



Survey Tries to Pin Down Vermont Values



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Politicians, business leaders, and the public often talk about "Vermont values." But what exactly are they? A new survey released Monday attempts to quantify those in a scientific way.



"The question is what are Vermonters' common values?" asked Sarah Waring of the Council on the Future of Vermont. "Do we still have values in common?"

The UVM Center for Rural Studies released a survey that showed there is more that unites Vermonters than divides them. The results were based on listening sessions in every Vermont county and a phone survey of 699 adults.



"We had this enormous list, and the job of survey was to try to validate or verify some of what we were hearing in a scientific way," Waring said.



But the questions posed would be hard to disagree with -- whether you are a Vermonter or not. More than 93 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements

- I value the working landscape and its heritage.
- I am proud of being from or living in Vermont.
- I value Vermont's spirit of independence.



Researchers admitted some of the survey was pointing out the obvious.

"Sometimes the most obvious things are the things we have in common that we don't examine enough, that we don't go back to galvanize ourselves to a common purpose," said Paul Costello, executive director of the Vermont Council on Rural Development.

But what that common purpose is isn't clear.

The survey found Vermonters want affordable housing and jobs through more business development, but how does that fit with the value placed on our rural landscape? We value education, but how does that fit with the concern of high taxes?

"Everything you're saying are the kinds of questions we're wrestling with internally," Costello said, "and we're not in a position to release conclusions to those. But clearly there are contradictions."

Researchers said the survey was not designed to drive the legislative process or public policy. They consider it good background, even if they are not sure just how

it will be used.

"We don't have those answers yet, but this is essential to the deliberations we're going to have at our table and the deliberations we hope this process will provoke on the streets and in every community in the state of Vermont," Costello said.

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