tower draws visitors.
- East Burke has improved sidewalks.
- East Burke has an improved bridge.
- Playgrounds have put in added safety measures.
- Good bike signage.
- Three annual marathons attract runners, for example, Circumburke.
- The Kingdom Trails brand is an asset to draw people.

What are the Challenges?

- The Scenic Byway has rough edges making it dangerous for cars and bikers. This makes it hard to bike to Lake Willoughby.
- The state routes running through town do not receive priority for improvement. This makes it hard to get state support to repave 5A.
- Large trucks come quickly through East Burke. This is partly a speed limit enforcement issue.
- The Burke Hollow, East Darling and 114 intersection is dangerous, especially with the increased traffic.
- East Darling Hill road is a liability because of the number of steep curves and bikers. There is a plan to expand the road and add a bike lane. The project would cost \$1.12 million and the Select board has applied to Northern Borders Regional Commission and the Pedestrian Grant program for funding.
- Cars speed on Darling Hill, the Mountain Road and through the Village of East Burke.
- Visitors using trails sometimes disregard rules. Ex. Riding at night, hanging out in the parking lot at night.
- People from West Burke do not use the trail system as much as the population of East Burke.
- Dogs on the trails can be a challenge.
- There is inadequate pedestrian lighting in the village at night. This makes it hard for people to walk safely.
- East Burke needs more extensive sidewalks. There is a sidewalk project, but it is expensive.
- There has been an increase in littering with no cleaning plan.
- There are no designated crosswalks in the villages.
- There need to be more visible and adequate restrooms in East Burke. Kingdom Trails maintains some in the village, Darling Hill needs some. Changing facilities are needed too.
- There is a lot of pedestrian traffic around Wildflower Inn and there is a need for a cross walk.
- Signs regulating cars, bikes, loitering and pedestrians are not well enforced.
- The severity of floods are increasing and flood maps understate the risks. Frank Maloney indicated that Burke had recent flood maps and an up to date Local Emergency Operations Plan. The Planning Commission has put a plan into place.
- There are a lot more people, cars and bikes in a small amount of space. This is an 'accident waiting to happen'.
- Burke Mountain Academy has dorms on both sides of Mountain Road and students are in danger while crossing.
- The number of bicycles is a safety challenge in East Burke. How can the village decrease traffic?
- Improvement projects are often in East Burke because of traffic demand, however, the majority of the population is in West Burke so it is hard to get town wide support for investments. Especially for expensive infrastructure projects.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Update the emergency operation plan for the Town of Burke to incorporate accurate flood risk. The planning commission has recently revised flood regulations and zoning over the last few years. This was done with public hearings and in compliance with State and FEMA requirements. The Town of Burke will be doing a Hazard Mitigation Plan, participation in the planning process will allow the community to integrate their ideas into the plan.
- Support the Selectboard and Kingdom Trails in their efforts to build a bike path on Darling Hill Rd.
- Explore public lighting projects successfully completed by other towns, for example, Bristol. Could be part of a town beautification plan with public installations such as a waterfall.
- Establish a small scale shuttle that could take bikes through high traffic areas to destinations and reduce the risk of accidents.
- Create a bike trail between East and West Burke.
- Identify land owners along a potential trail. Connect these land owners with current trail land owners to have them understand the benefits of having a trail across their land.
- Establish municipal land linking East and West Burke.
- Explore establishing the trail along the cleared power line land or the Portland Pipeline land. VAST may have done this in the past.
- Create multiple points of entry to Kingdom Trails' network along the Burke trail.
- Create an East/West connection with the school at the center to help create safe paths and roads to school. Make 'Walk and Roll to School' a more common occurrence.
- Establish a bike lane/path along Burke Hollow Road that connects West and East Burke.
- Explore methods for traffic calming in East Burke Village.
- Create an alternative bike trail from Darling Hill to East Burke Village to decrease traffic. Kingdom Trails is currently looking to create a climbing trail with a grant.
- Create multiple ports of entrance to the Kingdom Trails network. Focus on a Lyndonville access point. Develop parking and facilities to accommodate a new entrance.
- Explore ways to incentivize private landowners to permit trails on their land. One possibility is to promote a tax structure similar to 'current use'. Advocate for a recreational land tax policy with the Governor's new council on trails and outdoor recreation.

