

Swanton Community Visit

Report and Action Plan ~ May 2015



Vermont Council on Rural Development

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Vision for Swanton's Future	5
III. Initial List of Opportunities and Challenges	6
IV. Priority Topics	11
V. Task Force Action Plans.....	13
VI. Resource Team Recommendations.....	24
VII. Town Forum Notes	34
VIII. Community Visit Participants.....	52
IX. Resource Team Members	53



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

Staff:

Paul Costello, *Executive Director*
Jenna Whitson, *Community and Policy Senior Associate*
Margaret Gibson McCoy, *Office and Communications Manager*

I. Introduction

Nestled alongside Lake Champlain and bordered by the Missisquoi River, Swanton is a mecca for paddling enthusiasts and lovers northern of Vermont's scenic waterways and rolling hills. The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge offers wildlife viewing and trail networks for local enthusiasts and those that travel to visit this national treasure. Swanton is also a home to many economic assets. It is located at the convergence of several major transportation routes and boasts a walkable village center, surrounding an iconic Village Green, with a mixture of family-owned businesses, restaurants, and national stores. The town also has a strong agricultural foundation and a rich history and cultural heritage highlighted by the Swanton Historical Museum and the Abenaki Tribal Council Headquarters and Museum.

The VCRD visiting team was impressed by Swanton's numerous assets: hard-working volunteers, involved youth, dedicated and engaged town and village officials, a dynamic arts community, strong educational institutions, and a deep sense of belonging, community, and pride. In particular, the Visiting Team was struck by the community's willingness to tackle tough issues. From the beginning of the Community Visit discussions, Swanton residents recognized that addressing the issue of substance abuse in the community would be a key to the future of their town. Residents confronted this issue head-on, choosing to set this as a priority and gearing up for bold action.

Swanton's Community Visit Co-Chair, Molly Lambert said, "We live in a very rich community and we need to congratulate each other for that. We have an active and engaged citizenry. It is a very special thing to have people come together and be willing to work side by side with neighbors and strangers to build our community." From the Community Visit Day through the end of the process, the VCRD Visiting Team saw this richness and engagement over and over again in residents of all ages from all parts of the community. We see that Swanton cares deeply about the future prosperity and quality of life in their town and village.

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. We want to help build the connections of the community to human, technical, and funding resources from lead agencies and organizations in the state. And we want to help the Visiting Team that we build learn more about local needs and the dynamics in the diverse towns of rural Vermont so they can better serve these communities.

With over 200 local people participating in the process and over 70 volunteers now engaged in active Task Forces to advance priorities, we know that there is great energy for real progress in Swanton today. In fact, one group of motivated residents did not wait until the end of the Community Visit Process to get up and running: the new Swanton Arts Council jumpstarted its efforts in the middle of the process! Following the Community Visit Day, the group formed and has already accomplished a great deal towards establishing an artistic presence and developing the artistic community in Swanton. This group is a perfect example of the leadership and energy we saw throughout the process. At the end of the Community Visit, we see strong, practical work plans and some direct connections being engaged for key support from; the Northern Forest Canoe Trail on outdoor recreation efforts; the VT Department of Health and the Rutland Project Vision on addressing substance abuse; and the Franklin County Economic

Development Corporation and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission on economic development efforts. Swanton is well-positioned to successfully move its chosen projects forward.

It was not easy to choose priorities at the Community Meeting, 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 and be ground for work in town over time.

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

- **Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability and Bike Tourism**
- **Create the Swanton Arts Council** (established following the January 28th Community Visit Day)
- **Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee**
- **Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse**
- **Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown**

The Task Forces working to advance 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 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 Swanton consisted of three phases:

1. On the **Community Visit Day** on January 28th, Visiting Team members heard testimony from Swanton residents in nine focus group areas that had earlier been identified by the local steering committee. Notes and issues raised in these sessions are detailed in Part VII. Based on the testimony received, the Vermont Council on Rural Development identified an initial list of the key **Opportunities** before the community (Part III).
2. The second stage of the Community Visit occurred at the **Swanton Village Offices** on March 5th when VCRD presented the Opportunities list and facilitated the review and prioritization of these issues by town residents. The resulting list of **Swanton Priorities** (in Part IV) were then the focus for the formation of four new Task Forces established to build plans that would address them (see bulleted list above). The Swanton Arts Council, who had already formed following the Community Visit Day, announced their new group, and asked residents to sign on if they were interested in this new initiative.
3. In the third phase of the Visit, the **Community Resource Day** on April 15th, the four new Task Forces and the Swanton Arts Council met with a second Visiting Team to get organized, build Action Steps, and consider state, federal, non-profit, and private sector resources that may be available to support their work. The resulting **Task Force Work Plans** are listed in Part V.

Resource Team Members (listed with contact information in Part IX) signed on with a commitment to serve as sounding boards and referral agents for the Swanton Task Forces. Many of these visitors can be partners in the work before the committees; others can be great sources of advice or connection to other resources. **Call on them for help.**

Members of the Resource Team listened closely to the issues brought forward by town residents and have made suggestions in support of Swanton's efforts in each challenge area. **Their Recommendations (Part VI) *are not prescriptions; community members are in the best position to make decisions about their next steps and strategies.*** Recognizing existing local efforts and the leadership of the Task Forces, these recommendations are offered, rather, as suggestions for potential next steps, and as lists of potential resources as the Task Forces make their way forward.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development is dedicated to helping Vermont communities develop their capacity to create a prosperous and sustainable future through coordination, collaboration, and the effective use of public and private resources. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Swanton as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to Swanton Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Swanton projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

At VCRD, we deeply appreciate the leadership of the Swanton Enhancement Project Steering Committee who invited us to Swanton initially to explore the potential for a visit to Swanton and demonstrated an unprecedented drive, motivation, and vision throughout the Community Visit Process. Thank you to Steering Committee members; Reg Beliveau, Joel Clark, Molly Lambert, Hank Lambert, Betsy Fournier, Amanda Torrey, Adam Paxman, Sandy Kilburn, Marie Frey, Winton Goodrich, Ron Kilburn, Ross Lavoie, Mary Metayer, Kathy Lavoie, Terri O'Shea, Judy Paxman, and Kris Daignault.

VCRD especially wants to thank Hank and Molly Lambert for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Co-Chairs. Swanton is fortunate to have these two fighting for the future of the community. Molly and Hank are among the strongest, most organized, and certainly most driven community visit chairs that we have had the pleasure to work with. They are both truly talented leaders and dedicated servants to the community. VCRD feels confident that the new task forces and the initiatives for the future will be successful under the guidance and leadership of these committed residents.

We also appreciate Swanton's strong Town and Village leadership who formally invited VCRD to Swanton for the Community Visit Process and who are so passionate about the future of their community. Reg Beliveau, the Village Manager, and David Jescavage, the Town Administrator, are exemplary community leaders and have offered so much support and guidance over the course of the Community Visit. VCRD also appreciates the leadership and guidance the Swanton Town Select Board and Village Trustees.

We are grateful to the St. Albans Messenger for their wonderful coverage of the Community Visit meetings and their help getting the word out and inviting folks to the Visit events. The paper exemplifies community-spirited journalism at its very best.

Mike 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 the generous financial supporters of the process: The Vermont Community Foundation and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development.

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

VCRD also thanks those that have contributed the photos for this report including our very own Margaret Gibson McCoy and Jenna Whitson; and back cover photos by David Jescavage (*Swanton green*) and the Swanton Chamber of Commerce (*swans*).

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Swanton should be grateful to those who’ve stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Ron Kilburn and Mary Metayer: Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability and Bike Tourism; Judy Paxman and Kris Daignault: Swanton Arts Council; Terri O’Shea: Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee; Joel Clark: Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown; Kathy Lavoie: Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse.

In the end, though, we are proud at VCRD 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. So we are grateful to all residents, young and old, who stand up for Swanton and who are lined up for the common good and best future to this wonderful place.



Thanks also to the Missisquoi Valley Union High School student musicians who entertained us during the community dinner on Swanton Community Visit Day. Bravo!

II. Vision for Swanton's Future

These points of vision for the future of Swanton were shared by residents at the Community Meeting on March 5 and supported by the majority of participants in a poll of the community. The statements represent broad hopes that Swanton community members aspire to for the long term good of Swanton.

Swanton residents look to a future for the community where:

Swanton is a vibrant, diverse, and thriving community where local businesses, culture, and assets are highlighted. People are waiting in line to buy homes here because of the strong sense of community, a recreational facility that serves young and old, and a good night life with a good public restaurant, bar, or community meeting place.

Swanton is a safe community for children, families, and seniors, where children have safe places to play beyond their backyards and seniors feel they can get around and participate in activities safely.

Swanton is a community that cares about its children and families and works hard to strengthen families. Our schools are seen as the best in the region – and even in the entire state.

Swanton is a prosperous town with plenty of water resources that attracts appropriate retail development bringing good paying jobs to the town.

There is a sense of belonging in Swanton. There is an effective vehicle for communicating all of the good things going on for residents and visitors, and a community calendar to share events. The Town and the Village collaborate respectfully and effectively.

Swanton is a town where visitors come for activities ranging from biking, to paddling and fishing, and visiting the Historical Society. The town is recognized for artistic achievement and visitors come to see the work created and displayed by local artists. Swanton is much more than just a place that traffic passes through, it is a destination.

III. Initial List of Opportunities and Challenges

Identified by forums with community members on January 28 2015.

More than 200 Swanton residents joined with VCRD staff and a 24 member Visiting Team for the Community Visit Day on January 28, filling meeting rooms in the Swanton Public Library, the Village Office, Trinity Episcopal Church, and Missisquoi Valley Union High School. They took time from their workday and other commitments to attend forums and a community dinner at the High School, and to begin to work together in shaping the future of the town. The following issues emerged as initial challenges and opportunities. This list was presented back to community members at the Community Meeting on March 5 for voting and prioritization:

Expand Recreational Facilities and Opportunities

Swanton residents celebrate the town's recreational assets including a new Recreation Department with diverse offerings, a teen center, church-led activities, the town green, a new fitness center, the Abenaki Community Center, and the Marble Mill Property. Residents recognize the significant role that recreation opportunities play in community building and even substance abuse and crime prevention. However, many feel that these opportunities are underutilized due to lack of space and communication, and that more opportunities should be available to adults and families as well as youth. A task force of Swanton residents could strengthen the Recreation Department and expand offerings for youth, adults, and families. The group can, with input from the community (including youth), seek out opportunities to use underutilized spaces and work together to communicate opportunities to the Town and Village via social networks, the town websites, Front Porch Forum, and perhaps a regular community newsletter.

Improve River Access and Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

With the Missisquoi River, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rail Trail, Swanton is a prime location for the development of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and tourists. An Outdoor Recreation Task Force could explore opportunities to expand the use of these outdoor recreation resources by residents through organized programs or activities, build new and better boat access points, as well as identify ways to reach out to paddlers, bikers, and wildlife enthusiasts to invite both residents and visiting tourists to explore what Swanton has to offer. The task force could also work to attract a boat/bike rental business that can expand tourism access to the Missisquoi and Lake Champlain. The group could identify grant or other funding opportunities for activities and equipment as well as partner with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail to improve river access for paddling and fishing.

Expand Bike Tourism and Improve Bike-ability

Swanton is located at the beginning of the Lamoille Rail Trail. Residents recognize the opportunity to capitalize on this resource by focusing on making Swanton a more bike-friendly community and developing bike tourism resources. A Swanton Cycling Task Force could plan for and work to implement improvements ranging from bike racks and signage downtown to bike lanes on Route 78, new bike and walking paths (including a path to Hog Island) and could develop marketing resources and strategies aimed to expand local riding and attracting the regional and international cycling community.

Create an Arts Council

An arts council could be formed to promote the active, but sometimes unrecognized and uncelebrated, arts community in Swanton. Residents see an opportunity to boost recognition of local crafts and artists by building an organized group to plan and publicize events. The council could identify spaces and events to show art and communicate art events to residents and visitors. The group could work with Swanton businesses, churches, the library, and others to identify potential sponsorship and collaboration opportunities.

Create Swanton History Hike and Brochure

Swanton residents would like to develop a way to showcase and celebrate its rich history and connection to the Abenaki community. A History Task Force could partner with the Historical Society to identify strategies to educate residents and the public about the history of the region including: developing a history hike with signage and maps, a history brochure, exhibits of Abenaki art and other local points of interest, and offering educational events on the history of the community.

Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee

Swanton is home to many assets that are attractive to businesses including the interstate, affordable utilities, and strong networking and collaboration among businesses. Many residents, however, feel that growth is currently slow, that Swanton is not a destination for relocating businesses, and competition with New York is a challenge. Residents recognize the need for growth of businesses and jobs in the town, but want to make sure to move forward in a cohesive and structured way. Currently, there is no group or entity that focuses on creating a plan for economic development and no point person in the municipality to take the lead. An Economic Development Task Force can draw on community members and outside experts to create a common vision for the growth and development of Swanton's downtown, southern district, and small business development. The committee could work to identify funding to hire a point person for economic development that could market Swanton to businesses, encourage existing businesses, help businesses get over regulatory and financing hurdles, and advance jobs and prosperity for the future.

Develop a Growth Plan for the Southern Growth District

There is significant opportunity for growth in the Southern Growth District of Swanton and many residents see that growth as a great benefit to the tax base and economic prosperity of the community. A Master Plan for the Southern Growth District is needed to encourage and coordinate that growth in ways that meet the needs of Swanton and the region and, at the same time, establish locally developed structure to regulate the scale and pattern of development. A task force working with the municipality and planning commission, and supported by regional planning and other experts, could provide leadership to advance a rational plan.

Improve Communications and Marketing of Town Events and Resources

Throughout Community Visit Day, the visiting resource team was struck by the many recreation opportunities, art events, social gatherings, and activities that Swanton residents described. Residents also shared significant concerns about the lack of an effective way to spread the word among residents about these events. Residents would like to improve communication between the Town and the Village, the school and the community, and find better ways to get the word out about historical society, art, community resources, and recreational events. A Communications Committee could identify ways to improve communication such as improvements to town and village websites, a stronger community calendar, and potentially a monthly newsletter, perhaps in collaboration with

students at MVU, highlighting local events, activities, businesses, gatherings, and other occasions of community interest.

Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse

Swanton residents expressed concern around the growing use of drugs and alcohol in the community. Many see their neighbors, family, and friends struggling, and worry about the impact substance abuse and addiction can have on the wellbeing and safety of the community. Though Swanton residents are faced with a significant challenge, they are willing and ready to tackle this complex issue. Residents recognize that the community is working hard to address this issue in schools, churches, mentoring programs, and law enforcement, but are challenged to coordinate and communicate these efforts and unite around a common vision. A Substance Abuse Task Force could form to better coordinate and communicate existing efforts and serve as the focal group to unite the community to reduce substance abuse and addiction and improve the quality of life. Tasks may include developing and sharing a Swanton position statement on substance abuse and addiction, identifying and coordinating training opportunities for residents and those working with youth, identifying ways to make resources and support systems more accessible and available, taking back areas where drug use is rampant and potentially creating a neighborhood watch program.

Set Up a Community Garden

Swanton residents are proud of their prime agricultural soils, their dairy farms, and the flat tillable land in the region. Many residents are interested in ways to grow and access local food, and many grow food in personal gardens. For several years, residents have discussed developing a community garden in a safe and public area to allow all residents the opportunity to grow food together as a community. However, there has not been an organized group to get behind the effort. A task force could be formed to identify a good location for the garden, develop a plan for the community garden, and research potential funding opportunities.

Develop a Swanton Tourist Information Center

Swanton is home to many attractions that make it a wonderful Vermont tourism destination. The Wildlife Refuge, the Missisquoi River, and the Rail Trail make it an ideal recreation destination, while other visitors may be interested in the active arts community or fascinating history of the town. However, residents feel that more can be done to attract tourists to the area, especially those travelling from Montreal. A Tourism Task Force could form to tell Swanton's story, package local events and offerings, and collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce to develop and staff a Swanton Tourist Information Center to market Swanton as a destination and direct visitors to area attractions and businesses. An information center could display tourism materials that advertise Swanton's many assets and could provide information to bikers utilizing the Rail Trail or to paddlers that may be travelling on the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.

Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown

While Swanton's downtown has many key assets (small businesses, tourist attractions, sidewalks, the central green, a fitness center), residents expressed concern that a lack of parking and significant truck traffic through town undermines the full potential of the downtown and decreases safety and walkability. A Swanton Transportation Task Force could work to improve pedestrian and bikeways, public safety, and parking availability. The group could conduct a traffic study to identify opportunities to improve truck traffic in the downtown corridor, explore potential bypass or alternative truck routes, identify opportunities to expand and improve downtown parking, look at opportunities to reduce truck

traffic noise and improve signage in downtown Swanton. Residents would like to strengthen the downtown and manage traffic through the area to the town's advantage, both to improve the local economy and to make downtown Swanton more attractive and pleasant for residents and visitors.

Expand Public Transportation and Park and Ride

Swanton residents expressed frustration with the lack of public transportation and/or car sharing opportunities from Swanton to Burlington and other locations. A Public Transportation Task Force could identify ways to increase public transportation options especially for seniors and youth, work with Green Mountain Transit to expand routes and access, make improvements to the existing Park and Ride, better publicize the use of the Park and Ride, and explore ways to better connect commuters who may be interested in car sharing and/or carpooling.

Beautify Downtown

A Downtown Beautification Task Force could formalize downtown beautification work and expand on the efforts already made to improve the look of Swanton's downtown. Flowers, benches, attractive signage and other amenities could be planned and implemented. One opportunity to explore may be to tap into the youth community service requirement for beautification work.