- Convene a landowners’ forum to talk about benefits and drawbacks of having trails. Engage the landowners in outreach to help extend the trail network and explore ways to increase the benefits to current and future trail-host landowners.
- Re-instate the Town Constable with enforcement abilities.
- Increase the number and efficacy of traffic signs, especially around the Darling Hill intersection.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive pedestrian plan for Burke.
- Develop a parking infrastructure plan. Kingdom Trails is going to be looking into this with NVDA’s support.
- Collaborate with Lyndon and surrounding communities to manage traffic corridors.
- Increase access to restrooms at Kingdom Trails access points in East Burke Village and on Darling Hill.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Key themes in this discussion included road safety, a village pedestrian plan, road safety audits for the problem intersection, distributed access to the trail network to spread out demand and the need for hiking promotion.
- We heard a lot of ‘we’ implying community pride and a sense of unity. Private public partnerships may work with Kingdom Trails. Elsewhere, businesses have ‘sponsored’ sanitary facilities. There is a desire to maintain the local character without compromising safety. A way to do this is to use unique signage, for example: “drive like you live here.”
- One thing that stood out was hearing East Burke described as an ‘accident waiting to happen.’ People highlighted the need for a pedestrian safety plan. There are ways to accelerate the planning and plan implementation process. For instance, St. Johnsbury was able to experiment with different solutions.
- It is beneficial for residents and town government to connect more often and more deeply. Volunteer hours can help with the town’s match for a grant. It may be helpful to look to Lyndon for bike/ped projects, and also Sutton.
- Signage in Starksboro is a good example of creative collaboration. The town collaborated with the arts council to put up life-size signs of children, this successfully slowed traffic. East Burke is the economic driver, West Burke has the voters, West Burke needs to be incorporated into any economic development plan in order to get political buy in. Burke is well positioned to participate as the poster child for recreation-driven economic development and connect with the new Governor’s Council on Outdoor Recreation.
- Explore the private/public partnership opportunities that exist. There is a real challenge with traffic and safety in East Burke. One possibility could be to work with the town to do a demonstration project (similar to the Bethel project) or create alternative pathways through the village, possibly by stringing lights.
- Focus on long-term planning strategies to handle future increase in bike tourism. Look to the state for planning and implementation resources. The Better Connections grant program can help plans become part of the town’s capital improvement plan. Look to the Mad River Valley that integrated a commuter trail into their plan. Gather data, survey the needs of trail users.
- You need to sell these ideas to your fellow town’s people in August. The need to expand your existing transportation network to connect with other parts of the town and other communities better. The current transportation infrastructure is designed for cars, but is now used for an expanding purpose. One possibility to enforcing existing safety rules is volunteer patrols, like on the ski mountain.

Enhancing Opportunities for Youth and Families

Visiting Team: Kate Ash, Hannah Carpino (scribe), Paul Dragon, Jenna Koloski (facilitator), Michael Moser, Sheila Reed, Felipe Rivera

What are the Assets in this Area

- We have great ski programs through the school.
- There is good access to sports programs through a connection with Lyndon recreation programs.
- Kingdom Trails offer opportunity for programming like bike camps and a Thursday night children’s ride.
- The school is an asset. There is a consistent emphasis on leadership and a sense of community for the kids.
- The school helps to connect to the larger community as a whole.
- There is a real sense of community and feeling of belonging in Burke.
- Wellbeing and safety.
- Burke is a good environment to raise kids.
- Parent volunteers are highly involved in youth programs.
- There are soccer programs that incorporate high school and college players as coaches/leaders.
- Youth cross country ski program that incorporates older athlete volunteers.
- Theater camp.
- There are internship opportunities at Kingdom Trails and Burke Mountain.
- There are unorganized but available opportunities for families in the “rural tradition” such as beaches, hunting, and snowmobile trails.
- There are several local playgrounds and parks in town – in East Burke, West Burke, and at the school.
- There are continuing education opportunities offered through library in Lyndonville.
- The “Backpack program” provides food to lower income students to bring home at the end of the school day.
- There is a small library in the clubhouse in East Burke village. It has real potential to serve as a family gathering space.

- The Unitarian Universalist Church in West Burke has community gathering space and a small library.
- Kingdom Trails maintains a skill park/pump track.
- There are Nature trails near East Burke Park with informational postings that are very accessible to kids and families.

- The Senior center space in West Burke offers regular meals and bingo nights that families attend.
- There are pools in St. Johnsbury and Lyndonville that offer swimming lessons and pool access for Burke families.

What are the Challenges?

- There are not many activities for really young (pre-preschool) children. No network to share opportunities and get children and families together.
- There are kids in town who don't know how to swim and are unable to access lessons.
- There are not enough good jobs in the community. When people need to make life/career transitions it is difficult to find a new career or job training opportunities.
- Food security is a real challenge for many families, but Burke does not qualify for the universal school meals program.
- There are many opportunities for biking and skiing but a gap for those that are unable to pay for expensive equipment. Not everyone can afford to take part and that creates a gap in opportunities for kids.
- There is limited access to mental health services due to availability, access, and transportation.
- Transportation to places outside of town like St. Johnsbury where there are services is a challenge.
- There are not enough resources and services for families to cover all of the needs. There is no one based in the school that can provide support.
- Families with working parents struggle with transportation and programming opportunities and childcare – especially in the summer.
- There is no way to communicate between families about childcare, transportation, or resources available. It is hard to create playgroups or facilitate carpooling.
- There is a lack of a comprehensive childcare system. There is one small family daycare in Sutton and some families provide in-home care.
- There is some afterschool programming from the school, but limited access to other programming such as art or music programs.
- Keeping youth in Burke or having young people return is a challenge.
- Teenagers struggle to find decent summer job opportunities.
- There is limited internet access in some areas.
- Lack of connection to seniors or intergenerational opportunities.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Develop a multigenerational center for youth and seniors to interact and share.
- Create a system to mentor graduated high schoolers who choose to stay in Burke and are looking for opportunity and career guidance. A program exists in St. Johnsbury that could be a model or extended to Burke.
- Work with RCT to bring service further north to address transportation issues. This would allow access to Lyndon and St. Johnsbury.
- Plan a live music showcase/festival to gather the community together.
- -Develop a “maker’s space” or area that provides tools and materials for adults or teens to create.
- Continue the development of Kingdom Trails to expand on bike attractions such as a BMX track.
- Identify or build a facility for full-day preschool. The school can provide preschool, but there is no space.
- Create a space for biking where more families are welcome.
- Revitalize the West Burke Park to make it more family-friendly and welcoming.
- Hold traditional street dances like there used to be in West Burke.
- The Unitarian Church in West Burke could be a usable space for programming and/or services.
- Set up summer lunch program in West Burke park and use the church as rain location. Barton and Glover have similar summer meal programs
- Offer cooking classes for youth and families using the kitchen at church.
- Host a discussion forum with youth to determine what programs would garner interest.
- Build a community garden to support multigenerational connections and create a family gathering space.
- Build a community greenhouse adjacent to the community garden to help grow healthy options year-round.
- The Link program is a program to do bike maintenance to work with mechanics towards “earning a bike.” There is someone in town ready to take this on, but a space is needed.
- The Burke Community Center has a lot of potential as a community space, but is currently only used for seniors.
- Develop meal support for families who need it.
- Invigorate and revitalize the East Burke Mountain clubhouse library for families and youth.
- Build access to the tech center in Newport for high schoolers by improving transportation, options, timing, and reducing barriers.
- Develop resources to make “school choice” more of a choice by providing info on programming and opportunities.