Expand Career/ Workforce Development for Youth and Adults

Swanton, like many other Vermont communities, faces a challenge keeping youth connected to their community, drawing youth in to the community, and filling agriculture and manufacturing jobs. A Career and Workforce Development Task Force could form, in collaboration with MVU, CCV, and NWRTC, to identify strategies to address these challenges. The group could explore ways to better connect the tech center with MVU and local businesses, to create job shadow or apprenticeship opportunities, and could work on ways to better coordinate and communicate professional development, education, and career opportunities for adults and youth. Residents also expressed an interest in working with MVU to develop continuing ed and community education offerings for adults.

Build a Community Center

Swanton residents would like to see more opportunities for community members and families to come together for social and recreational activities. Many residents noted that there are several vacant buildings that may be suitable for the development of a multi-generational community center. A task force could consider possibilities for the development of a multigenerational community space. It could work with the community to develop a vision for a community center and identify potential public, private, and philanthropic funding sources to support the development of a multigenerational community gathering space.

Advance the Development of a Shared Work Space

Over the past several month some Swanton residents have been looking at the possibility of developing a shared office space as a way to attract, support, or incubate new businesses and draw a new generation of entrepreneurs and young people to the community. An incubator or shared work space could range from a co-working office, to a facility to help new businesses develop products ranging from software to value-added foods. A task force could come together to build on this discussion by identifying an appropriate building in the downtown, planning for key facility needs, setting a plan for redevelopment, and framing to connect to potential funding sources to bring this model to Swanton.

Start a Community Restaurant

Swanton residents wish that there were more dining options downtown where they could go out for dinner with their friends and family. A Task Force could be formed to develop and implement a plan to set up and maintain a community-owned restaurant in downtown Swanton. A new restaurant would contribute to building a vibrant downtown, attract residents and tourists to spend time in town, and create jobs and economic opportunity.

Redevelop the Marble Mill Park and Playground

During Community Visit forums, the Marble Mill Property and boat launch was highlighted both as an opportunity and a challenge. While the park and playground are a great community resource, many felt that the property was in need of attention. Some residents expressed a desire to clean up the property to be better utilized by the community while others, including youth, noted that the property did not feel safe to use. A Task Force could be formed to explore ways to clean up and or redevelop the property and better utilize the space for community recreation and enjoyment, especially for the community's youth.

Revitalize and Reuse Vacant/Abandoned Buildings

Swanton residents are concerned by the number of vacant buildings in Swanton's downtown. A Downtown Buildings task force could identify ways to use vacant buildings for the improvement of the community. Some ideas that residents brainstormed included space for art showing, a place to eat out, a community meeting space, and space for recreational opportunities.



*Community Meeting Day
participants read the
opportunities together.*



IV. Swanton Priorities

Determined by Swanton residents at the VCRD Community Meeting, March 5 2015

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Swanton community members whittled down a list of 20 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with orange and blue stickers, nearly 100 participants chose five issues that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the March 5 meeting by signing up for one of five Task Forces in the selected areas.

Swanton residents selected five priorities for future action:

✓ Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability and Bike Tourism

With the Missisquoi River, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rail Trail, Swanton is a prime location for the development of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and tourists. An Outdoor Recreation Task Force could explore opportunities to expand the use of these outdoor recreation resources by residents through organized programs or activities, build new and better boat access points, improve bike-ability, as well as identify ways to reach out to paddlers, bikers, and wildlife enthusiasts to invite both residents and visiting tourists to explore what Swanton has to offer. The task force could also work to attract a boat/bike rental business that can expand tourism access to the Missisquoi and Lake Champlain. The group could identify grant or other funding opportunities for activities and equipment as well as partner with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail to improve river access for paddling and fishing.

✓ Create an Arts Council

An arts council could be formed to promote the active, but sometimes unrecognized and uncelebrated, arts community in Swanton. Residents see an opportunity to boost recognition of local crafts and artists by building an organized group to plan and publicize events. The council could identify spaces and events to show art and communicate art events to residents and visitors. The group could work with Swanton businesses, churches, the library, and others to identify potential sponsorship and collaboration opportunities.

✓ Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee

Swanton is home to many assets that are attractive to businesses including the interstate, affordable utilities, and strong networking and collaboration among businesses. Many residents, however, feel that growth is currently slow, that Swanton is not a destination for relocating businesses, and competition with New York is a challenge. Residents recognize the need for growth of businesses and jobs in the town, but want to make sure to move forward in a cohesive and structured way. Currently, there is no group or entity that focuses on creating a plan for economic development and no point person in the municipality to take the lead. An Economic Development Task Force can draw on community members and outside experts to create a common vision for the growth and development of Swanton's downtown, southern district, and small business development. The committee could

work to identify funding to hire a point person for economic development that could market Swanton to businesses, encourage existing businesses, help businesses get over regulatory and financing hurdles, and advance jobs and prosperity for the future.

✓ **Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse**

Swanton residents expressed concern around the growing use of drugs and alcohol in the community. Many see their neighbors, family, and friends struggling, and worry about the impact substance abuse and addiction can have on the wellbeing and safety of the community. Though Swanton residents are faced with a significant challenge, they are willing and ready to tackle this complex issue. Residents recognize that the community is working hard to address this issue in schools, churches, mentoring programs, and law enforcement, but are challenged to coordinate and communicate these efforts and unite around a common vision. A Substance Abuse Task Force could form to better coordinate and communicate existing efforts and serve as the focal group to unite the community to reduce substance abuse and addiction and improve the quality of life. Tasks may include developing and sharing a Swanton position statement on substance abuse and addiction, identifying and coordinating training opportunities for residents and those working with youth, identifying ways to make resources and support systems more accessible and available, taking back areas where drug use is rampant and potentially creating a neighborhood watch program.

✓ **Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown**

While Swanton's downtown has many key assets (small businesses, tourist attractions, sidewalks, the central green, a fitness center), residents expressed concern that a lack of parking and significant truck traffic through town undermines the full potential of the downtown and decreases safety and walkability. A Swanton Transportation Task Force could work to improve pedestrian and bikeways, public safety, and parking availability. The group could conduct a traffic study to identify opportunities to improve truck traffic in the downtown corridor, explore potential bypass or alternative truck routes, identify opportunities to expand and improve downtown parking, look at opportunities to reduce truck traffic noise and improve signage in downtown Swanton. Residents would like to strengthen the downtown and manage traffic through the area to the town's advantage, both to improve the local economy and to make downtown Swanton more attractive and pleasant for residents and visitors.



On Community Meeting Day, participants took part in a dot-voting exercise to select their top priorities for action.

V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, April 15 2015

Swanton Task Forces are comprised of community members and an appointed chairperson. On Resource Day committee members worked closely with a facilitator and small resource teams to develop step-by-step action plans and to devise 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.

Task Force: ✓ Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability and Bike Tourism

Chairperson: **Mary Metayer** and **Ron Kilburn**

Facilitator: **Jenna Whitson**, VCRD

Resource Leaders: **Walter Opuszynski**, Northern Forest Canoe Trail

With the Missisquoi River, the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, and the Rail Trail, Swanton is a prime location for the development of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents and tourists. An Outdoor Recreation Task Force could explore opportunities to expand the use of these outdoor recreation resources by residents through organized programs or activities, build new and better boat access points, improve bike-ability, as well as identify ways to reach out to paddlers, bikers, and wildlife enthusiasts to invite both residents and visiting tourists to explore what Swanton has to offer. The task force could also work to attract a boat/bike rental business that can expand tourism access to the Missisquoi and Lake Champlain. The group could identify grant or other funding opportunities for activities and equipment as well as partner with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail to improve river access for paddling and fishing.

Priority Action Steps:

1. Investigate the access points of the Missisquoi River that the state, town, and village of Swanton own, specifically above and below the dam. Increase access to the 7 mile stretch of calm water above the dam. Develop outdoor recreation opportunities that also highlight the value of the calm water above the dam.
2. Create a map to identify and promote the current outdoor recreation assets in the community. Start with a map found at www.townofswantonvermont.weebly.com
3. Improve river access at Depot Museum and Marble Mill.
4. Plan a river celebration that would include food, music, speakers, etc. to highlight the success of the improved access to the river and celebrate the outdoor assets of the community.
5. Improve bike safety. Perhaps by improving signage in the village and along Route 78. Collaborate on this effort with the task force working on improving traffic and walkability downtown.
6. Improve the communication of outdoor recreation opportunities in the community including outdoor oriented workshops, program opportunities, events, etc. Explore the best way to spread the word. Options may include; Front Porch Forum, the Swanton Rec Dept Wednesday Weekly, a weekly insert in the St. Albans Messenger, or the development of an outdoor recreation community calendar.

7. Work in collaboration with the Swanton Recreation Department to support summer camp programs for youth that include ample outdoor recreation, biking, and river opportunities.

Other action ideas:

- Partner with the wildlife refuge to offer paddling experience for beginners and promote outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Explore the possibility of a primitive river campsite in Swanton in collaboration with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.
- Work with the elementary school to expand “Ski Fridays” year-round offering “river Fridays” in the summer.
- Explore opportunities for new bike paths.
- Initiate a Swanton Geo Cacheing program through Swanton Recreation Dept.
- Construct a Swanton Frisbee Golf Course through Swanton Recreation Dept.
- Connect a Swanton resident with the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail committee.
- Bring an outdoor gear rental program to Swanton.
- Improve the connection between the end of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail and downtown by improving signage, mapping, and sidewalks.

Resources:

1. University of Vermont students for mapping support.
2. Northern Forest Canoe Recreational Trails Program can offer support with the project to improve river access. They may be able to support a grant proposal to fund the project.
3. Missisquoi Wildlife refuge.
4. RISEVT.com
5. Complete Streets Program at Local Motion for bike safety support. Katelin Brewer-Colie manages that program.
6. The Town and Village Joint Legislative Body is a key resource as many of the outdoor recreation assets are publicly owned. A new sidewalk project may be underway which may be a good opportunity to improve bike and pedestrian safety between the Rail Trail and town.
7. Jon Kaplan is the Program Manager at the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program at the VT Agency of Transportation.
8. Swanton Historical Society.
9. Land and Water Conservation Fund at the Agency of Natural Resources.
10. Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Public Outdoor Recreation funds.
11. Highgate Arena.
12. Leaders in the Richford community who worked on improving river access and planning the Richford Riverfest. NFCT Trail Town Committee.
13. Swanton Recreation Department.
14. Amy Brewer: Northwest Medical Center/Public Health
15. Friends of Northern Lake Champlain: Denise Smith

Task Force Members:

Reg	Beliveau	rbeliveau@swanton.net	
Neal	Speer	nealspeerconstruction@yahoo.com	868-4277
Gordon	Clements	gordonc@gordonswd.com	868-2444
Don	Collins	treasureguy68@hotmail.com; grandpavt@gmail.com	868-7975
Susan	Collins	pgm_vt@yahoo.com	868-7975
Linda	Cross	ljtcross@comcast.net	868-7540
Marie	Frey	hudakfarm@gmail.com	527-7956
Ron	Kilburn (Co-Chair)	swanza@swantonvermont.org	868-3892
Sarah	King	skj.king@gmail.com	309-0263
Shayne	Kirby	shaynekirby18@gmail.com	777-6487
Carol	Lizotte	clizotte@fnwsu.org	
Sharon	Menard	stella.menardvt@gmail.com	868-0684
Chad	Metayer	cmetayer@comcast.net	868-5400
Mary	Metayer (Co-Chair)	marymetayer52@hotmail.com	868-3158
Lillian	Meunier	15meunierl@fnwsu.org	782-1824
Randall	Rupp	celldocs@gmail.com	370-0756
Sandra	Skeels Kilburn	sandykilburn1939@gmail.com	868-3892
Karrie	Thomas	karrie@northernforestcanoetrail.org	496-2285
Ross	Lavoie	rosslavoie@hotmail.com	782-1925



Task Force: ✓ Create a Swanton Arts Council

Chairpersons: **Judy Paxman** and **Kris Daignault**

Facilitator: **Zon Eastes**, *Vermont Arts Council*

Resource Leaders: **Ben Doyle**, *Vermont Arts Council*; **Ruth Wallman**, *Lake Champlain Islands Economic Development Corporation*

An arts council has been formed to promote the active, but sometimes unrecognized and uncelebrated, arts community in Swanton. Residents see an opportunity to boost recognition of local crafts and artists by building an organized group to plan and publicize events. The council intends to identify spaces and events to show art and communicate art events to residents and visitors. The group will work with Swanton businesses, churches, the library, and others to identify potential sponsorship and collaboration opportunities.

Action Steps

1. Register as Vermont Non-Profit (Faith Dubois).
2. Register as a 501(c)3 with the IRS (Faith Dubois).
3. Explore possibility of applying for a Project Grant - deadline 5/15/2015 (added at end of community meeting).
4. Locate a legal representative (Lenore MacMillion).
5. Research Arts Council best practices (Kris Daignault).
6. Create an Asset Map (Rebecca Rupp and Judy Paxman).
7. Gather information on existing community calendars and Create a Swanton Arts Council calendar to link to existing calendars. Create an "arts clearinghouse" of events (Summer Interns).
8. Develop a focus for the group. Identify a signature Swanton Arts Council event (to be added to future Arts Council Agenda).

Resources

1. Vermont Arts Council staff.
2. Other Arts Councils.
3. VAC Project grants (community art list).
4. VAC Cultural facilities grants.
5. VAC Technical Assistance grants.
6. Vermont Creative Network.
7. Creative Ground Artist Directory.
8. Teaching artist residency grants for schools.
9. Community Liaisons

Task Force Members

Nathan	Archambault	narcham@gmail.com	
Kelly	Babcock (Swanton Recreation Liaison)	kellymb4511@live.com	309-4511
Reg	Beliveau (Swanton Village Liaison)	rbeliveau@swanton.net	
Tanya	Caswell	eatsleeparts@gmail.com	

Ed	Coleman	edcoleman@gmail.com	343-6926
Felicia	Cota	Fellicia.creativeinterventions@gmail.com	
Kris	Daignault (co-chair)	outinthevalley@yahoo.com	309-3376
Faith	DuBois	fadub2001@yahoo.com	782-9105
Katie	Foster	kfoster_74@hotmail.com	802-782-0348
Nancy	Fuller	healthsecrets@myfairpoint.net	363-0597
Sarah	Garvey		999-4692
Laura	Garvey		
Karen	Gates	howmars@franklinvt.net	
Kathleen	Hoffman	loverofshakespeare@gmail.com	
Mary	Hoy	mecanthave@yahoo.com	309-4259
Spencer	Hutchins		782-6172
Chrystal	Hutchins		782-6172
Ron	Kilburn	swanza@swantonvermont.org	868-3892
Hank	Lambert	hanklambert@comcast.net	868-4989
Deb	Lowe-Murray	dlowemis@comcast.net	
Lenore	MacMillian	phaegeoux@hotmail.com	881-4812
Sharon	Menard (Swanton Chamber of commerce liaison)	stella.menardvt@gmail.com	868-0684(h) 578-9473 (c)
Mary	Metayer	marymetayer52@hotmail.com	
Anita	Parah	anita.michele@comcast.net	309-9078
Kevin	Parah		
Mollie	Parah		
Joanna	Parah Reiter	joannereiter@comcast.net	868-5629
Alexandria	Paxman	apaxman@bryant.edu	
Judy	Paxman (co-Chair)	drjudypax@yahoo.com	309-0650
Jessica	Pelkey	jesspelkey@gmail.com	868-6553 or 393-9180 (cell)
Scott	Rheaume	sarheaume@hotmail.com	370-2311
Rebecca	Rupp (Swanton Public Library AND Swanton Historical Society Liaison)	rebeccarupp@gmail.com	802-868-2879 or 733-7471(cell)
Randy	Rupp	celldocs@gmail.com	
Ethan	Rupp	ethan.rupp@gmail.com	
Caleb	Rupp	cbarupp@gmail.com	
Josh	Rupp	joshuasrupp@gmail.com	
Teri	Sibenaller	teri@mapleleaf-it.com	528-1283
Marie	Speer	reesews@gmail.com	752-5198
Neal	Speer	nealspeerconstruction@yahoo.com	309-4102
Gerta	Thiabault		
Adam	Tougas	adam.tougas@gmail.com	
Karlie	Whiting		802-393-9055
Linda	Wirts		868-5492

Task Force: ✓ Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee

Chairperson: **Terri O'Shea**

Facilitator: **Paul Costello**, VCRD

Resource Leaders: **Tim Smith**, *Franklin Industrial Devel. Corp.*; **Paul Bruhn**, *Preservation Trust of VT*

Swanton is home to many assets that are attractive to businesses including the interstate, affordable utilities, and strong networking and collaboration among businesses. Many residents, however, feel that growth is currently slow, that Swanton is not a destination for relocating businesses, and competition with New York is a challenge. Residents recognize the need for growth of businesses and jobs in the town, but want to make sure to move forward in a cohesive and structured way. Currently, there is no group or entity that focuses on creating a plan for economic development and no point person in the municipality to take the lead. An Economic Development Task Force can draw on community members and outside experts to create a common vision for the growth and development of Swanton's downtown, southern district, and small business development. The committee could work to identify funding to hire a point person for economic development that could market Swanton to businesses, encourage existing businesses, help businesses get over regulatory and financing hurdles, and advance jobs and prosperity for the future.

Action Steps

1. Investigate the other towns economic development committees in the county to see what they accomplish and how they work: Richford and Enosburg
2. Work with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission on the region-wide brownfields assessment to identify and plan for the redevelopment of Swanton brownfields.
3. Connect with the Planning Commission to review the draft Swanton Town Plan and contribute ideas on economic development.
4. Establish a Swanton "Bragging Plan" to tell great stories about Swanton assets, activities and good news! Draw on each of the other Task Force work to share a variety of stories for local media, and for media beyond Swanton.
5. Evaluate the idea of attracting, supporting or developing a community restaurant downtown.
6. Support agricultural enterprises and agritourism as key features of Swanton's economy.
7. Go business to business in Swanton—what do they need to grow? Build an inventory of local businesses. Use a common set of questions and ultimately build a list of resources that can be shared with businesses.
8. Get an overview of workforce needs and programs from Kathy Lavoie at the Workforce Development Board, and define strategies to build the workforce.
9. Support the work in progress to develop a welcome center and signage by the Swanton Interstate exit.

Resources:

1. Tim Smith and the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation can provide information and support to the task force.
2. David Southwick and the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce is willing to work with and support the committee.
3. The High School, especially the agriculture program and Workforce Development Board could be important partners.

4. Paul Bruhn and Preservation Trust of Vermont who could help think about restaurants and historic building projects. PTV also conducts tours so community task force members could learn from other towns in VT, or participate in retreats to learn best community development practices.
5. Dom Cloud, Liz Gamache and Chip Sawyer from St. Albans could be invited up to share ideas and techniques for advancing commerce, downtown development and economic development.
6. Kiersten Bougouis of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development could be invited to help advance key strategies.
7. The Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Catherine Dimitruk and staff, could provide invaluable assistance.
8. Even though there are no direct earmarks available anymore, VT's Congressional Delegation can get behind Swanton efforts and can help lever resources.
9. There will be a variety of funding opportunities to move specific projects forward including the opportunity to get a grant of \$2,500 from the Northwest Board of Realtors, connect with Downtown and Village Tax Credits, check in to the Lake Champlain Basin Program heritage program funds, and look into possibilities through the Northern Borders Commission.
10. Ultimately, Swanton needs a point person to keep all work and volunteers on track and drive community efforts to encourage economic development. The Committee will investigate what Johnson and other towns do, and evaluate the possibility of proposing a part or full time position to the village and town.

Task Force Members

Reg	Beliveau	rbeliveau@swanton.net	
Shawn	Cheney	shawnccheney75@gmail.com	782-0400
Joel	Clark	theswan7@comcast.net	868-9034
Don	Collins	treasureguy68@hotmail.com; grandpavt@gmail.com	868-7975
Rep Marianna	Gamache	mariannagamache@gmail.com	309-8871
Monica	Greene	mgreene@vermontprecisiontools.com	868-9034
Lucie	Hill	lhill@fnwsu.org	868-7294
Jim	Hubbard	jhubx5@hotmail.com	752-6961
Linda	Kelly	bkpeterbilt@gmail.com	868-3110
Louise	Lampman Laravee	abenakiselfhelp@comcast.net	
Kathy	Lavoie	kathy.lavoie2@myfairpoint.net	782-1924
Ross	Lavoie	rlavoie@wmorrissey.com	782-1925
Chris	Leach	cleach47@gmail.com	868-2523
Terri	O'Shea (Chair)	osheadev@gmail.com	734-6060
Elisabeth	Nance	elisabeth1815@gmail.com	238-3531
Adam	Paxman	adam.paxman@gmail.com	393-1840
Brian	Savage	brianklynnb@comcast.net	782-9314
Michael	Sibenaller	michael@mapleleaf-it.com	
Dave	Southwick	director@frcrcvt.com	
Neal	Speer	nealspeerconstruction@yahoo.com	868-4277
Kristine	Stell	kstell@remax.net	782-2834
Susan	Washburn	washburnsj@comcast.net	868-3110

✓ Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse

Chairperson: **Kathy Lavoie**

Facilitator: **Peter Mallary**, *VT Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery*

Resource Leaders: **Mary Pickener**, *VT Department of Health*;
Commander Scott Tucker, *Rutland City Police Department*

Swanton residents expressed concern around the growing use of drugs and alcohol in the community. Many see their neighbors, family, and friends struggling, and worry about the impact substance abuse and addiction can have on the wellbeing and safety of the community. Though Swanton residents are faced with a significant challenge, they are willing and ready to tackle this complex issue. Residents recognize that the community is working hard to address this issue in schools, churches, mentoring programs, and law enforcement, but are challenged to coordinate and communicate these efforts and unite around a common vision. A Substance Abuse Task Force could form to better coordinate and communicate existing efforts and serve as the focal group to unite the community to reduce substance abuse and addiction and improve the quality of life. Tasks may include developing and sharing a Swanton position statement on substance abuse and addiction, identifying and coordinating training opportunities for residents and those working with youth, identifying ways to make resources and support systems more accessible and available, taking back areas where drug use is rampant and potentially creating a neighborhood watch program.

Action Steps

1. Identify family friendly activities and promote them monthly. Opportunities could include; cooking classes, arts and crafts, outdoor movies, sports, block parties, outdoor recreation, etc. Collaborate with other local groups such as the new Outdoor Recreation Task Force and the Swanton Recreation Department.
2. Gather data on the extent of substance abuse in the Swanton community as well as map recovery and prevention assets; enlist resource of local researcher, UVM, State Dept. of Health, and law enforcement (including local, state and Dept. of Corrections).
3. Focus on Prevention through reviewing 40 Developmental Assets and identifying 3 that can be addressed; collaborate with regional and state resources to deliver support.
4. Connect with Vermont Recovery Network and local VNR, Turning Point in St. Albans, in consideration of opening a recovery center in Swanton.
5. Market & Expand “Drug Takeback” program in Swanton community. Work with local pharmacy and law enforcement to discover new opportunities throughout year.
6. Visit Rutland to learn more about the Project Vision, a collaboration of resources and services to address various community challenges, including abuse and addiction.

Resources:

1. Partner with the outdoor recreation task force and the Swanton recreation department on the development of family-oriented recreation opportunities.
2. Faith-based organizations.
3. Franklin County Caring Communities.
4. Local law enforcement.
5. Neighborhood leaders.
6. Schools
7. Youth

8. Judy Ashley, Department of Health, and UVM researchers
9. Rutland's Project Vision.
10. Peter Mallary peter@itsclassified.com; 802-356-0284
11. VNR & Turning Point

Task Force Members

Reg	Beliveau	rbeliveau@swanton.net	
Betsy	Fournier	betsy.fcccp@gmail.com	524-5049 x2
John	Lucy	jluca.wilde@gmail.com	316-4476
Lillian	Meunier	15meunierl@fnwsu.org	782-1824
Sandra	Skeels Kilburn	sandykilburn1939@gmail.com	868-3892
Lucie	Hill	lhill@fnwsu.org	868-7294
Louise	Lampman Laravee	abenakiselfhelp@comcast.net	
Kathy	Lavoie (Chair)	kathy.lavoie2@myfairpoint.net	782-1924
Dianne	Clement	diannecl802@gmail.com	
Maryrose	Fahy	jamfahy@yahoo.com	868-62f27
Kathy	Fournier	kathy.fournier2007@hotmail.com	309-8312
Dennis	Greeno	greeno2130@comcast.net	527-2943
Sally	Greeno	greeno2130@comcast.net	527-2943
Fred	Holmes	fholmes06@me.com	734-3631
John	Hoy	jlhoy41656.com	524-6968
Chris	King	cking@fnwsu.org	370-1335
Kathy	Kneebone	kkneebone@fnwsu.org	
David	Lucey	sherlock@myfairpoint.net	933-2953
Sara	Maguire	saramagu@comcast.net	370-0616
Austin	Moss	austin.moss91@yahoo.com	370-2755
Rebecca	Rupp	rebeccarupp@gmail.com	868-2879
Marie	Speer	reesews@gmail.com	752-5198
Leonard	Stell	leonard.stell@state.vt.us	



✓ Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown

Chairperson: **Joel Clark**

Facilitator: **Michele Boomhower**, *VT Agency of Transportation*

Resource Leaders: **Bethany Remmers**, *Northwest Regional Planning Commission*;
Katelin Brewer-Colie, *Local Motion*

While Swanton's downtown has many key assets (small businesses, tourist attractions, sidewalks, the central green, a fitness center), residents expressed concern that a lack of parking and significant truck traffic through town undermines the full potential of the downtown and decreases safety and walkability. A Swanton Transportation Task Force could work to improve pedestrian and bikeways, public safety, and parking availability. The group could conduct a traffic study to identify opportunities to improve truck traffic in the downtown corridor, explore potential bypass or alternative truck routes, identify opportunities to expand and improve downtown parking, look at opportunities to reduce truck traffic noise and improve signage in downtown Swanton. Residents would like to strengthen the downtown and manage traffic through the area to the town's advantage, both to improve the local economy and to make downtown Swanton more attractive and pleasant for residents and visitors.

Action Steps

1. Complete traffic and parking studies for town core and village area.
2. Recruit volunteers to complete walking and biking audits.
3. Work with village officials and law enforcement to improve enforcement of traffic laws and speeding in the village, put up "No Engine Brake" signs, and increase truck inspections.
4. Inventory existing parking and new potential parking areas. Begin a list of potential parking areas at next meeting.
5. Put up a speed trailer and sign and put out flexi signs to yield to pedestrians.

Resources:

1. VT Agency of Transportation Alternatives/Bicycle and Pedestrian Program.
2. Northern Border Regional Commission (grant opportunities may be available, especially in collaboration with other task forces such as the new Economic Development group. Identify opportunities to coordinate projects for a grant application).
3. Committee labor – audits and parking inventory.
4. Identify opportunities to integrate projects from Swanton into the Comprehensive Economic Develop Strategy for the Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont.
5. Agency of Commerce and Community Development Village Greens Program.
6. Coordinate with the VT Agency of Transportation on potential Rt 78 improvements by the time repaving begins which is planned for 2016.

Task Force Members

Reg	Beliveau	rbeliveau@swanton.net	
Joel	Clark (Chair)	theswan7@comcast.net	868-9034
Todd	Conger	stemaries31@yahoo.com	868-3538
Irene	Cook	isee1525@gmail.com	
Betsy	Fournier	betsy.fcccp@gmail.com	524-5049 x2

Glen	Gurwit	ggurwit@hotmail.com	868-4618
David	Jescavage	djjes1@yahoo.com; townadmin@swantonvermont.org	868-7418
Linda	Kelly	bkpeterbilt@gmail.com	868-3567
Ron	Kilburn	swanza@swantonvermont.org	868-3892
Eugene	LaBombard	llabombard@gmail.com	868-4141
Molly	Lambert	mpllambert@yahoo.com	868-4989
John	Lucy	jlucy.wilde@gmail.com	
Richard W	McVicker	richardwmcvicker@gmail.com	
Elisabeth	Nance	elisabeth1815@gmail.com	238-3531
Randall	Rupp	celldocs@gmail.com	370-0756
Dexter	Spaulding	djspaulding1960@myfairpoint.net	868-4023
Dena	St. Amour	dstamour@fnwsu.org; dena-stamour@comcast.net	



VI. Resource Team Recommendations

Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state, and agree to serve as partners and advisors to the Swanton Task Forces. Their recommendations below encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs. It is hoped that community members will turn frequently to these pages for concrete ideas, resources and support. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work.

✓ Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, River Access, Bike-ability, and Bike Tourism

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

One way to proceed would be to create a map of all existing and desired outdoor recreational facilities and routes. Include any local businesses that can serve the users of the trails and facilities. Once mapped, develop a vision and outdoor recreation plan for Swanton. Share the map and the vision with the community and promote its use.

Look at ways that Swanton could support recreational biking while also making it easier for people to choose biking as a transportation option. There could be opportunities for this task force to collaborate with the Walkability and Traffic Task Force to advance projects together or share infrastructure like bike racks, or advocate for bike lanes or signs to help people find their way around.

By talking about biking in the community as both tourism AND transportation the task force can underscore that efforts in this arena aren't just for tourists, but are also for the benefit of residents. This could also help the group get more widespread buy in and participation.

Connect with other communities and/or organizations who have focused on this work. Connect to Local Motion from Burlington, which is expanding its services, for ideas and support. Rutland, Manchester and Vergennes have built working groups and advanced projects; the committee might want to look into what they have done so far, how they have gotten over barriers, and funding sources they have accessed.

Reach out to bike, paddle, and other outdoor recreation tour operators based in Vermont to learn what facilities they need when planning trips. Talk to businesses about their interest in becoming involved.

Promote outdoor recreation opportunities in Swanton online. Connect with the Town, the Village, and the Chamber website to see if they could have a space for outdoor recreation opportunities to build this as a key feature of the town brand. Vermont Canoe and Kayak is a business based in Central Vermont that offers guided canoe and kayak tours. True North Kayak offers tours on Lake Champlain. Maybe they would be interested in building a tour outpost in Swanton.

Build local buy-in through organized outdoor recreation events. Consider organizing fun community outings such as the Halloween Ride that Local Motion organizes each year. Get local folks outdoors and having fun. Celebrate the outdoor assets together as a community. Host a River Festival event similar to the Annual Richford River Fest with boat rentals, guided activities, music, and food.

Work on making Swanton more bike-friendly. Build bike racks in town and explore the possibility of a local bike rental system with rental locations around the town and village. Work with local bike clubs, local police, state police, and the Traffic and Walkability Task Force to identify dangerous situations for bicyclists and prepare mitigation strategies and plan forward for expanded bike lanes, and street sweeping at critical spots. Convene focus sessions for local bike enthusiasts to identify assets and build a volunteer base.

Look at other outdoor recreation destinations that have been successful. The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing has some resources that could be used as examples to attract outdoor recreation tourism.

Work with local schools to develop a local trails interpretation project that could function like geocaching. There are great examples of these projects where a simple sign with a code reader sends someone with a smart phone to a city or school web page that offers up interpretive nuance to points of interest throughout the town and surrounding countryside.

Share your outdoor recreation vision with local organizations, businesses, schools, municipal and regional officials and leaders. Ensure that all feel engaged and involved.

Think outside the box and be as inclusive as possible when defining “outdoor recreation.” Some outdoor activities can hit a lot of different strategies and outcomes.

The Task Force could develop more connections to the Abenaki Tribal Council and community to strengthen outdoor recreation and education opportunities.

Connect with the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge to identify ways to collaborate on outdoor recreation or outdoor education opportunities for local residents and visitors to town, maybe by inviting someone from the refuge to be a working member of the committee.

The Task Force could contribute at least one participant to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail (LVRT) project. The LVRT project has prioritized the Sheldon to Swanton leg as part of their next phase and would likely take input from the group.

The group could appoint one or two members to join the Lake Champlain Basin Program, a Champlain Valley Natural Heritage Partnership stakeholders committee which meets to help direct grant opportunities and funding for recreational projects. Contact Dave Southwick to join the mailing list at director@frcrcvt.com.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE OUTDOOR RECREATION TASK FORCE:

Missisquoi Valley Union High School could take on a sign and/or trail building project as a class project for science or civics class. Connect with civics or science teachers at the school.

Partner with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail on improving river access. The Northern Forest Canoe Trail staff can support this work, and may be able to connect the group with funding opportunities to support river access. Contact Karrie Thomas, Executive Director at karrie@northernforestcanoetrail.org or 802-496-2285.

Jon Kaplan at the VTrans Bicycle and Pedestrian Program could be a good resource for either potential funding opportunities for scoping (feasibility) studies or for the design and construction of projects. Contact Jon at jon.kaplan@state.vt.us or at 828-0059.

Louise Lampman-Larivee does a lot of outdoor recreation work thorough an Abenaki lens. Connect with her to discuss ways to integrate the Abenaki heritage into the work of the Outdoor Recreation Task Force; maybe invite her to join the committee.

Look at old railroad beds if there is a need to develop more trails. The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps or AmeriCorps might be able to help with trail development. Contact Tom Hark, President of VYCC at 434-3969 x100.

Connect with Local Motion for guidance on biking and other land-based, people-powered activities. Local Motion offers a variety of printed resources for promoting walking and biking. Put in a request for anything that you might use. Most are available at no charge. Local Motion is also available to consult on bike infrastructure projects for an hourly fee. Contact Jason Van Driesche, Director of Advocacy and Education (jason@localmotion.org; 802-861-2700 ext 109).

Lake Champlain International would be a good resource for people interested in fishing. LCI is a non-profit organization actively involved in shaping the future of the Lake Champlain water and fishery health. They offer Youth Education and Outreach and Fisheries Restoration. Contact LCI at 802-879-3466.

Watersheds United Vermont is a state-wide network of local groups dedicated to the health of their home watersheds. They are actively working to connect all of the local watershed groups, working on both recreation and conservation (www.watershedsunitedvt.org).

Funding sources for outdoor recreation projects could include:

- Vermont Community Foundation Small and Inspiring Grants for community building and civic engagement projects (Christopher Kaufmann-Ilstrup, 388-3355)
- Ben & Jerry's Foundation Community Action Team grants
- New England Grassroots Environment Fund (NEGEF) grants for environmental or community organizing (603-905-9915).
- Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Public Outdoor Recreation Grants (828-3250)

Vermont Community Garden Network has resources and small amounts of funding to build or improve community gardens which are great community builders and excellent ways to engage local folks around issues of healthy food and nutrition education. Contact Jess Hyman at 861-4769.

There may be funds for outdoor recreation facilities and planning processes available through local healthcare facilities, AARP, the VT complete streets program , VAST, or the Rail Trail project.

A group in the Lake Champlain Islands is working on making the Islands a destination for bike tourism. Contact Ruth Wallman at ruth@champlainislands.com or 802-372-8400. There may be opportunities to work together in the future.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission may be able to help the committee with planning, support or grant development services. Contact them at 524-5958.