- Use Front Porch Forum or another similar forum to improve communications and boost information such as job postings, work needed, events, etc.
- Identify small business owners who would be willing to mentor or employ young kids.
- VT laws for starting small businesses can feel restrictive. More support is needed for entrepreneurial business starters.
- Recycling area used to have a “free” area that got shut down. We should bring back a way to exchange free goods in the community.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There was a strong overall theme of equity throughout this conversation.
- Nutrition and concerns about food and resources seem like fundamental challenges to tackle. Some communities have effectively been able to open churches and schools for Farm to Plate or summer meal programs.
- One topic that didn’t seem to come up was regional health care as well as affordable housing – those may be some other fundamental challenges as well.
- A Community music series would be a great way to bring the community together – that was a great idea! Johnson has a festival each week that really works to bridge the generational gap and tighten community bonds.
- Front Porch Forum is an incredible resource to allow community members to voice concerns in a community-oriented fashion and build a forum for communications.
- Access to nature is incredible, but it sounds like there are opportunities to make it more accessible. Important to think about costs and children with disabilities as well.
- It sounds like there could be some need and opportunity for community-based efforts towards addressing mental health/substance abuse issues.
- Connecting elderly with younger folks came up several times. There are some real opportunities there as well as some successful models in Vermont communities and beyond.

Economic Development and the Future of Downtowns

Visiting Team: Ted Brady (facilitator), Ben Doyle, Paul Costello, Peter Fairweather, Gary Holloway, Wendy Knight, Pollaidh Major (scribe), Frank Maloney, Dave Pelletier, Lisa Ryan, Jason Van Dreische

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The East Burke ice-cream shop and the convenience store.
- Groceries and necessities are locally available.
- Restaurants such as The Foggy Goggle, Mike’s Tiki Bar, the food truck, Lottis Cafe, the ice cream parlor, and others.
- The growing recreational economy is an asset. The hotel just added rooms in town to increase capacity.
- An active Chamber of Commerce with a part-time staff person.
- Business development assets including: NCIC, SBDA, NVDA and Lyndon State College.
- West Burke businesses: Aldrich’s General Store, Mike’s Gas and Redemption, the log yard and the brewery.
- Kingdom Trails brings people to the area.
- Burke is a year-round recreation destination. Four seasons of activities (snow, trail and water recreational opportunities) .
- Burke Mountain is a community, recreational and economic asset. The mountain employs between 100-300 people.
- There is an opportunity for the community to build a positive relationship between the mountain’s new owners and community.
- The Burke Mountain Club is open to the community and creates a community space. It was donated by Elmore Darling for community use.
- The town is welcoming.
- We are easy to access from Interstate 91.
- The natural beauty and well cared for land. A vibrant working landscape with timber and forest management that helps supply resources for furniture products.
- Good schools and school choice.
- The Burke Mountain Academy’s new partnership with the US Ski Team.
- We have creative and talented people.
- Burke is a safe place to live, and it has a low crime rate.
- The East Burke water system.

What are the Challenges?

- Lack of resources for development.
- The West Burke downtown is a challenge. We haven’t found a business that the ‘right fit’.
- In West Burke there is potential for a pellet mill. Three phase power is important for economic development.
- There is no common understanding of how much tourism Burke should recruit. There is a strong desire to maintain identity and not become ‘Stowe’.
- We need more job opportunities to attract and retain youth.
- Lack of affordable child care.
- Vermont’s tax structure is not friendly towards businesses.
- West Burke lost its mill which was the economic driver.
- Burke farms have gone out of business. There were once 13 in Burke Hollow and now there are none.
- We don’t have an economic development committee or personnel.