RiseVT is a county wide health initiative. You can contact Dorey Demers, the Director of RiseVT, to assign a representative to the Swanton region and be a part of this group. <http://www.risevt.com/>

✓ Create an Arts Council

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

With the Swanton Arts Council already established, it should look to develop a work plan moving forward.

The group could research others' work, and make sure not to reinvent the wheel. The team could research local arts organizations around the state and check-in with the Vermont Arts Council as it develops its work. The Swanton Arts Council might want to start small and grow capacity over time. It's important to establish parameters and assign roles and tasks to council members.

Consider registering with the Secretary of State's Office as a Vermont non-profit and consider beginning the process of becoming a 501c3. This will help the Council pursue grant funding to support its efforts.

Develop an asset map of local arts resources and allies who can help further the mission of the Council. Consider efforts that are currently underway and how you can coordinate with them to effectively highlight the role of the arts in Swanton.

Partner with neighboring communities and organizations to see what you can do together to have a greater and more robust impact regionally.

Develop a signature event for the Council to improve visibility. The River of Light Parade in Waterbury is a great example of a signature arts related event that brings the community together and celebrates local artists.

Connect with the Abenaki Tribal Council. There are many working artists involved in the tribal organization and they are able to sell crafts as native made; you might want to specifically invite a tribal representative to join the team.

Collaborate with local schools, churches, and businesses on community art projects, or to organize showing of local artists' work. Identify available visible spaces downtown that could serve as a home base for the Council and as a pop-up gallery.

Get involved with the Vermont Arts Council's statewide Creative Economy Network, an interconnected engine of statewide people, places, and resources. Find out more at www.vermontartscouncil.org.

Engage the art, music, and drama community at the schools. They will have a lot of good ideas on how to engage young people in this work. Perhaps create a "YouthArts" adjunct to the council that could

develop original works by students for students. Young Playwrites and Young Writer's projects are great resources. Think poetry slams and comedy jams; develop a shared instrument or loaner program so people could take guitar lessons or bang on drums with their peers.

The group could appoint one or two members to join the Lake Champlain Basin Program, a Champlain Valley Natural Heritage Partnership stakeholders committee which meets to help direct grant opportunities and funding for culture and arts projects. Contact Dave Southwick to join the mailing list at director@fcrccvt.com

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE SWANTON ARTS COUNCIL:

The Vermont Arts Council offers a number of grants that could help support these efforts. Information on the following grants can be found on the Vermont Arts Council website:

www.vermontartscouncil.org

- Project Grants: A matching grant of up to \$3,000 used to support projects that bring the arts to the center of Vermont Communities.
- Technical Assistance Grants: A matching grant for up to \$1,500 used to support activities that help Vermont arts organizations strengthen their capacity to serve constituents.
- Cultural Facilities Grants: Grants intended to help Vermont nonprofit organizations and municipalities enhance, create, or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural activities for the public.

Vermont Arts Council staff is also available to provide technical assistance and share resources. Two key contacts at the Arts Council are:

- Sarah Mutrux, Director of Artist and Community Programs. Contact Sarah at smutrux@vermontartscouncil.org or 802-828-5425.
- Zon Eastes, Director of Outreach and Advancement. Contact Zon at zeastes@vermontartscouncil.org or 802-828-5423.

Other groups and organizations around the state engaged in community-level arts projects, showing, events, and development are important resources. Here are some ideas of who to connect with around the state:

- The Memphramagog Artists Collaborative in Newport runs a cooperative gallery. Call 802-334-1966.
- The Connecticut River Artisans Guild (CRAG) in Canaan runs events, classes, and pop-up galleries.
- The Art House in Craftsbury runs community classes in multiple media and runs a small gallery and craft shop. They have also starting holding concerts and dances. Call 802-586-2200.
- BarnArts in Barnard coordinates a year-round performing and visual arts program of workshops for adults and youth, exhibitions and performances, showcasing existing local talent and bringing in national recognized artist. Call 802-234-1645.
- River Arts in Morrisville is a multi-generational community arts organization that runs programming for youth, adults, and elders. It hosts events and maintains two galleries. Call 802-888-1261.
- Island Arts is an arts group in North Hero that has been around for 30 years. The President, Katya Wilcox, would be a resource for the Council. She can be contacted at info@islandarts.org or at 802-233-1725.
- The Champlain Islands Artists Organization is a group for artists and crafters. Their website is www.ciaovt.org.

Contact Burlington City Arts to look into collaboration options or advice in promoting the arts. They may be able to provide some insights into how to build a community coalition around the arts. Call 802-865-7166.

Contact Catamount Arts in St Johnsbury. Catamount Arts is a rural and relatively low-income community with a successful community arts model that also partners with school districts and college to put on events and programs for the community. Contact Jody Fried, Executive Director, at jfried@catamountarts.org or 802-748-2600.

Other funding sources may be available including The Vermont Community Foundation, The Ben & Jerry's Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

✓ Build a Swanton Economic Development Committee

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

The Task Force could inventory community economic assets in Swanton potentially including educational, workforce development, financial, business assistance, cost of housing, health care, and infrastructural assets. It could also identify and document available spaces for business and do an analysis of the condition of the downtown buildings to determine if they are ready for occupancy. The team might highlight downtown reuse and redevelopment opportunities to bolster the downtown, and talk to existing businesses about expansion and/or assistance needs.

One step might be to talk to home businesses that may be growing out of their houses about the spaces you have identified in your downtown.

With your list of assets, develop a Swanton “bragging plan” to tell the story about Swanton assets, activities, and good news. Build a brochure, map, and/or buy local directory to spur businesses, bundle tourism activities and lodging, and stimulate the local business climate. Also create an economic development vision for Swanton. Include community members and outside experts.

Invite state agencies such as the Natural Resources Board (which administers Act 250 permitting) the Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Department of Housing and Community Development to come talk about permitting processes and how to make improvements locally. For example, the NRB and DHCD are doing a lot of outreach and education right now on Criterion 9L of Act 250, which is new and causing some uncertainty. The outreach has proven very helpful in many communities.

Explore the possibility of a co-working space downtown with high speed internet to attract people downtown, encourage interaction between entrepreneurs, and provide customers for local businesses. Take a field trip to existing co-working spaces such as Local 64 in Montpelier. Creating this type of space is a way to harness the so-called “creative” and “knowledge” economies, people who do work that can be done from anywhere. This is a downtown redevelopment strategy building traction all over Vermont right now.

Work with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission on the region-wide brownfields assessment to identify and plan for the redevelopment of Swanton brownfields.

Think broadly about economic development, including nurturing businesses that are already in town. Especially include agricultural businesses, agritourism, or food businesses. Identify ways to take advantage of the strong local food movement in Vermont. Connect with the Swanton Arts Council and the Wildlife Refuge. Both of these are potential economic opportunities.

Consider organizing a grant competition for entrepreneurs looking to start businesses in Swanton to create excitement and bring some resources to new business.

Talk to other area municipalities with experience. Reach out to St. Albans (Dom Cloud, Liz Gamache, and Chip Sawyer) to learn more about the economic development work they have done there. Connect with the Richford and Enosburg economic development committees to see what they have accomplished and how they work. Invite folks from other towns to share ideas and techniques for advancing commerce, downtown development and economic development.

Continue to think about how to draw visitors from Quebec. There are many folks right over the border who are visiting Vermont frequently. How can you draw and accommodate those potential visitors? Look into the development of a welcome center and signage by the Swanton interstate exit.

Use the village green to your advantage. Offer the village green as a venue for businesses to hold events on specific days. Offer the Town Website calendar as one venue and a link to the business or organizing entities website for advertising the event. Events could include; antiques and/or residents flea market field sales; outdoor equipment sales; house/dog shows; concerts or other recreational events; offer an event on the Green to every business within town.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE:

Tim Smith and the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation can provide information and indispensable support to the task force. Contact tim@fcidc.com or 802-524-2194.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission will be extremely useful to the committee, especially related to the work on the brownfields assessment and redevelopment program. Contact Catherine Dimitruk, the Executive Director, at cdimitruk@nrpcvt.com or 802-524-5958.

USDA Rural Development has a variety of resources that could be available for planning and project implementation. RBOG grants can help economic planning, cluster planning and with groundwork to spur economic development. RBEG grants can support the progress of particular enterprises and might be especially useful if an incubator project is developed. Contact State Director Ted Brady at 802-828-6000 and visit their website at <http://www.rd.usda.gov/vt>.

Contact co-working spaces in Vermont to learn about what they have accomplished, and explore the possibility of bringing one to Swanton. Check out

Office Squared in Burlington (<http://officesquaredvt.com>) and Local 64 in Montpelier (<http://l64.co>). Lars Hasselblad Torres coordinates the Local 64 space in Montpelier and would be a great resource if you are thinking about starting a space in Swanton (595-0605).

David Southwick and the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce is willing to work with the committee and is able to provide support. Contact David, Executive Director, at director@fcrccvt.com or at 802-425-2444.

Preservation Trust of Vermont could help the committee think about restaurants and historic building projects as well as offer tours so community task force members could learn from other towns in Vermont. Contact Paul Bruhn, Executive Director, at paul@ptvermont.org or 802-658-6647.

✓ Unite the Community to Reduce Substance Abuse

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

The team could research what other communities have done and are doing to address this issue in a positive way. Rutland City has a great community organizing project called Project Vision that is working to address addiction and its effects on neighborhoods. Connect with Project Vision and arrange a visit to Rutland to learn more about the work they are doing. Don't try and go it alone. The work is challenging and can be isolating. It is important to connect with other communities.

Collaborate closely with local law enforcement. Build your relationship with the Swanton Police Department and make sure that you are working together and towards a similar vision. It might be a good idea to invite a member of the force to be on the committee. Following the Rutland Project Vision model, identify ways to create a comprehensive and more integrated collaboration among the agencies and organizations that serve Swanton and the region. Explore the development of a satellite location in Swanton for substance abuse recovery specialists to collaborate on recovery and prevention efforts or a broader center point like Rutland has put together.

Conduct research and make sure the group and the community are informed about the root causes of substance abuse including; poverty, boredom, generational drug use, homelessness, and other challenges. Also gather data on the extent of substance abuse in Swanton and map the available recovery and prevention assets.

Work to reduce stigma around addiction to make it easier to talk about. Work to create a safe environment in Swanton for people who are addicted to reach out for help to their neighbors and friends. Addiction is a medical problem, not a criminal or moral problem. Work to bring it out of the shadows.

Cross sectoral approaches to the issue of addition are critical. Look at ways you can get other community organization involved such as the tribal council, churches, schools, health clinics, local businesses, etc. Ensure that all organizations are collaborating and moving in the same directions on this issue. Identify and promote family friendly activities including cooking classes, arts and crafts programs, movie showings, block parties, outdoor recreation opportunities, etc. Connect with the Swanton Recreation Department and the new Outdoor Recreation Task Force to collaborate on event development and outreach.

Consider ways to “take back” parts of town where drug usage concentrates, particularly the Marbleworks park area. Build positive activities or events there and reclaim it as public space. Consider adaptations in the area that would make it less desirable for any criminal behavior.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE REDUCE SUBSTANCE ABUSE TASK FORCE:

Rutland Project Vision has offered to lend their guidance and support to the task force’s efforts. Contacts there include Scott Tucker, Support Services Commander, scott.tucker@state.vt.us or 802-773-1843 and Rutland Mayor Chris Louras at mayorlouras@rutlandcity.com or 802-773-1800. Mayor Louras can share the big story of Rutland’s efforts, and ideas on reclaiming public spaces.

Franklin County Caring Communities’ mission is to promote healthy communities in Franklin County through positive youth development and substance abuse prevention. They could be a key resource for the group. Contact Beth Crane, Executive Director, at 5275049 x 1 or beth@fccc.org.

Look into health care funders for assistance. For example, the Fletcher Allen Health Care Foundation, or others. Contact the Vermont Community Foundation for support: 388-3355.

Connect with other organizations working to reduce stigma around tough issues to learn from them and share resources. Organizations that may be helpful are The Howard Center in Burlington, the Vermont Parent Representation Center in St. Albans, and Vermont CARES.

The Regional Substance Abuse Prevention program through the Vermont Department of Health can offer more localized support to the task force. Contact Mary Pickener at mary.pickener@state.vt.us or 802-524-7918.

Peter Mallary, who leads Government Relations and Community Outreach at the Vermont Association for Mental Health and Addiction Recovery has also offered his support to the group. He can be contacted at peter@itsclassified.com or 802-356-0284.

Koi Boynton is the grant writer at the Northwest Medical Center. She is currently working on a few grant opportunities that include Substance Abuse Components. Contact her at koihope@gmail.com.

✓ Improve Traffic, Walkability, and Parking Downtown

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS:

One way for the task force to proceed would be to complete a traffic study for the town core and the village area, identify areas for improvement and implement strategies to address each identified goal.

The team could, likewise, complete a parking study. Look into opportunities for shared parking. For example, are there churches that have parking lots that are available during the week that could be used as public parking? Identify how you can get more use out of the parking infrastructure you already have.

Complete walking and biking audits for the community. Engage community volunteers.

Improve signage and work with village officials and law enforcement to improve enforcement of traffic laws and speeding in the village. Look into what kinds of signs might be helpful for people who want to access the downtown. Are there more parking signs needed? Directional signs? Signs pointing people towards public restrooms? Look into the new idea of “do it yourself” wayfinding signs that encourage people to get out and explore. Find out more information at <https://walkyourcity.org>. Begin with signage and/or other visual cues that drivers will see and will slow down. Look at trees, fences, plantings, crosswalks, new line striping, crosswalk lights, etc. Differentiate crosswalks to make them more visible by adding texture, lighting, bump-outs, and in-street crosswalk signs.

Review the benefits available to Swanton through the Village Center designation and brainstorm how these benefits might be harnessed to improve traffic, walkability, and parking.

The group could appoint a member to the Lake Champlain Basin Program, Champlain Valley Natural Heritage Partnership stakeholders committee which meets to help direct grant opportunities and funding for establishing Swanton as a Gateway community to the Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge. This may include additional signage opportunities. Contact Dave Southwick at director@frcrcvt.com to join the mailing list.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE TRAFFIC, WALKABILITY, AND PARKING TASK FORCE:

UVM Center for Rural Studies has limited seed funding that could be used to facilitate access to UVM-based subject matter experts such as the transportation research center and VT Tourism data center. Contact Michael Moser, Research Project Specialist, at mmoser@uvm.edu or 802-656-0864.

Connect with Local Motion for both technical and financial advice. Contact Katelin Brewer-Colie, the Director of the Complete Streets Program at katelin@localmotion.org or 802-861-2700 x104.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission can provide invaluable support and assistance—especially in securing funding for, and then leading the planning aspects of the work. Contact Bethany Remmers, Assistant Director, at bethany@nrpcvt.org.

Newport has made its own wayfinding signs. Connect with their former Downtown Director (now a consultant), Trisha Sears, to learn more at trish@kingdomcommons.com.

Vermont Agency of Transportation Alternatives/Bicycle Pedestrian Program could be a resource for the group. Contact Jon Kaplan at jon.kaplan@state.vt.us.

AARP has an excellent walkability program with lots of free resources and advice on how to make your town more pedestrian friendly for seniors.

As a state-designated Village Center, Swanton can receive certain benefits as well as priority consideration for certain grants including transportation grants. Visit the Agency of Commerce and Community Development website for more information.

http://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accd/files/Documents/strongcommunities/cpr/131125_Village_Center_benefits.pdf.

Richard Amore and Caitlin Corkins are the Department of Housing and Community Development staff who can answer questions about this. Their contact information is on the website above.

VIII. The Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 185 Swanton residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on January 28 2015

Although the prioritization work of the 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.

Vibrant Downtown

Resource Team: Alex Aldrich, Megan Smith, Michelle Boomhower, Jon Muise (facilitator), Mike Moser, Paul Bruhn, Ruth Wallman, Kip Porter, Greta Brunswick (scribe), Eric Palmer

What are the Assets in this Area?

- There are many tourist attractions.
- Many tourists pass through due to location and attractions.
- Many bikers pass through the community, especially Canadians.
- The river and natural environment are attractions.
- The Village is walkable and intimate.
- Liked old welcome signs that were hanging along First Street (aesthetic and welcoming).
- Variety of great small businesses: ice cream shop, library, new gym, hair salon, clothing, drug store.
- Real community feel.
- Great central green.
- Businesses give back to community.
- Businesses are supportive of each other.
- There is a Health Center that you can walk to.
- Everything you need as you get older is right here in the village.
- Services are great in village: Plowing and sanding of roads good and great electric service.
- Village power company is one of the best in the state - very seldom lose power and the rates very low.
- Community that loves to be here.
- A lot of protected land and recreation resources: Missisquoi wildlife refuge, Maquam wildlife refuge, Lake Champlain, River
- Improving sidewalk connections is being pursued (MVU and Bike Path at River Street).
- Good access to Lake and River outside the Village.
- Great Teen Center.
- Tyler Place brings people to town.

What are the Challenges?

Traffic:

- Amount of truck traffic that flows through village – affects walkability and bike-ability.
- 1200 trucks go through a day.
- Truck traffic is problematic for central green – noise makes it unenjoyable.
- Truck traffic makes street crossing dangerous/difficult, especially at post office.
- There have been many studies done, especially on truck traffic, but no action.
- Nothing ever came of State's proposal to do a bypass .
- Traffic patterns in this village are ridiculous.
- Undefined corner at intersection of Route 78, 7, and Merchants Row is very problematic - What is a road, what is a path, what is a parking place?
- Commuter traffic makes it challenging to stop at local businesses.

Walkability/Connections:

- The High school is not walkable from village, no sidewalks.
- There is no good connection between central green and river.
- Walkability in the village is poor.

- Need better delineation of pedestrian amenities and traffic control/calming.

Bike Accessibility:

- Need bike trails. Not connected to Missisquoi Valley Rail Trail. There is a bike path downtown, but not good connection on River Street.
- Route 78 is not bike-able from Hog Island to village.

Lack of Tourist Information:

- Lack of good information center or rest stop to attract people off the interstate. First available stop is at Georgia.
- It is hard to staff local Chamber of Commerce office.

No good Restaurants:

- Why did really good restaurants leave? No good, upscale restaurants. Why do we not attract restaurants?

Public Transportation:

- Transit company does not does prove good coverage throughout town, especially to hog island.

Access to River:

- Need better river access in the village.

Youth:

- Not a lot of teens that go to the center.

- Teens don't get out to boat launch/beach much because it is not accessible. Bike path would be great. Perhaps other park amenities out there too.

Parking:

- Parking is challenge, not much in downtown.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

Traffic

- Study how you reroute truck traffic without rerouting retail traffic.
- We should look at alternative truck route, bypass.
- Have trucks stay on Route 2 through the islands to exit 17 and not go through village.
- There is a potential alternate truck route through Beebe Road and River Street, but this route is not taken.
- Study what the truck traffic consists of (some of is delivering wood chips nearby, not all pass through).
- Champlain NY is a good example of bypass. As a result downtown Champlain is ghost town. Study what has been done elsewhere.
- Alternative northern interstate route – Buffalo to Bangor, 89 to 9.
- Study local opportunities to address noise from truck traffic
- Canadians are completing interstate at Highgate crossing.
- May impact truck traffic. Include in study. Effect of Canada feed.
- Clearly delineate crosswalks - Use better material?
- Make sure study will result in action.
- Getting better response from Sue Minter at the Agency of Transportation – optimistic that things will happen because of this.
- Need better signage at Merchants Row/Route 78/Route 7 intersection.
- Make opportunity out of truck traffic.

Bike Paths

- Bike paths or road improvements for bike safety out to hog island.
- Need cooperation with Montpelier for funding of big improvements – traffic, bike paths, lake cleanup.

Parks/Recreation

- Improve park at marble mill, overlook, etc. Utilize that area better. An overlook for the dam is in the works.
- Clean up boat launch across from Marble Mill Park.

Swanton Dam:

- Historic dam. It is the reason why we have quiet backwater, makes river enjoyable. State wants to take dam out. It would hurt usability of river.

- The other side of the dam, upstream, a bridge that no longer takes vehicular traffic – link to trails and promote new trail development.
- Study how to connect Islands/Hog Island to village and up route 7 up to Highgate springs.
- St. Johnsbury to Swanton is being converted to rail trail (Lamoille Valley Rail Trail)– capitalize on it.
- Getting from dam to lake more accessible for boats – dredging?

Parking

- Study parking in village area. Look for new municipal sites.
- Improve signage for existing parking areas

Tourism

- Develop map of resources – on web or as an app.
- Local tourism/community promotion materials – history, culture, attractions

Vibrant Village/Community

- Create night life – draws people to town.
- Promote arts/art galleries.
- Need to fill redevelop vacant buildings. Need to invite proposals for redevelopment of these sites.
- Downtown beautification – formalize and expand what is already done.
- Business incentives – create certified local government. Can funnel federal money to fund projects.
- Tap into youth community service requirement for beautification.
- Street lighting up through Hog Island.
- Create attractive welcoming signs.

Youth

- High school career shadow program.
- We could renovate the teen center to make it more attractive.
- Ask youth what they want before investing in what we think they want.
- Participatory Action Research – involve youth in determining what to ask and developing plans and research.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- High school pedestrian accessibility is being worked on.
- Surprised that Walmart was not mentioned once – community does not perceive this as a challenge.
- There was no mention of Northern Forest Canoe Trail, which could be a great resource.
- In order to have action need to engage leadership. Voice to leadership, give direction.
- Great grass roots efforts already underway, such as beautification on bridge.
- Interest in bike trails is great!

- There are a lot of things on your list that the state is aware of but there are many significant challenges. There may be ways to move forward, but we also need to recognize limits. The State will be monitoring the new Canadian interstate.
- Improve connectivity and improve barriers to connectivity
- Lamoille Valley Rail Trail opportunity.
- No discussion on water quality and how improving it can help the town and the village.
- Think about the role of agriculture – it could contribute to local village economy.

Swanton History & Culture

Resource Team: Alex Aldrich (facilitator), Megan Smith, Michelle Boomhower, Jon Muise, Mike Moser, Paul Bruhn, Ruth Wallman (scribe), Kip Porter, Greta Brunswick, Eric Palmer

What are the Assets in this Area?

- You can learn about school.
- We have good people.
- We have a great hospital.
- We have stores to get what you need.
- We have restaurants like Chinese Buffet, McDonalds.
- We have a lot of churches, and they work well together, inclusive.
- We have a great Historical Society.
- Activities for all ages are in the Park.
- Library has activities for kids.
- Village is a good size – easy to get to know people.
- Swanton is close to the river and close to Montreal.
- Swanton has reasonable prices and taxes.
- This area was settled hundreds of years ago – great history
- Native Americans and other settlers are here.
- Active teen center is also active in the community.
- Great talent – artistic people need more opportunities to be seen.
- No drama club in the school, but there is art, music.
- There is an old movie theater but it is not used.
- Theater in the school is not used in the summer, used for storage, yet it is air conditioned.
- School has new rec department and summer sports are offered for kids.
- Marble Mill Park and the river are there for recreation.
- Historical Society has history camp for kids.
- People come to Swanton from outside. The Chamber organizes festivals and a Car Show.
- Teen Center puts on an auction to raise funds to support activities.
- New Farmers Market with food and crafts, flowers.
- Swanton History unique to VT – T. Jefferson had his customs office here, Ethan Allen's ex-wife!
- Airport
- Franklin County Field Days

What are the Challenges?

- Merchants Row suffers from traffic that cuts across walking spaces, bad connection to parking area.
- Historical society has difficulty communicating activities with the community.
- School info goes out to parents and families, but not the rest of the community.
- Truck traffic cuts through town.
- Churches need to be recognized for what they are doing to promote community, food shelf, artistic events, history. Allow them to communicate through other venues, not just to the congregation. Churches could host music and other performances.
- Nowhere to eat, but not enough people to keep a restaurant busy in the off-season. Need jobs, so this would be a good solution.
- Need to kick start the economy.
- There are empty buildings that need to be used.
- People who commute are tired when they get home, so don't want to go out and do things.
- How do you let people know that they are empowered to get things done?
- Not everyone has access to the Internet. Need to use multiple forms of communication – local newspaper, radio, etc. County Courier, Messenger, Buyers Digest.
- Not too many businesses in Swanton that can provide sponsorship funding, and they all get asked all the time.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Churches have hosted dinners, Macbeth, many are historic buildings. Can they take advantage of being historic to get grants from historic preservation? Library doesn't host speakers or events. It does have a gym program in the basement.
- Need places to show indigenous arts and crafts – people would be interested. Show them with non-native arts in one program. Need to communicate the opportunities and use FPF. Use the signup sheet to push out the info
- Wildlife Refuge has programs – do people know about them?
- Need a Taco Bell.
- Bring back the Swanton Festival with rides and such – needs a big group to volunteer to do the work. Contact the Chamber of Commerce to get involved. There needs to be change to bring it up to date.
- Create a museum full of games.
- Make sure people know about FPF and join.
- Help older people learn the new digital platforms like FPF
- Need a place to show art – ask restaurants. Need to find out who the artists are. Need someone(s) to organize getting the word out to people who want to participate.
- Need someplace to put signage.
- Work with the B. Free Press to see if content can go into Buyers Digest. Use school calendars. Put flyers up at stores
- Work with the Chamber to share sponsor opportunities for town events. Try to add more ad and networking opportunities.
- Use the whole town not just part of it. "Use All The Ice!"
- Match venues with the programs – do an asset inventory of spaces that might be available.
- Help people find opportunities for leadership.

Tourism, Water & Wildlife

Resource Team: Alex Aldrich, Megan Smith (facilitator), Michelle Boomhower, Jon Muise, Mike Moser, Paul Bruhn, Ruth Wallman, Kip Porter, Greta Brunswick (scribe), Eric Palmer

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Geography: Location on a river and on a lake, close to Canada.
- Missisquoi Wildlife Refuge – two accesses, birdfeeders, Vermont's most important wetland, 7 miles of trail, visitor's center, lots of programs, two boat accesses, important delta resource that has brought people here for thousands of years. Draws 70 to 80K people per year.
- Rich cultural history and Native American heritage.
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail
- Wildlife – deer, skunks, wildlife is abundant!
- An hour from Montreal which is a large population center.
- Prime spot for bikers.
- Top of Maquam shore – perfect for kiteboarding and wind surfing, particularly for beginners because it is so shallow...lots of beginners from Montreal.
- Lamoille Valley Rail Trail – right now just a VAST Trail, still waiting for more money to construct the terminus in Swanton.
- Renovated railroad station and bridge – old railroad bed still there and could be used for rec paths, etc.
- Airport – future expansion.
- Flat for biking.
- Hog Island
- 2 motels – 1 more for tourists near the elementary school.
- Champlain Country Club – but people think it's in St. Albans
- Farms – lots of dairy.
- Bikers going to Champlain Islands.
- Tyler Place
- Lots of car traffic (potential customers). Location on Route 78 and Interstate 89.
- Sap Run during Maple Festival in St. Albans. 5K in September that's very small. The Cooper Run at MVU.
- About an hour to Jay Peak. Hasn't been a lot of connection to this side of the mountain.
- River and good local fishing.
- Ice skating and fishing.
- The Chamber is open so visitors can get information about Swanton.
- Swans in park.

What are the Challenges?

- Lack of value added agriculture.
- Lack of hotels and restaurant.
- Maybe a need for more campgrounds.
- Moving refuge headquarters off of VT 78 was a bad move - less traffic, get less stopover traffic. Think boundary lines scares people away with signage, but challenge to get it known. Most visitors from out of state, not locals.
- No outfitter. No rentals for canoes or bikes. Emulate Hero's Welcome.
- A lot of blue green algae in certain areas.
- No real engagement, or lack of personal connections with Tyler Place.
- No State Welcome Center.
- Need more information about the river. Accesses, safety issues.
- Improved accesses to the river near the bridge.
- Potential removal of the dam
- There is no marketing plan – even to local residents.
- No one really knows about community calendar.
- Getting the youth more involved. Invite Abenaki people to be more involved. Involve the community in creating more trails. Maybe working with Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Connecting Swanton to West Swanton via old railroad bed that goes from Maquam and to the refuge. There is one private landowner in between.
- Get more people to know about the Wildlife Refuge, promote opportunities for outdoor recreation there. Get bikers to stay longer than just using the restrooms. "Be able to weave the Refuge into the fabric of Swanton." Maybe figure how to promote the Refuge as a resource and then draw folks to Swanton. Spread info on Facebook. Monthly program on local TV to let people know what's going on at the Refuge. Create a reciprocal relationship between the Wildlife Refuge and Historical Society. Talk about putting the Refuge on the National Historical Register.
- Focus more on biking and bike tourism (need more bike racks, especially downtown). Create connection between the village and the Refuge. Bike lanes on the VT Route 78.
- Maybe something like the Boston Freedom Trail. Maybe additional way-finding signage (can put in during the summer and take out in the winter).
- Attract retail businesses to take advantage of river and lake accesses. Make the river more accessible. Could keep dam and do a fish ladder (or some way to get fish over the dam).
- Business recruitment. Try to get more lodging, campgrounds, etc.

- Determine ways to get more information out about local happenings and events. (use more Front Porch Forum and local calendar).

- Go towards making a new Welcome Center in Swanton. Islands are interested.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Value of the refuge, Missisquoi Dam, Missisquoi Bay. (Emulate East Burke in terms of being a biking Mecca and connect to retail and lodging opportunities) .
- Lots of cultural and natural resources. But need commercial and retail infrastructure. A little bit of the chicken and the egg situation. Seems to be opportunities to keep the dam, but address the fishery issues and provide more access to the River.
- No coherence in terms to the stories about Swanton that you want to share. Need more communication between residents. Echo back your three or four stories with the world. Focus on those.
- Suggest going to North Hero next weekend to see their winter festival to see an example of a festival where they use what they have.
- Lack of tourist information. Or getting information to tourists. Need to create a visual cue. Need to try to get people downtown, maybe through way-finding signage. Focus on supporting your business and spend your dollars locally here in Swanton.
- Heard a lot about transport. Biking, moving throughout the community, keeping those in the community. The rail trail with LVRT and trying to connect to the Refuge.
- A lot of ingredients of success. Take advantage of the school. Bike traffic is coming here already without any real effort. Should try to create entrepreneurial opportunities here around biking, especially with the school to create ownership over the town. Work with small business development staff once a week. The theme should really be around the bicycle. Everyone aware of what they have in the community, but intra-community communication should be improved.

Community Recreation Facilities

Resource Team: John Tracy (facilitator), Kristen Prior, Harry Frank, Kate Jellema, Jill Remick, Mike Fife (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Swanton's most important asset is the children.
- Both adults and children are interested in activities.
- Churches are and could be a great asset.
- The teen center.
- Public Beach on the Quam (underutilized).
- There is some dated property that is undeveloped that has potential – Goose Point park has a public boat launch w/ramp which is rarely used.
- Marble mill property – Basketball, tennis, swings, etc... all outdoor.
- Outside fields and gymnasiums at the schools (3).
- Memorial Auditorium where the youth teen center is.
- Rented out by town as a manufacturing facility (month by month lease since the 90s).
- Teen center which is rent free.
- There is a kitchen area, some rooms.
- Recreational fields (3 baseball, a soccer field, parking, community garden, 2 outdoor volleyball courts).
- Large amount of this land is wetlands.
- The community bike/rec trail going through the village and to railroad museum is a quiet calming area.
- Wildlife refuge
- Both schools have a gym, which is made available to various groups.
- There is space above the town clerk's office that was once used as a rec center for kids (now storage).
- Town Green
- MVU has 4 Soccer fields a football field and a field hockey field, 2 baseball, 3 softball, 1 gym at the high school. There is also a weight room and outdoor track as well.
- The Abenaki community center (just renovated) is doing work with community computer training.
- Franklin/Northwest Supervisory Union has a 21st century community learning center that provides many after school activities.
- The high school has a stage/auditorium.
- The Public Library
- There is a new local fitness center with classes for older and younger folks.
- The river is a good asset for fishing, kayaking, etc...
- The National Guard Armory used to have a full gymnasium in it.
- High Swans: A group that has some programs for seniors.
- The community takes pride in the high quality of fields and the work of the rec department which has a very high standard.

What are the Challenges?

- There are many teams but only one gym at the high school and teams meet from 3:15 to 10pm. Varsity games force JV

teams into the elementary school gym. Elementary school kids get priority. This means that middle school kids and high

school kids are practicing until 9 and 10 at night and then travel 30 minutes to get to school.

- There is a huge need for more space for the middle and high school teams especially during the winter.
- It's difficult to balance the need to keep kids occupied with the lack of winter space for activities.
- There is not a lot of space for organized adult rec – limited by the space issues especially in winter and inclement weather.
- High demand for classes and rec activities for adults.
- There are not a lot of options/space for senior activities.
- What are kids doing to stay out of trouble when they're not on a team?
- The teen center is a "cave."
- The teen center is a little out of the way and could use more visibility.
- Community dinners for older population are maxed out in terms of space.
- Parking is needed, for many and without it, events and even churches are hard to access.
- There is a need for multi-purpose year round facility.
- There is a need for space and options for youth that are interested in arts and other options that are not sports.
- The library hosts a good gymnastics program 3 days a week but it's limited by space as well.
- The program is filled to max every time it's offered.
- More open/public equipment is needed for the MVU fitness room.
- It would be helpful if a community center were multi-generational
- The cost at the local gym is prohibitive for many.
- The school is thinking about expanding the weight room but has no space.
- Swanton received a Healthy People Strong Communities Grant and got 50 mountain bikes for school and community use.
- The bikes were available several weekends during summer but it didn't take off.
- The program needs volunteers to function.
- There is no safe way for kids to walk from downtown to the high school.
- Bike path/sidewalks/trail all need expansion.
- Swanton has applied for a grant looking into fixing up the rail trail.
- Not a lot of bike path/space for cyclists, no clear cut places to ride your bike.
- Overall, space is a huge issue.
- Transportation to other towns is lacking, which makes it hard to use other facilities that are not in Swanton.
- When parents are working, kids who are further away need transportation.
- There is a need to get the word out about opportunities to connect with church and town programming.
- How do we communicate the need for spaces to folks without kids?
- Because of lack of space, events and programming moves around. Without a regular space and time, parents and community members can't get into a rhythm of attending.
- Elementary schools are not available through vacation so programs go on hold during those times. This is due to lack of staffing or maintenance work that happens over breaks
- Adult activity schedules must revolve around school team's. practice/game times. This means that they aren't offered year round.
- The soccer field at the school has poor drainage and doesn't have grass on it.
- Swanton recreation fields used to have kids show up casually, but now they are only for organized sports.
- Volleyball and community garden weren't fully used although one man used all the extra community garden space to grow veggies for the local Food Shelf.
- Awareness is low and it's hard to get the word out about programs.
- Parents don't want to send kids out alone w/o parents present to public spaces due to safety.
- Kids can't be outside for recess due to weather in the winter, which means many kids lack physical activity.
- Money is a huge issue for the community – folks acknowledge needs and just don't have the money. Swanton needs corporate money/big dollars to build these facilities.
- Cost of living is rising faster than pay.
- Capital improvement passes quickly in city.
- General operating budget has trouble in passing.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- If folks want to give money there is a space for a building in the wetland (already evaluated, and there's a possibility it could go there).
- Could the school contract with the local fitness center? This could help with safety and staffing. Teams could use the space.
- The local fitness center is currently working with MVU hockey team.
- High school just had "Blue and White" Day on mental health.
- Kids want basketball court and a place for them to get together and socialize out of school that is safe.
- How can we improve the teen center and make it brighter and more inviting?
- The teens need a facility that is not shared.
- A multi-generational community center could be a positive addition to the community.
- Space for music and computer/video work would be great.
- Highgate recreation has an ice rink and towns have tried to get together to refurbish and fix it.
- Highgate took that on and the rink is now used by both Swanton and Highgate.
- Could larger projects be done at MVU as an expansion of the high school rather than a rec center? This might go over better in terms of asking the town for funding.
- People would like community room, weight room and walking path.