- There are challenges for the Chamber of Commerce: the loss of the leadership of Tim Tierney, a lot of local criticism recently, the Chamber and the Town do not work together.
- Lack of sewer or water infrastructure in West Burke to support community development.
- Old buildings in West Burke that are hard to redevelop.
- Lack of a sewer/wastewater system in East Burke.
- Need for sidewalks and lights in both villages.
- Poor cell service is a problem for tourists and residents.
- Poor internet service.
- Lack of rural transportation.
- West Burke is seen as a 'pass through' town. Because the majority of the downtown is not functioning. Drivers do not stop.
- A shortage of affordable, high quality, housing. Low income housing in West Burke brings down local property values.
- We are competing with surrounding towns for a limited number of economic development opportunities.
- Access to quality health care.
- Communication and getting the word out is a challenge. There is no universally used and reliable platform for sharing events and opportunities with residents and tourists.
- There has been a recent leadership transition on the Selectboard after Sam's resignation.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Install a septic system in East Burke, perhaps in partnership with Burke Mountain.
- Establish cross walks in village centers.
- Explore and implement traffic calming methods.
- Carry out a downtown beautification effort, perhaps involving banners or flags that unite both villages.
- Create a pedestrian walking path and bike path on the back side of town that connects to business.
- Increase the town's administrative capacity. Create and fund a town administrator. Look into how other towns compensate their administrators.
- Develop the identity of West Burke, for example, brand West Burke as the Gateway to the Lakes. Identify what type of businesses are likely to succeed in West Burke.
- Explore how to develop West Burke as a recreational hub, different than East Burke- Hike, fish, ice climbing, water sports. Build on the brand of East Burke but make it unique.
- Assess sanitary facilities in East Burke to ensure that existing facilities are used and needs met.
- Check comparable towns to see how they compensate their administration.
- Create signage that highlights facilities, services and assets.
- Change local ordinances to allow for more signage.
- Inventory the infrastructure and figure out what it would take to attract businesses. What has been done, what is there, what could be done, and what it would cost?
- Establish a visitor center/welcome center staffed by volunteers. The Chamber once served as an info center.
- Increase home values by paving more roads and improving internet service. Identify which portions of roads to pave and which to leave authentic and dirt.
- Increase businesses' awareness of support services available. The Chamber does do some of this already including listing businesses on their website and hosting business workshops.
- Revitalize the Chamber of Commerce: better promote and utilize the Chamber's services, increase compensation for the administrator, increase coordination between the town, the community, the mountain and the chamber. Build chamber capacity.
- Increase community participation in the Chamber of Commerce. Perhaps change Chamber meeting times to better accommodate local businesses.
- Explore working with the Lyndonville chamber and the NEK Chamber of Commerce.
- Create a town communication system where all entities can submit highlights weekly to be sent out to subscribers. The Chamber partially does this through updating the website. Increase the number of people using current and future communication systems.
- Establish public bulletins in East and West Burke.
- Develop a common marketing message for the business community.
- Build an indoor bike park and Olympic ski jump.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There is a dynamic tension between success, and too much development. How to preserve and extend the unique economic base while preserving the community?
- Burke's problems and challenges are not unique – wastewater is a huge economic barrier to attracting economic development. Communication is also a barrier – set up monthly meetings, make sure everyone is involved. Capacity is an issue. Volunteer driven organizations result in burn out. Burke already has a sellable brand. Establish a strong referral system.
- It sounds like folks want to be a town for visitors and residents. Vibrant downtowns serve both residents and visitors, Burke can look to develop both. What are the opportunities to serve local community? Look at what buildings could be adapted that way.
- People come to Vermont to experience community 'like a local'. We heard a need for dedicated personnel to manage dynamic growth. Explore hiring someone part time who is shared with other similar entities, chambers or municipalities. Realize that we are in a global economy and handle it by being laser focused on what you can achieve.