- In order to keep people in the community we need spaces and programming that will help people feel connection to Swanton.
- There is a need for better communication about programming for folks who don't have a connection to the school.
- Swanton village has a community calendar but it doesn't have complete information.
- Front porch forum is an option.
- Without access to internet it's very hard to get information and that's a problem for many families.
- Could the town put flyers in bills?
 - Town employees get many of the ones that they send out back.
 - One participant said he enjoys them and likes getting information that way.
- A bond vote to build a building probably won't go through.
- Channel 15 can be a good resource the get the word out.
- The teen center is vacant during that day and might be used for community events.
- There are some unused spaces in churches for gathering and/or meetings.
- Cub scouts and boy scouts use the VFW and churches.
- Swanton Village space is highly booked.
- A swimming pool would be a good addition for winter activities for all generation.
- Safe routes to school grant is in the works right now and working very well.
- Swanton is waiting on a grant that will help with sidewalks to the school.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- It feels like there is a desire for a community hub where Swanton can meet and have a sense of a community.
- There are good assets that Swanton can build incrementally as a community, it does not all need to happen at once. Rail to trail, a great rec department, and support for school sports are all examples of this.
- What are options that don't require large amounts of space that could be short term wins even if they're not long term solutions to the space problems?
- Could the O'Brien Community Center in Winooski be used as a model both for funding and structure (video?). They reused existing space and have expanded repeatedly due to successes.
- Turn out is very high and the community is involved with community night out and this meeting. How does Swanton recreate this when communicating about other programs?
- Consistency is a HUGE help with this.
- National night out is a great example of success, all kinds of people come out. The police departments do a great job with this.
- There is hope and leverage in shared interests like, local sports, national night out, where else?
- There are many folks with interests in having more facilities. How can these people all get together and meet to share information about needs and options?
- Keene NH, set goal of being healthiest community in America. Can Swanton replicate something like this?
- Swanton is a "Fit and Healthy" community and getting grant money from the health department.
- This helped with rail trail and the community garden.
- The wildlife refuge has been talked about a fair bit, how is the relationship between it and the community?
- It offers activities that are well advertised and is linked closely with Swanton Schools.
- The issues with the refuge is that it is are 7 miles out from Swanton.
- How is the armory being used and how can it be used to help with facility needs. National Guard left in Burlington and it was made into a rec center.
- The National Guard is located between school and rec facility
- Can high schools do evening programs for the community?
- Sunday evening Zumba is happening now.
- If the memorial auditorium is only a month by month lease, is there a possibility that this could be moved into being a space for the community rather than leased to a manufacturer.
- They're using the whole space and the facility needs hundreds of thousands of dollars of maintenance.

Education & Training

Resource Team: John Tracy, Kristen Prior, Harry Frank (facilitator), Kate Jellema, Jill Remick, Mike Fife (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The 5 year 21st Century Community Learning Center Program Grant provides funds for multiple school programs.
- MVU has a strong connection to the community.
- Communication with the community is high and many come regularly to provide support (Blue and White day today is an example of this).
- Children are our greatest asset.
- Abenaki have adult basic education classes that run 2 days a week free of charge. These happen at their facility on Grand Avenue.
- Northwest Tech Center at BFA St Albans has:
 - Day programs for 11 industries that provide certification and have dual enrollment.
 - Work based learning programs where high school students shadow/intern and experience potential careers.

- Evening career development programs for adults and high school students.
- VSAC and Dept of Labor grants for adults in need.
- Partnership between Northwest Tech Center and MVU as well as BFA for MVU Juniors and Seniors (bused during school day).
- School system has great curriculum and teachers.
- Great arts programs.
- A wide range of afterhours programs for the community through the school.
- Murals focusing on Abenaki community and the Abenaki flag hanging at MVU important to making the Abenaki community feel welcome. Abenaki students make up 35% of the student population of MVU.
- This movement towards collaboration and inclusion has been somewhat recent.
- The Missisquoi Youth Program helps Abenaki and all youth with reading, cultural enrichment and tutoring and is open to all.
- The community is very collaborative and involved with the school.
- Cargill and other Ag partners place seniors in jobs.
- There is an active workforce investment board in Franklin county and Grand Isle, places many interns and work shadows.
- Close proximity to CCV and 45 minutes away from major metropolitan area (Montreal).
- Supportive parents.
- Franklin Grande Isle book mobile.
- The Career Program at MVU brings in community speakers and have an easy time getting folks to commit. They focus on 16 or so career clusters and almost never get turned down for job shadows.
- The school has high quality personal learning plans.
- There are organized efforts to help students come out and do positive things in the community (ie. Clean up activities).
- Proximity to the Natural Environment – MVU is close to the rail trail, Jay Peak, Missisquoi River, Wildlife refuge, and has a farm to school program.
- Student involvement in community as interns, job shadows, etc.
- Incredible educators and teachers at the schools.
- Facebook posts by the school are a great source of communication.
- The NCSS youth mental health class was available and useful for many students and adults in the community and was a success.

What are the Challenges?

- There is a lack of transportation for seniors and school children.
- What does exist is high cost.
- Transportation is a barrier to getting students into the community.
- There is not enough training or education for teachers and adults as to how special needs challenges effect kids. Special needs kids need more help especially autistic kids (1 in 80).
- It is difficult for teachers to talk about autism and special needs.
- There is a good core group of support but outside this core, there is training needed.
- How can the school get good news out about what's happening at MVU to people who don't have children in the school?
- This may be related to the fact that they are Union Schools which are sometimes seen as no one's school rather than everyone's.
- There is a disappearing middle class in the area which reduces the tax base.
- Lower income folks without computers don't get much information.
- There are large distances between community resources.
- Some students live far from schools and getting them centralized is difficult.
- There are multiple community identities which conflict with the idea of MVU as gathering point for all communities in the Union. This can be hard for both students and parents.
- There are high needs for space – only one theater, few gymnasiums etc... all different communities depend on the same spaces and so do the students.
- It is hard to ensure that all students have access to everything that students have in Chittenden County.
- It's harder for Swanton students to attend UVM/St. Mikes.
- There are more businesses in Chittenden County for schools to work with.
- Swanton's funding and tax base is smaller and creates anxiety.
- Museums and boat houses are lacking in Swanton.
- Keeping teachers here is difficult due to lower pay here.
- Staff move to Chittenden and Swanton ends up as a training ground.
- How do we better support those that do stay?
- Mental health and substance abuse issues in Franklin County lack resources and are a large problem for the community and thus the schools.
- Swanton needs more programs that support students with mental health/substance abuse issues.
- There is a lack of awareness about resources regarding mental health/substance abuse that are present in the community.
- How do you inform community about what appropriate mental health looks like? Many parents don't recognize mental health issues in kids.
- Addiction is compounding and can be seen as normal and then becomes generational.
- Many families have grandparents raising the children.
- Youth mental health is put on those that are working in the field rather than being an issue for the community as a whole to work through.

- It is difficult to give practical training for Agriculture in the traditional school settings which doesn't coincide with the school schedule.
- There is a need for more options at the community college in St. Albans. Students want the education but can't get to Winooski and thus miss out.
- Budgets are growing tighter and this community has an opportunity to be a leader in education. However, because

there is no collective sense of the school belonging to ALL the communities that make up the Supervisory Union there is a cycle of underfunding budgets. This can lead to a vicious cycle of schools getting worse and thus continuing to lose funding.

- The communication process to the community really isn't there. It is more of "this is what we've done" that and invitation to join the process.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Swanton can use education as a driver by creating a sense of shared ownership of the school.
- The school can be used to drive economic development and thereby keep youth in the community which will increase the tax base and lower individual tax burdens.
- K-12 is going very well but Swanton can focus also on adult education that is not college based.
- Swanton can use tech centers to train people and develop multiple options for adults so that they can stay in town.
- NWTC is a great resource.
- Tech centers are not a dirty word but an opportunity for many.
- How do we create marketing and awareness of tech center programs that can increase income?
- Can we create a community service learning center?
- Promote dual enrollment programs between CCV and high school.
- There are current opportunities for this.
- Investigate more post high school training programs in Swanton.
- Talk to industries about what they need from graduates and adults.
- Education beyond high school needs to be available to all.
- MVU currently partners with Leader Evaporator in welding, training and prepping students to work there.
- Cargill is full supporter of the animal science program.

- Can Swanton create a position for coordinator of services and resources that can help communicate successes and organize the community? - This could help bring the community together.
- Can there be a school newspaper, written by students that goes out to the community. This would help as a activity for kids and also serve as a way to reach folks without computers.
- What can MVU do for taxpayers' via adult ed. that helps community members without students in the supervisory union to see what they get out of the school budget and reconnect with the school?
- Maybe if they see what's in it for them, they would vote more supportively on future school budgets.
- There have been some of these types of programs in the past.
- Make the school 24/7 – open it up as a place of belonging for all.
- The group wants dates and project planning with milestones so has to not feel overwhelmed.
- Don't want to leave this all up to the school and continues to engage the whole community.
- Major changes are coming in the next 3-5 years. We must be more proactive about change and let the community know beforehand and gather input.
- Increase positive communication and stories about the school and students to build energy. Currently there is a lot of focus on sports but very little on other positives like art and math.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Swanton is the hub of a larger area. Building on that rather than allowing it to divide the community will be very important moving forward.
- Communication to the community has been an issue for multiple areas and groups within the community. The school may be able to be a leader in improving communication.
- Like the idea of having the students help with communication through a school newspaper that goes out to the community.
- There is a lot of energy around Swanton being a hub.
- Is there an opportunity for a coordinator (not within MVU) that focuses on how MVU serves community members/partners?

- Transportation is a major problem throughout the county and it's good that it's being discussed.
- Is there an opportunity for MVU to give in kind space to CCV?
- How do you make a deliberate effort to engage those that are skeptical of the school budget and get them into the school so that they better appreciate MVU?
- There is a lot being done right and it is very impressive especially with regards to those students that are not going to college and using tech programs.

Community Health & Substance Abuse

Resource Team: John Tracy, Kristen Prior, Harry Frank, Paul Costello (facilitator), Kate Jellema, Jill Remick, Jenna Whitson (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have local churches that offer support for the congregation and community. Pastors are a resource for substance abuse counseling and support.
- We made significant progress with anti-tobacco campaigns
- The teen center is a safe place to talk to an adult. The teen center cleaned out marble mills sandbox because they were seeing drug paraphernalia where kids play.
- There is a growing partnership between schools and mental health agencies to educate about risk factors and services, and to coordinate action.
- All police officers were trained in drug prevention through Northwest Counseling Services.
- There are great recreational programs and afterschool programs.
- We have a mentoring program that supports kids called Watershed mentoring which is a very effective prevention strategy and very meaningful for youth 527-5049.
- We have a strong EEE (essential early education) and Head Start. There are 190 students ages 3 and 4 in that program. A new 36 million dollar grant is offering expansion opportunities for families living in poverty and raising hours of care from 10 to 30 per week. The program is getting healthier because of focus on early education in the state.
- The 211 phone number is available for resources and support.

What are the Challenges?

- We are losing the war on drugs with our youth.
- The county has a real problem with opiates right now and sending someone down to Brattleboro for a week does not seem to be the solution. It takes a total life style change to come out of that. It is a long hard journey and relapse is part of it.
- A doctor that works at a Suboxone clinic was overwhelmed by the scale of the problem.
- Behavior and health of residents is undermined related to drug use. The community has seen an increase in crime.
- Another large problem is substance abuse due to veteran's treatment at the VA. When you go to the VA clinic, the very first thing they do is prescribe morphine which leads to addiction and related issues.
- This creates an issue for hiring in town. You can't hire people that don't pass the drug test.
- The town has tried to initiate the Hungry Hearts process but can't seem to get it invigorated. It lost momentum.
- Drug use builds a bad reputation for the town.
- Alcohol use and marijuana are also abused. Alcohol is still the most abused drug and nicotine as well. No one ever talks about the negative effects of marijuana which makes it hard to convince kids that it is bad when the governor is talking about legalizing. Used to have an edge but now "if it's so bad why is it legalizing?" Residents see marijuana as a gateway drug.
- The ability to parent is compromised due to abuse. What do we do with the families of addicts? Family and friends are affected.
- It is more expensive for a highschooler to get a 6-pack of beer than to get a week's worth of marijuana. Drug prices have gone down significantly so illegal trade doing better than legal trade.
- Peer pressure in the schools leads to addiction.
- Residents have seen drastic changes in Swanton. People have found needles in town. It is very scary and makes a big difference.
- Some residents see it on the street. The teen center sees youth that have been approached to use drugs or join a gang etc.
- There has been a significant increase in vandalism in town and theft/break ins which can lead to a violent situation if someone is home. This creates fear in the community.
- There are limited places where young kids can play other than schools to go and have fun because marble mill is used to do drugs and smoke.
- We are raising children who do not feel good about themselves which can lead to substance abuse.
- Most resources go to put out the fire and not to prevention.
- Swanton is not affluent. Many people that end up addicted to drugs and their resources are diminished, how will they pay for treatment?
- The state is not taking the issue seriously and the funding is not available.
- Schools recognize students at risk but are not trained to deal with prevention.
- Everyone is at risk for substance abuse.
- Community is addressing kids that are at risk but there are some more affluent kids that are being missed (have the means to pay for drugs, etc.)
- No one is held accountable for their actions.
- The school does not have the power to make sure that a kid referred to counseling goes through with the actions of counseling. They can only make sure they go.
- Local solutions have not worked. We need to make all the drugs legal at the state and federal level and this would solve the problem.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We need more support systems in the community.
- We need to focus on prevention.
- We need to do work in the school system to identify the kids who are at risk. Teachers and staff need to recognize that a kid is in trouble and get them help.

- The school is partnering with mental health. We need support of team.
- We can work to reduce the stigma around treatment of mental health and substance abuse through community education, training programs. The town could seek a grant to bring training to the community through northwest counseling.
- People working with youth can meet more often to coordinate efforts. There are great things going on but not communicating across different efforts. Monthly meeting of everyone doing this work in the community.
- We need a coordinator in the community around resources and efforts.
- We could do a neighborhood watch that would be a focal point to get everyone together.
- We need to involve people affected in decision making. We could have kids start developing some questions for a survey to ask community members what is needed.
- We could have more NAAA meetings in town and offer them at different times of day so people would be better able to attend.
- We need to develop things for adults to do that don't involve alcohol.
- We need more primary parent education and support through doctors' offices, Notch, young parents. It would be great if the medical profession started that work.
- We could develop a place in the community for families to have fun together. The teen center is great for teens, but we need activities for more than just teens. Maybe a community center for families.
- We need to amplify the resources that are available and communicate it out there and figure out how to catch people's attention. We could get a group together to compile resources and then develop a strategy to get the word out.
- We need to have activities that families can do together. For example, we could have family sport leagues that encourage health while providing activities. A committee or families willing may be willing to lead. We have fields and could also have games for adults to play too if they didn't want to play sports.
- Town should come together to write a position statement and a vision for combatting drugs. Representatives from all organizations and institutions in town for a common vision and then we could post it everywhere! The village offices are willing to set up a meeting and are willing to get started working on this ASAP!
- We need to connect health, education, and economic development and focus our attention on pre-birth and expecting parents. A concerted effort to work with parents through school would make a big difference.
- Mentoring in an extremely powerful intervention.
- It is critical to improve communication about what is out there. We could make a card for resources in the community to break down the blinders and enable people to take that first step. We could post information on Swanton village website and community calendar.
- If we develop committees we need to include youth.
- Peer to peer counseling is an effective prevention tool.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There are a lot of good things happening and they are just not well communicated. That has been a theme across the sessions today. That is a good problem to have because it is something you can do something about.
- The experience of connecting with other people who share the struggle is a major resource. I am struck by the fact that you have that to give to each other. It is frightening to be there as a community. It not an easy step but I encourage you, recognizing the challenge you're facing. There are some great things that make me hopeful for the town. You may be an hour from where I live, but we are very connected.
- I am impressed with all of the good things I heard, forward thinking and things that can happen. It is a great idea to amplify what we already have. The faith community is underutilized. I want to work with faith communities in these counties. Mentoring is most cost effective prevention that we can do and it makes an incredible difference. Peer to peer connection is critical. Increasing AA and NAA meetings can be easily implemented. I am impressed by who showed up and by positive ideas.
- I am sympathetic to the folks who want to look at the high level systems change. I appreciate bringing up the issue of legalization and want to recognize bringing up health insurance as an issue. Universal access to health insurance would help but those are very high level systems things to change. I do want to note that this is not something Swanton doesn't have control over. You can join together as a group to advocate for systems change, that action step should be put into the mix. I am also touched by the very ground level conversations that came out tonight. The thing that stuck out for me is the importance of reducing stigma. That is something you can do right on the street is not judge people based on struggle they are having. I am seeing a very ground level kindness and deep need for systems change.
- This is a struggle that a lot of communities are having and the fact everyone is here talking about this is fantastic. I hear a call for more coordination. There are a lot of amazing things happening here. We have all been impressed by multiple initiatives (teen center honored is great example). How can you coordinate, what is the mechanism to allow you to do that? Also, it is great that the group has recognized that the problem isn't just kids, but that we also need to pay attention to adults and families. How do we do more together as families? We need support for family members of addicts. When we think about what to do about this, that is part of this conversation. How do we support them? I encourage you to put that out there in the task force as a real issue to look at.
- Communication. There is a strong need to know what is going on and this is a theme across several groups that have met today. There is a strong desire to have more forums of communication in the community. This will certainly be an outcome of this process. This group is looking at a much more

complex problem. Take a look at other communities that have done this organizing process ahead of you ex. Rutland really seized the steering wheel on this, Springfield is trying as well. I also had the feeling that there is not a clear view of how big the problem is and where the points of leverage are in the community. It is important to access and share some data on where interventions are possible, trouble spots.

- Great stuff is happening at different points of the compass but those aren't a part of the team and because of that it is diffuse. There is no easy answer and this is a long term problem. There is enormous room for connecting and building communication. Until you're a spear point around it you end up doing things in your own pockets. It's about taking power on this. There is a lot of opportunity for direction and momentum.

The Future of Agricultural Opportunities

Resource Team: Kiersten Bourgeois, Catherine Dimitruk, Sarah Waring, Jenny Nelson, Tim Smith, Karen Freeman, Paul Costello (facilitator), Kate McCarthy, Jenna Whitson (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have one of the pockets of prime agricultural soils in the state.
- We have flat tillable land with good drainage
- Currently, we have about a dozen large dairy farms in town of Swanton. Farms also raise other crops such as soybeans and corn
- We have a small cheese company that is working on taking the factory to the next level. Currently the factory is running about 6,000 lbs. of milk through the plant but they want to grow. Milk for production is coming out of NY state through local cooperatives. The plant is making Italian cheeses (mozzarella, ricotta, parmesan, curd). The plant employs 13 and is looking to grow.
- We have some small diversified vegetable farms. Healthy roots has an evolving list of diversified farms in the county that could be broken out to look at the number within Swanton. The guess is about 10-12.
- We have some young farmers coming in to the county, trying to make it work.
- Franklin is one of the top maple counties in the state and the maple production is good. There are some small operations (like Hudack farm) but also some large maple producers in the area.
- We have an apple orchard in West Swanton.
- Question – is there infrastructure in town for processing grain?
- We have two mills in town – Poulin and Cargill. Each mill employs 20-40 people. The railroad goes through here – a lot of grain is going to Canada, NY, and Maine.
- We have some small farm stands.
- The local foods movement in Swanton does seem to be growing. There is some movement toward local food which is encouraging. Hudack Farm has been busy. They are making a living and keeping the farm going.
- Hudack farm is making and selling compost.
- Many people grow their own food in raised beds behind their house.
- We have competitive utility prices compared to other areas. We are close to the border and close to the highway.
- Healthy Roots is working on enhancing and improving infrastructure to help get product to market. For example - Cold storage facility to store potatoes. They are also working on consumer education and looking to embed local foods into community events and gatherings.
- We have a local FFA and 4-H.
- We have an agriculture program at the high school with a greenhouse. Students are even raising beef at MVU.
- The Town is starting to make their own compost by collecting leaves and brush and branches from residents. They are starting to make some nice compost now. When people come to drop their brush they can pick some up for free and they use it as well.
- The Recreation program has a community garden with about a dozen raised beds and the grade school has a garden.
- There is a small farmers market.
- We have a couple of organic dairy farms in the area.
- There is some interest in raw dairy availability.
- Ms. Hartman at MVU has a career exploration program for students.
- Question: Forest products are a part of agriculture, are there any mill or logging operations here in Swanton?
- There is a very small Cedar mill.
- MVU students are eligible to go to the tech center in St Albans. Currently, there are discussions about an advanced manufacturing class.
- NOFA is a huge resource for vegetable farms in the area. NRCS and the extension service in St Albans are available for certain aspects of business plans, land management, etc.
- There are a group of farmers that collaborate locally, they help each other out, they talk to each other about the future and how to be successful.
- We have a farm to school program at the elementary level.
- Hudack farm sells onions to "Farmers To You" in the winter. This program connects producers with the market in Boston. There is room for growth there.

What are the Challenges?

- Whey is a limiting factor for the cheese factory. It has to be handled somehow.
- It is a challenge to find people to hire for farm work. People don't want to milk cows anymore. Probably in 10-12 years dairy farms will go to robotic milking. The return on investment takes a while but there are other benefits that come along with it.
- The local foods movement is slower than in other parts of the state.
- It is challenging to compete with cheaper food in grocery stores.
- It is necessary to automate to be more efficient but this costs money.
- New water quality laws are challenging. Farms risk losing current use status or even being shut down. These changes upsetting because sometimes it seems your land is not your own and it makes you feel scrutinized.
- Farms are getting bigger. Everything has been cleared and opened right up. This is directly related to the struggle to produce food.
- Huge dairies are huge because that is the way it has to be to be successful. The price of food is too cheap compared to the price of production.
- Many farms have been consolidated into larger farms.
- There is no network of small producers or an opportunity for incubation of small farms and businesses.
- All of the growth is happening in St. Albans right now. Swanton is the last place to begin a business, it is happening in the state but will it ever get here? Is there any land left?
- We are always competing with New York.
- We do not have any vacant buildings. People make their mind up to locate in VT and they want it to happen quickly but there is no place to put them.
- Question: What do you foresee for the next generation of farmers?
- We do see our kids taking over the operation, but it can be hard to get involved with FFA and 4H due to it being hard to get away for a weekend as there are always chores to get done.
- We talked about a community garden at the church but liability insurance wouldn't allow it.
- Hudack Farm aggregates other products, honey, maple etc. but not a single thing comes from Swanton.
- We have nowhere to grow. There is no land left. Most of the land in refuge or land trust – how can Swanton grow?
- There is no group that is working on economic development (like the groups in Richford, Enosburg, and Georgia).
- Question: Are there opportunities to hire apprentices and interns interested in learning the trade?
- This is challenging because of the Department of Labor requirements to track how much each person is getting paid.
- When a farm goes out, another farmer already here buys it so there are no farmers coming in and starting new operations.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We could build a community garden. People in town have been talking about it for a few years. There is currently no organized group that is working on it. We need to find a good location for the garden that is safe and public.
- We could look into grant opportunities for building apprenticeship/internship opportunities.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- People are busy doing what they're doing and doing more is hard, but there are also some ideas about working together, more conversations about helping people out (water quality, finding more markets, getting younger folks involved) there are opportunities to plug in small changes over time to help keep the land base.
- Interesting to think about Farm to School. There is a strong farm to school program but is the school sourcing from local farms? Are there opportunities to plug in with the local school or local businesses to expand local demand and build pride in the food produced in Swanton?
- Education is valuable. Are there ways to reach out and share information? Maybe farmer mixers, and/or a newsletter.
- It is interesting to see the conversation around agriculture shift from value of subdivision to how are we going to be profitable in agriculture. I am pleased to see that shift.
- We recently launched a program called Dairy Vision where we raised about 85K to help dairy farms with HR issues, management, etc. Four farms have gone through the program but no one from Swanton or Franklin County has participated.
- The Community Garden idea is a great vision for the town. Dairy farmers are notorious for helping each other in times of need but not having time to talk about the future. However, there is also a lot of pride to be had in anything that is value added. As a small group you could look to Swanton cheese as a way to put Swanton on the map and make a good local product. Value added in maple is another thing to consider. There are many products that can be made and there are funds at the federal and state level to help.
- The attitude needed in agriculture is when something is missing we need to see it as a place to change the picture for what ag looks like. There is also a lot of issues of scale, how to be profitable, how to have margins to keep folks on the land and manage labor issues, etc. There is an amazing education program at high school and a gap at labor force, but good TA in the form of extension, etc. There could be a way to pull people in different parts of this issue together. For example, a Teacher from MVU, folks interested in community gardens, and extension could begin to think about the missing pieces

together. There may be ways to coordinate around addressing the gaps rather than focusing on one thing.

- It is important to start to brag about what you do have. In Vermont, farms and chefs are really sexy. Everyone one wants to be growing, eating, or making food but there is a missing part of the picture which is who is behind the wheel of the truck, the people that are invisible. We need to be able to be proud of the folks that are here and then think about the invisible folks as well.
- There may be an interesting connection between labor needs and the tech school. This seems like it could be a good opportunity.
- It is important to think about branding. What about having your own compost brand? You may be on to something to get out ahead of act 148 (Vermont's new solid waste law).

- For VT as a whole right now, this topic is so hot. The future of the working landscape is exciting in a lot of parts of the state. In the council on the future of Vermont, we found that the #1 ranked value of Vermonters is agriculture and its future. There is tremendous pride in our producers. The question is, is there one thing that would be a seed of cooperation in town – maybe a seal that says “made in Swanton” or a new business that the community would get behind as a way to start a sense that Swanton is growing new businesses connecting to agriculture. In Hardwick when one person brags it's for everyone else too. Talking with pride about their place increases a sense of pride in everyone else in the community. Swanton has something to be proud of in its ag community and the land that has been nurtured but it has not been celebrated. Pride can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Growth & Development

Resource Team: Kiersten Bourgeois, Catherine Dimitruk, Sarah Waring, Jenny Nelson, Tim Smith, Karen Freeman, Paul Costello (scribe), Kate McCarthy, Jenna Whitson (facilitator)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- The new interstate. This gives us a lot of new opportunity to grow our business community. We need more industry to keep kids here and reduce property taxes.
- The Electric Department owned by the village. We have the lowest rates in the state. This is good for new businesses.
- Caring for streets and snow removal.
- The Chamber is great.
- We have family oriented events such as an annual car show, bands in park, Halloween on the green.
- The farmer's market in the park is just starting this last year every Saturday with great success. There are not many vendors yet, but a big opportunity.
- Great sidewalks, we can walk anywhere.
- There is a new Gym in town.
- We have a good pharmacy.
- We have an excellent educational program, elementary and right up through.
- Good faculty and administration and good programs.
- Strong special education.
- Our biggest asset and liability is traffic. We need to balance trucking and tourism. Average truck traffic is 3 or 4% but ours is 16%.
- There is a lot of Canadian Traffic and tourism folks stopping in convenience stores.
- Some of the trucks are from our businesses.
- Southern growth district is a way to expand development and tax base.
- There is an active industrial park but only 5 acres left to develop.
- The Missisquoi river and lake access that could be improved and beautified.
- One of the largest assets is the community is networking.

What are the Challenges?

- We're not a destination.
- We shouldn't have farmers market at the same time as St. Albans. Everyone wants to be there instead.
- Big challenge that new businesses are not coming in.
- Pine st. in Burlington has small crafters and arts. We don't have a place for artisans and have a place for people to come see their wares.
- We lose people from Montreal - they don't stop. We have a chamber and an info center but we don't have adequate resources to put someone there all the time. We need to have a point person to lead folks to local assets and capture their interest.
- We have a large grocery store that's now empty.
- We don't have a full time person working economic development...helping businesses, supporting the industrial park, attracting people.
- Hog Island is not well marked or made into an attraction.
- Trucks in the village are a challenge.
- Cleaning up the lake is a huge challenge for us, for tourists, for property values.
- There are not many jobs here. People are buying here but not working or spending money here. They are commuting out of town.
- We have lots of industrial space but not high paying jobs.
- We have very affordable rental housing, there's a perception that there are problems with people just released from prison.
- Vermont can't compete against New York with their program for tax free for businesses for 10 years.

- There is an income disparity between different parts of the town and village.
- We have traffic, but we don't capitalize on it to capture dollars locally.
- The state seems to be perceived as unfriendly to businesses.
- Towns in New York are more ready to take lead to help businesses—Swanton isn't organized to compete. It takes too much time to develop and settle in Swanton.
- St Albans town/village fight over water impedes development in the southern tier.
- Parking is a challenge...people with motor homes, etc. can't stop in town. We have to find a lot of parking.
- There is a public lot next to the Chamber but it's full during the week...not much of a sign...
- Hard to find a place to park just to run into a place...a parking problem.
- Southern growth region doesn't have a plan or anyone on point to lead it forward.
- Paralyzed by St. Albans...lots of interest but water.
- We have to find a way to lower risk. Or maybe there is not a way to expand because of state rules on sprawl...but how do we control for risk.
- What happened to the 'space center' that was supposed to attract businesses...they weren't able to raise the money to get it started...it was to attract students from way beyond the town. A lot of money was raised.
- Village of Swanton doesn't have any modern retail space...buildings are old and in bad shape.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- A working group could take the initiative to help businesses cut through red tape to develop.
- A community point person for economic development to take the lead to work with new businesses. Nobody here is an expert in attracting or supporting growing businesses.
- Maybe we need to build our own water plant in southern Swanton to feed the growth there rather than wait and rely on St. Albans.
- We need to involve youth and also educate them about business development. MVU has an emerging program.
- Do something with the empty storefront. We are missing a nice place to have dinner.
- A place to hang out, to visit, like a community center.
- It would be good to have culinary education.
- Teen center is a big building with a lot of space, bowling alley, very dark...there could be a nice working kitchen...could be community dinners etc.
- Need a master plan for the southern growth area down by Tractor Supply. If a committee was formed it would need some folks beyond local volunteers, it would need outside experts.
- A committee with regional and local folks to develop a master plan for growth center development. Also have a town/village staff person to coordinate and lead this effort.
- We may need two working groups—one on southern growth development of boxes and business and other one on downtown—for bike tourism, for more arts, like an arts center or arts/artisan store.
- One economic development group that takes on these issues...including Hog Island and bicycling with sub-committees.
- Marble Mill could be redeveloped.
- It would be great to have a place to rent a canoe or bikes or other outdoor goods.
- St. Albans did it and it's really working. We could too. We might need some outside help. They got transportation grants and VHC and historic tax credits and TIF—tax increment finance district.
- We have a small beach but some people don't know about it. It is not clean because of algae - we should fix it up with a park.
- We are beginning a rewrite of town plan. We could use ideas of working groups on downtown and southern growth district could.
- Action plan to build a welcome center here in Swanton for visitors off the freeway.
- We have to support businesses in downtown because we really want these places. Restaurant has to have customers and we all need to support each other to succeed.
- Get a hired person in Chamber office. We need someone in there to channel visitors.
- Get chamber have phone number that has an active line, even when no one is in the shop.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There are many existing assets and challenges with parking, traffic, and some ideas for specific action. Some things can be done with volunteers, but some things need experts. Low hanging fruit can be community action steps. Some of these can just be done by citizens, and others we need to line up to get things done.
- History of the 'space center' and what happened to the restaurant shows that there needs to be public knowledge and sharing of the ideas of committees. The more we are informed together the more we will make progress.
- Not everyone seems to be on the same page, so more communication is great. Southern growth and water supply issue—is there capacity that could be extended rather than a new and separate development?
- Funds allocated for the space center should be accounted for.
- I love the green and the town and having a place where people can meet a focal place that everyone supports.
- Be symbiotic with St. Albans, not duplicate. Empower a new economic strategy to bring in new young people.

- People need a place to meet. People need to connect with neighbors.
- Great boards in town—pro business, pro community.
- You have 3 great assets—sidewalks, roads and river...it is welcoming and could be developed.
- Ag is underutilized and is changing in VT.
- Communication can be powerful. You have lots of assets here. Tell what you have and sell it.
- Gathering spaces. You could use empty grocery as a gathering place. Something like a shared work spaces for young people, and other businesses. You can save on the commute and attract entrepreneurs—a hot spot.
- Think about what you want out of your downtown. Don't just think about what you want for tourists but mostly for you.
- Think about what you can get, how do the developments benefit or hurt the environment, job creation - you can plan the way you want it.

Jobs & Economic Opportunity

Resource Team: Kiersten Bourgeois, Catherine Dimitruk, Sarah Waring (facilitator), Jenny Nelson, Tim Smith, Karen Freeman, Kate McCarthy, Margaret Gibson McCoy (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Land is an asset and we have farmers, so there is an opportunity for processing of agricultural goods; taking advantage of the local food movement.
- Our infrastructure: we have the cheapest electricity in VT, the interstate runs through, the airport is about to expand, traffic runs through town, and we have our own water purification and distribution system that is in the process of being updated.
- Also, VT Gas has a main transmission line through town – the downtown is already hooked to their feeder lines. An Israeli corporation bought some land about a year ago and is planning to open a natural compressed gas business.
- We have internet; fiber is in the area goes through Swanton Village to Highgate.
- Accessibility to legislators and community leaders.
- VT Precision Tools and Leader Evaporator are 2 successful big businesses in town.
- Cargill is still in town, and the low cost of power is really appealing to them. Town and Village leaders worked hard to keep them in Swanton. At that time, we were able to offer them tax stabilization at the local level, but can't do that now.
- The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge in Swanton offers lots of trails, fishing, duck hunting, environmental education. Lots of students visit. Would like to see it more vibrant.
- Our power company is a municipal power company with trustees that want to see the area succeed.
- We have affordable housing here and OK property taxes (one of the lower in the county).
- Lake Champlain is an asset, it brings a lot of people in to town.
- It's a relatively safe community.
- There is a proliferation of law enforcement; border patrol backs up local police.
- Career development center offers all kinds of classes from culinary, computer training, welding, blueprint reading, and licensed nursing. It's located in St Albans but services Franklin County. Dept of Labor helps fund tuition of courses.
- Lots of professional support for businesses that come to the area through the Development Corps and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Chamber of Commerce has become recognized within the community now as a great asset.
- Fire department is ISO class 5 certified which helps with property insurance rates throughout the community.
- Swanton has a lot of sense of community: fire dept, electric dept, street dept; a lot of those people live in town and it binds us together.
- We have the Franklin Grand Isle job fair every year in St. Albans. This year it's on March 26th. We take about 80-100 kids from the tech center, and about 700 students all together attend in the a.m. Then it's open to the public in the afternoon. About 600-700 people attend.