- Volunteers have done an incredible job with this community. The idea of capacity building is important. A good way to leverage the assets and manage growth. Focus on local level infrastructure needs. Acknowledge the current servitude structure. West Burke and Lyndonville serve East Burke and East Burke serves visitors.
- Political and economic development is dynamic. West Burke has to be successful for everything to thrive. And infrastructure is critical. Rural Development can help. Rural Business Development Grants have been used by communities to fund economic development personnel (see Franklin, NH). The REAP Zone is a great opportunity. Your job is to identify priorities.
- You need a point person to coordinate economic development. Burke has a bursting economic development engine. There is energy in the community, but you haven't built on it yet. Economic development leadership is vital. Economic development and transportation plans will be valuable. Burke could build an economic development commission.
- Businesses need support. Bring businesses together and have them talk about their needs. Create a vision that is the unique and inherent truth about a place. The idea of a complementary vision for West Burke is important. Celebrate quality of life and identity- it's a competitive advantage for attracting businesses. Plan for 10 years down the line, not 3 or 5.



Scenes from Community Visit Day.

VIII. Burke Community Visit Participants

Ryan Albert
Priscilla Aldrich
Joe Allard
Tory Amorello
Amy Ash Nixon
Lauri Austin
Elly Barksdale
James Bentley
Steve Berlack
Tom Blake
Jennifer Botzjoorns
Sophie Branson Gill
Marc Brown
Diane Burke
Ronald Burke
Alex Buskey
Kiah Caldwell
Barbara Chapman
Charlie "Chappy"
Chapman
Millie Chappell
Scott Chappell
Keith Clark
Matt Clark
Disa Clarner
Doug Clarner
Michael Cohen
Shelly Cole
Larry Compiano
Travis Corey
Daryel Corrow
Crosby Coughlin
Caitlin Daulong
Collin Daulong
Wendy J. Davenport
Daniel Davis
Charlie Delaney
Christine Emmons
Dan Flanagan
Jodi Flanagan
Travis Foley

Sarah Foster
Lee French
Sherry French
Brian Gallagher
Joel Gilbert
Rachel Gilbert
Lauren Grader-Fox
Lisa Grader-Fox
Kellie Greer
Ron Groskopf
Susan Hanus
Chrissie Heinrich
Barry Hertz
Des Hertz
Mary Ann Hertz
Lilias Ide
Alan Keays
Charlie Kimbell
John Kresser
Sarah Kresser
Carol Krochak
Michelle Laferriere
Kristen Langlais
Matt Langlais
Michelle Larocque-
Tipton
Elise Lawson
Phil Lawson
Suzanne Legare Belcher
Sue Leskin
Susan Leskin
Jaime Lipka
John Lotti
Linda Lotti
Kevin Mack
Frank Maloney
Chris Manges
Jackie Manges
Tom Manges
Alison Manion
Ed Manion

Alyssa May
Jen McCormack
Erin McKinnon
John McKinnon
Mike Michaud
Carmenza Montague
Sean Montague
Abbie Montgomery
Morgan Moore
Carol Moore-Whitney
Mary Jane Morrin
Harry Morrison
Daniel Morse
Jamie Myers
Edwin Nason
Adam Norwood
Susanne Norwood
Tate Norwood
Kate O'Farrell
Mary Jo O'Neill
Dave Ormiston
Baylow Ouellette
Lisa Paquette
Ron Paquette
Marilyn Pastore
Nancy Pepin-Vogt
Taylor Peyton
Erik Phillips-Nania
Cliff Pierce
Susan Pierce
Ric Prescott
Nelia Rath
Jon Rice
Stacy Rice
Trenny Robb
Rachel Robillard
Laural Ruggles
Karyl Ryczek
CJ Scott
Jessica Sechler
Siobhan Shufelt

Pam Smith
Kraig Sourbeer
Sarah Stanley
Ryan Strauch
Daniel Sweet
Nancy Taylor
Tom Taylor
Alia Thabit
Addison Tipton
Ben Tipton
Makail Tipton
Tiaan Van Der linde
Markus Vogt
Harrison Wade
George Wagner
Tammy Wagner
George Sr. Wagner
Fritz Walther
Marti Walther
Gail Weed
Karl Weidemann
Cathie Wheeler
Jake Wheeler
Bradley Wiggins
Karri Willy
Viki Woodworth
Linda Wray



Des Hertz, Chair of the One Burke Community Visit process.