What are the Challenges?

- Paperwork; Act 250 requirements make it hard for new businesses to set up here. They don't want to pay the fees and go through the red tape.
- Lots of kids going through the school could be a workforce, but currently kids have to leave to get jobs. A lot of young people with potential have to leave.
- Career tech ed. center struggles with perception. Some people (parents) still think of it as vocational education, but it has changed. The perceptions need to change; the parents need to know that kids get life skills, earn credit, and get training for real jobs.
- Swanton is a large area and there is a lot of opportunity for large business to come. We need good paying jobs and being close to the interstate is attractive.
- Would like to see the type of industry in town that makes something that gets distributed rather than just offer services. More companies like Precision Tools.
- Need to focus on what the Tech Center needs to have in here, and get that kind of industry to come.
- Don't have a point person in the community that can take it from A-Z. When a business comes in, there isn't a clear path. They may go to the town, the village, the legislative body.

- We don't advertise ourselves as an attractive place to do business.
- Would like to see us attract a big tech company. Need better broadband and need to have the population to supply the need of that company. We have a blank slate in this area, if we have to go through all the processes, we have to find someone with the funding to go through it.
- Would be nice to have flexibility with being able to offer tax stabilization as an incentive for businesses. Working people pay taxes!
- Perception of those outside Swanton isn't as high as those that live here.
- Last year, there was a significant change made to Act 250. "Criteria 9L" that came out of Natural Resources and Energy Committee has turned into a disaster for business development, it's affected towns like Vergennes and it's affecting us. Something the size of a car dealer can't locate in the downtown. We're trying to get it repealed or watered down.
- From Village and Town Government standpoint, you try your best. Have an informational meeting on a multi-million vote, nobody comes to the meeting. We post meeting notices, but people don't come.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Hire an economic development coordinator and marketing. Someone with contacts in local, regional, state and federal levels. The person could support businesses that want to come to Swanton and also help those that are already here scale up. Need to fund that position. Job description could be written quickly.
- Improve public transportation; work with coordinator of Green Mountain Transit to improve the route. Look at the CIDR bus system in Grand Isle for seniors as a model because it's very localized.
- There isn't any public transportation to Burlington. Look at Carshare Vermont, or organized car-pooling. Swanton isn't on Carshare's radar, but it's a possibility.
- We have a park & ride but people don't know where it is.
- Town has received a grant to rewrite the Town Plan. Meetings are open to the public so people should attend and offer input.
- If Town Plan includes priorities, it does help with funding and access to pots of money.
- Communication in the town and village could be improved. Sometimes people don't know what's going on. Finding a way to get people active and coming to the meetings might produce a better product. Front Porch Forum (FPF) is a great resource for communication to everyone in town.
- Our Chamber could brag more about our resources; the great electric rates, etc. We could get some of those messages out through FPF, and find other ways to get the message out. Need to blast out the word. Want to bring people from Chittenden County in; people from Canada come.
- We have a great wildlife center, it could really be made into a place that draws people here.
- Where do people find out about jobs here? Some go through temp agencies but mostly through word of mouth. Some of the agencies use the job boards like VTjobs but it tends to be the larger businesses. The Chamber website has the capability to do job posts but it's not currently turned on – it could be turned on so that it can be used by local businesses.
- Building off the Franklin Grand Isle job fair idea, we could do a job expo just for this region. But the problems is that we don't have enough employers here to make it a big enough event, or have enough openings. Is there some way to duplicate a smaller version here? A career day for students?
- Because of our small size, we are sometimes limited by the density of resources and the people we have available to us. For it to be successful you have to have enough people; we're careful about what we do.
- Let's advertise our quality of life, affordable housing, and other things good about being here. Oftentimes, businesses are looking for places their employees want to be. Find a way to brand the town.
- Get the word out about all the positive assets "don't sit on your assets." Work to get the word out about the benefits of Swanton: a booth at the home recreation center where we could talk about all the benefits and opportunity in Swanton. Would be relatively inexpensive. About 7-8000 people go through there in the weekend. Get a lot of contacts.
- We have value-added ag opportunities. Dairy is king here, but in order for a business to grow, could break out into another area like the Venture Center. Look at bringing in a volume freezing facility to use the harvest out of local gardens, and extend local food offerings beyond just the growing season to local schools. A food hub could utilize farm land. The Center for an Ag Economy is working on identifying the best equipment for a new technology called "flash freezing." Freezer space is a sustainable enterprise. IQF hooks up to nitrogen or ammonia tanks at the industrial scale.
- Look at abandoned areas as an opportunity for redevelopment.
- Connect the workforce with the schools; resumés, job shadowing, career center, interviews. Our high schools spend too much time convincing kids they need to go to college rather than helping them find the right career for them and pointing them to what's available in the area. Should be spending resources on kids and getting them to learn through the career center what's out there, rather than just spending resources to convince them to go to college.
- College grads accrue enormous debt, but some of them could find a job right through the tech center. Would also be good to connect them with outside businesses. Begin a program to pull new jobs in.
- Have to start with the kids, they are our future. Parents aren't educating kids about responsible spending. Need to educate the kids about that. Invite local business people into the classroom so kids know what's out there.

- Have a lot of small businesses here that need some help getting started or growing. Maybe start our own SBDC to help work with businesses, help them write grants, etc. St Albans has an SBDC person one day a week. If there's a way to connect existing business owners as advisors, or have a kind of workshop setup, it wouldn't have to be as expensive as an SBDC setup.
- Have been working on a shared space model for a few months.
- Form a committee to get someone that can create a plan for the point person, write a grant to help fund that point person, someone has to decide how we're going to do that.
- Improve park and rides and public transportation.
- Getting more involvement with our local government. More people to serve on commissions, show up for public meetings. Currently we post meeting notices on town website, in village office, town office and post office. Would be great to post on PPF. Village has a facebook page, it's a good way to get info out there.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- The list of assets is impressive. The median size is 1,222 people in towns in VT. With the town plan coming up and economic development conversations likely to continue, ponder the role of youth. Think about what you're trying to achieve, a trend in rural communities is that kids leave but come back in their 30s. When think of ED, think about what things should be local, and what are more suitable to be done at a regional level. Some things may be more successful at a different scale and regionally. Should it be a little of both.
- List of assets is remarkable. Should spread the word about them. With a small investment with a communication vehicle it could help. Goodwill and energy, openness, great sense of community here, won't take a lot. Crow at top of lungs.
- Blow your own horn. Don't forget root cellars for value-added. USDA RD has funding. SCORE (service corps of retired executives) are retired business people that can help businesses with plans, etc. In terms of career days, they are really great to get business people right to the school.
- Swanton Enhancement project has been successful at getting people to turn out. Need to learn from them what worked as we approach the town plan update. Hope we can align some of the work that comes out of this with that project.
- A great turnout here. Great pride in Swanton, but people want to take it to the next level. Get the word out about Swanton. Always had great dealings with Selectboard and trustees here, always pro-business. Great examples of ED is Vermont Precision Tools, started with 2 guys 35 years ago. 10 years ago up to 113, now at 200. Looking to add another 20. The economy in Franklin County is pretty good. There are a lot of worse places off than.
- The more specific you can get in terms of what you want, the more success you can have. Define what you want and answer those questions, the more funding, leadership, non-profit and agency support can help make it happen.



Diners young and old filled the Missisquoi Valley Union High School cafeteria for the community dinner on Community Visit Day.

VIII. Swanton Community Visit Participants

Isaiah Bates	Travis Elwood	Chris King	Elisabeth Nance	Jill Snapp
Reg Beliveau	Maryrose Fahy	Sarah King	Elaine Nester	Dave Southwick
Michael Benjamin	Deanna Farnham	Shayne Kirby	Taylor Newton	Judy Spaulding
Jeff Berry	Betsy Fournier	Kathy Kneebone	Jon Nielsen	Dexter Spaulding
Casey Bessette	Kathy Fournier	Louise LaBombard	Sarah Nielsen	Sandra Speck Kilburn
Michael Bessette	Bonnie Fournier	Gene LaBombard	Terri O'Shea	Marie Speer
Kim Beyer Kelley	Cheryl Fregeau	Molly Lambert	Kevin O'Shea	Neal Speer
Jonathan Billings	Marie Frey	Hank Lambert	Jack Paige	Michelle Spence
Barbara Bosley	Fred Fuller	Lawrence Lampman	Lynn Paradis	Dena St. Amour
Robert Bosley	Pat Gaboriault	Louise Lampman	Anita Parah	Ken St. Amour
Jane Bouchard	Gary Gadouas	Laravee	Ray Pare	Sandy Steele Kilburn
George Bouchard	Marianna Gamache	Brittany LaPan	Polly Pare	Leonard Stell
Mike Bouchy	Betty Gingras	Andy LaRocque	Judy Paxman	Kristine Stell
Alan Bourdeau	David Goodin	Jim LaRocque	Adam Paxman	Blaine Tardy
Marge Bourdeau	Winton Goodrich	Kathy Lavoie	Jessica A Pelkey	Hunter Tardy
Deb Bourgeois	John Gratton	Ross Lavoie	Alvin Ploof	Payton Tardy
Steve Bourgeois	Vickie Gratton	Chris Leach	Joyce Ploof	Karrie Thomas
Amy Brewer	Monica Greene	Don Lefebvre	Daren Plouff	Candy Thomas
Logan Burke	Dennis Greeno	Karen Lefebvre	Charlie Purington	Amanda Torrey
Shawn Cheney	Sally Greeno	Marge Leroux	Patty Rainville	Lianne Trombley
Chip Chiappinelli	Debora Grennon	Carol Lizotte	Brent M Reader	Kyle Underwood
Mary Chiappinelli	James Guilmette	Marcel Longway	Elodie Reed	Sofia Wagner
Marcel Choquette	Glen Gurwit	David Lucey	Joanne Reiter	Steven Wagner
Joel Clark	Brianna Haenke	John Lucy	Scott Rheaume	Suzanne Washburn
Dianne Clements	Johanne Hamilton	John Lumsden	Eugene G. Rich Jr.	Yaasha Wheeler
Gordon Clements	Annette Hannah	Daniel Lynn	Rebecca Rupp	Katherine Winchester
Don Collins	Mary Hartman	Lenore Macmillan	Randall Rupp	Debbie Winter
Susan Collins	Lucie Hill	Sara Maguire	Linda Russo	Gordon Winters
Liz Conforti	Dennis Hill	Tobias Maguire	Tony Russo	John Winters
Earlene Conge	Rob Hirss	Tom Maguire	Dan Ryan	Linda Wirts
Todd Conger	Shane Hojaboom	Janet Maguire	Brian Savage	Mary Wood
Jennifer Conger	Fred Holmes	Marianne Marshall	Bob Shea	Leeann Wright
Earlene Consea	Jennifer Horton	Christie Martin	Michael Sibenaller	Adam Wright
Michel Consejo	John Hoy	Steve Martin	Teri Sibenaller	Ginette Young
Irene Cook	Jim Hubbard	Heath McAllister	Denise Smith	Robert M Zelazo
Brent Coon	Jack Hubbard	Larry McGraw		
Duane Couture	Kristen Hughes	Richard W McVicker		
Kim Craig	Tyler Hull	Chad Melage		
Beth Crane	Corey Hurley	Sharon Menard		
Linda Cross	Spencer Hutchins	Mike Menari		
Kris Daignault	Robert Irish	James Messier		
Dianne Day	David Jescavage	Mary Metayer		
Dorey Demers	Tod Jones	Chad Metayer		
Damien Dipietro	Katie Judd	Chad Metayer		
Dustin Dipietro	Rich Kelley	Lillian Meunier		
Kris Dognault	Linda Kelly	Maureen Morits		
Faith DuBois	Ron Kilburn	Austin Moss		



*Swanton Community Visit co-chairs:
Hank & Molly Lambert*

IX. Resource Team Members

Alex Aldrich

Vermont Arts Council
136 State St., Drawer 33
Montpelier VT 05633-6001
aaldrich@vermontartscouncil.org
828-3293; 828-5420

Tom Berry

Office of Senator Leahy
199 Main Street 4th Floor
Burlington, VT 05401
Tom_berry@leahy.senate.gov
802-863-2525

Michele Boomhower

VT Agency of Transportation
National Life Building
Montpelier, VT 05602
Michele.boomhower@state.vt.us
802-828-5753

Kiersten Bourgeois

National Life Bldg. 6th Floor
Montpelier VT 05602
kirsten.bourgeois@state.vt.us
802-793-4899

Katelin Brewer-Colie

Local Motion, 1 Steele St #103
Burlington VT 05401
katelin@localmotion.org
802-861-2700

Paul Bruhn

Preservation Trust of Vermont
104 Church St. #21
Burlington, VT 05401
paul@ptvermont.org
802-658-6647

Greta Brunswick

NW Regional Planning Comm.
75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, T 05478
gbrunswick@nrpcvt.com
802-524-5958

Paul Costello

VT Council on Rural Dev.
PO Box 1348
Montpelier, VT 05602
pcostello@vtrural.org
802-223-5763

Catherine Dimitruk

NW Regional Planning Comm.
75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, T 05478
cdimitruk@nrpcvt.com
802-524-5958

Ben Doyle

Vermont Arts Council
136 State St., Drawer 33
Montpelier VT 05633-6001
bdoyle@vermontartscouncil.org
802-828-5420

Zon Eastes

Vermont Arts Council
136 State St., Drawer 33
Montpelier VT 05633-6001
zeastes@vermontartscouncil.org
802-828-5420

Harry Frank

VT School Boards Association
2 Prospect St. #4
Montpelier, VT 05462
hfrank@vtvsba.org
802-223-3580

Karen Freeman

VT Housing and Cons. Board
58 East State Street
Montpelier, VT 05462
kfreeman@vhcb.org

Margaret Gibson McCoy

VT Council on Rural Devel.
PO Box 1348, Montpelier, VT
margaret@vtrural.org
802-223-6091

Kate Jellema

Marlboro College, 28 Vernon
Street, Brattleboro, VT 05301
katej@marlboro.edu
802-254-7024

Christopher Kaufman Ilstrup

VT Community Foundation
3 Court Street, Middlebury VT
05753
cilstrup@vermontcf.org
802-388-3355

Kate McCarthy

VT Natural Resources Council
9 Bailey Ave., Montpelier, VT
kmccarthy@vnrc.org
802-223-2328

Peter Mallary

VT Assn for Mental Health and
Addiction Recovery
peter@itsclassified.com
802-356-0284

Michael Moser

UVM Center for Rural Studies
206 Morrill Hall, UVM
Burlington, VT 05405
mmoser@uvm.edu
802-656-0864

Jon-Michael Muise

USDA Rural Development
28 Vernon St. #3
Brattleboro, VT 05301
Jon.muise@vt.usda.gov
802-257-7878 x106

Jennifer Nelson

Office of Senator Sanders
357 Western Ave.
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
Jenny_nelson@sanders.
senate.gov
802-748-9269

Walter Opuszynski

Northern Forest Canoe Trail
PO Box 565, 4403 Main St.
Waitsfield, VT 05673
walter@northerforestcanoe
trail.org
802-496-2285 ext 5

Mary Pickener

VT Department of Health
27 Federal Street, Suite 201
St. Albans VT 05478
Mary.pickener@state.vt.us
802-524-7918

Kip Potter

USDA National Resources
Conservation
USDA NRCS VT State Office
Colchester VT 05446
Kip.potter@vt.usda.gov
802-951-6796 x238

Kristin Prior

VT Agency of Human Services
29 Houghton Street, Suite 103
St. Albans, VT 05478
kristin.prior@state.vt.us
802-527-5438

Jill Remick

VT Agency of Education
219 North Main Street, Suite 402
Barre, VT 05641
Jill.remick@state.vt.us
802-479-1177

Bethany Remmers

Northwest Regional Planning
Commission
75 Fairfield Street
St. Albans, VT 05478
bremmers@nrpcvt.com
802-524-5958

Megan Smith

VT Department of Tourism and
Marketing
1 National Life Dr. 6th Floor
Montpelier, VT 05602-0501
megan.smith@state.vt.us
802-828-3237

Timothy Smith

Franklin County Industrial
Development Corp
PO Box 1099
St. Albans, VT 05478-1099
tim@fcidc.com
802-524-2194

Scott Tucker

Rutland Police Department
Project Vision
Scott.tucker@state.vt.us
802-773-1840

Ruth Wallman

Lake Champlain Islands Economic
Development Corporation
3501 US Route 2
North Hero VT 05495
Ruth@champlainislands.com
802-372-8400

Sarah Waring

Center for an Agricultural
Economy
PO Box 422, 41 Main Street
Hardwick, VT 05843
sarah@hardwickagriculture.org
802-472-5840

Jenna Whitson

VT Council on Rural Development
PO Box 1348, 43 Main Street
Montpelier, VT 05602
jenna@vtrural.org
802-255-6091



Visiting team members gathered for a briefing luncheon before Community Visit Day forums got underway.



That's a wrap!!



Vermont Council on Rural Development

PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384

802-223-6091

info@vtrural.org | www.vtrural.org

Printing by Minuteman Press