VIII. Visiting Resource Team Members

Richard Amore, *Planning & Project Manager*, VT Dept of Housing and Community Development, 802-828-5229, richard.amore@vermont.gov

Kate Ash, *Field Representative*, Office of U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy, 802-229-0569, kate_ash@leahy.senate.gov

Ted Brady, *Deputy Secretary*, VT Agy of Commerce & Community Devel., 828-5204, ted.brady@vermont.gov; kitty.sweet@vermont.gov

Hannah Carpino, *Student*, University of Vermont, hannah.carpino@uvm.edu

Paul Costello, *Executive Director*, VT Council on Rural Development, 802-223-5763, pcostello@vtrural.org

Ben Doyle, *Community Development Specialist*, USDA Rural Development, 828-6042, benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov

Paul Dragon, *Director of Policy and Planning*, VT Agency of Human Services, paul.dragon@vermont.gov

Peter Fairweather, Fairweather Consulting, 845-255-0611, pfairweather@fairweatherconsulting.com

Jeffrey Francis, *Executive Director*, VT Superintendents Assoc., 802-229-5834, jfrancis@vtvsa.org

Margaret Gibson McCoy, *Office and Communications Manager*, VT Council on Rural Development, 802-223-6091, margaret@vtrural.org

Gary Holloway, *Downtown Program Coordinator*, VT Dept of Housing and Community Devel., 802-828-3220, gary.holloway@vermont.gov

Trisha Ingalls, *Chief Executive Officer*, Rural Edge, 802-535-3555; trishai@ruraledge.org; info@ruraledge.org

Wendy Knight, *Commissioner*, Department of Tourism and Marketing, 802-798-2191, wendy.knight@vermont.gov

Jenna Koloski, *Community and Policy Manager*, VT Council on Rural Development, 802-225-6091, jenna@vtrural.org

Eric Law, *VT/NH Community Loan Specialist*, USDA Rural Development, 802-828-6033, eric.law@vt.usda.gov

Pollaidh Major, *Public Affairs Specialist and Administrative Assistant*, USDA Rural Development, 802-828-6080, Pollaidh.Major@vt.usda.gov

Frank Maloney, *Planner*, Northeastern VT Development Assoc., 802-424-1419, fmaloney@nvda.net

Doug Morton, *Senior Transportation Planner*, Northeastern VT Development Assoc., 802-748-1224, dmorton@nvda.net

Michael Moser, *Research Project Specialist*, UVM Center for Rural Studies, 802-656-0864; 656-3021, mmoser@uvm.edu

Dave Pelletier, *Planning Coordinator*, VT Agency of Transportation, 802-595-9675, Dave.Pelletier@vermont.gov

Sheila Reed, *Outreach Representative*, Office of Senator Bernard Sanders, 802-748-9269; 800-339-9834, Sheila_Reed@sanders.senate.gov

Felipe Rivera, *VP of Communications*, VT Community Foundation, frivera@vermontcf.org

Lisa Ryan, *Field Service Representative*, Preservation Trust of Vermont, 802-917-2994, lisa@ptvermont.org

Joe Segale, *Policy, Planning and Research Bureau Director*, VT Agency of Transportation, 828-3968, joe.segale@vermont.gov

Misty Sinsigalli, *Community Programs Specialist*, USDA Rural Development, 802.748.8746 X122, misty.sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov

David Snedeker, *Executive Director*, Northeastern VT Development Assn., 802-748-5181 x15, dsnedeker@nvda.net

Jason Van Driesche, *Interim Director*, Local Motion, 861-2700 x109, jason@localmotion.org

Kevin Wiberg, *Philanthropic Advisor for Community Engagement*, Vermont Community Foundation, 802-388-3355 ext. 284, kwiberg@vermontcf.org



Visiting Team members enjoyed their time in Burke!



**Vermont Council on
Rural Development**

PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384
802-223-6091 | info@vtrural.org

<http://vtrural.org>



THE
Vermont
Community Foundation

3 Court St., Middlebury, VT 05753
802-388-3355 | info@vermontcf.org

<http://vermontcf.org>