

Hardwick Community Visit

Report and Action Plan ~ April 2016



Vermont Council on Rural Development

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

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

Front cover painting: KATHRYN LOVINSKY
Back cover and Page 3: PERRY HELLER
Inside pages: MARGARET GIBSON MCCOY



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Steering committee meeting to determine forum topics, logistics, and outreach strategies; Potluck dinner on Community Visit Day for over 150 community and visiting team members; Community Meeting Day participants weigh in; Entertainment at the Visit Day potluck thanks to John Page and David Gaillard; and Community members shared their ideas at forums with Visiting Team members.

I. Introduction

Hardwick is a close knit and hard-working community where residents take care of each other and take pride in their ability to get things done. In recent years, community members, businesses, and organizations have together overcome many challenges; revitalizing their downtown, boosting economic development, preserving heritage buildings, and positioning themselves as a world-renowned leader in the sustainable agriculture movement.

Located along the banks of the Lamoille River and nestled among rolling hills, picturesque lakes, and a dynamic working landscape, Hardwick is a town with a wealth of assets. Diverse businesses, First Friday events, the Food Venture Center, the industrial park, and local restaurants contribute to a strong downtown center and vibrant economy. Cultural and education institutions such as the Jeudevine Library, the Town House, and GRACE, help to foster community gathering, creativity, and a good quality of life. Hardwick's greatest asset however, is its people.

Now, rooted in their rich history and driven by this positive momentum, residents lined up to ask what's next.

This exciting time of innovation, creativity, and action drew a strong Visiting Team who were impressed by the town's momentum but also by the clear commitment to take next steps collectively, bringing together all members of the community towards common goals for the future. Throughout the Community Visit process, residents from all parts of the community, from life-long residents to those newer to town, to business owners, teachers and school administrators, farmers, town officials, and others came together to discuss ideas for action. The Visiting Team was also impressed by the town's dedication to not only engaging the youth voice, but also to cultivate the next generation of engaged community leaders.

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 160 local people participating in the process and over 85 volunteers now engaged in active Task Forces to advance priorities, we know that there is great energy for real progress in Hardwick today. At the end of the Community Visit, we see strong, practical work plans and some direct connections being engaged for key support from the Northeastern Vermont Development Association, USDA Rural Development, the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association. The town has chosen to take on challenging initiatives, and there is much work ahead, but Hardwick is a hard-working and caring community that is ready to take action for the future of their town.

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 Hardwick Task Forces as the priority projects identified in the process move forward efforts to:

- **Open a Recreational Center and Expand Recreation Opportunities**
- **Expand Jeudevine Library Space and Services**
- **Enhance Hardwick’s Downtown and Build a Business and Economic Development Network**
- **Build a School and Community Partnership and Develop Mentorship and Career Building Opportunities for Hardwick Youth**

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 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 Hardwick as it moves forward and to provide follow up help to the Hardwick Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Hardwick projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Call on us, and on Visiting Team members, when we can be of help.

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

We would like to thank the Hardwick Selectboard and Town Manager Jon Jewett who initially invited this process. We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of the Steering Committee who helped guide the process from the beginning including; Shari Cornish, Jon Jewett, Nancy Nottermann, Sarah Waring, Jim Lovinsky, Eric Remick, Joe Rivard, Dave Gross, Jonathan Gilbert, Richard Brochu, Ruby Dale-Brown, Katharine Ingram, Deb Wilson, Bruce Kaufman, Aaron Cochran, Karen Holmes, Orise Ainsworth, and Kathryn Lovinsky.

We are very thankful for the use of community spaces for the Community Visit meetings including Hazen Union High School, St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church, GRACE at the Old Firehouse, the Memorial Building, and the Knights of Columbus Hall.

The Hardwick Gazette and Hardwick Community Television were key partners in the Hardwick Community Visit Process and in helping to spread the word about the process and meetings, and share the outcomes of each gathering.

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: USDA Rural Development, the Community National Bank, The Northeast Kingdom Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, and the Green Mountain Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation.

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

Getting things done is all about leadership, and all of Hardwick should be grateful to those who’ve stepped up to serve as chairs of the task forces: Amy Holloway and Clara Lew-Smith: Build a School and Community Partnership and Build Mentorship and Career Development Opportunities; Jerina Page and Jodi Lew-Smith: Expand Jeudevine Library Space and Services; Heather Davis: Build a Recreation Center and Expand Recreation Opportunities; and Jim Lovinsky: Enhance Hardwick’s Downtown and Built a Business and Economic Development Network.

VCRD especially wants to thank Karen Holmes for stepping up to lead this process as the Community Visit Chair. Karen is a strong, kind, and knowledgeable leader. Her experience as a convener and facilitator, as well as her deep connection and dedication to the Hardwick community positioned her as a natural choice for our chair and key point person throughout the process. We are extremely confident in Karen’s ability to lead and coordinate the work ahead and look forward to working with Karen over the months and years ahead as Hardwick advances its priorities.

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 Hardwick and who are lined up for the common good and best future for this wonderful place.



A view of downtown Hardwick.

II. The Hardwick Community Visit Process

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



III. Vision for Hardwick's Future

These points of vision were compiled from vision statements that were shared during the Community Meeting on February 15th and supported by participants at the March 16th Resource Meeting and an online survey. The statements represent broad hopes that community members have for the long term good of Hardwick.

Hardwick residents look to a future for the community where:

- ❖ Hardwick has a vibrant downtown, but does not lose the intimacy of the village and the community feeling. All storefronts are filled and buildings are maintained and well cared for.
- ❖ Hardwick is a pedestrian friendly town where people can walk and bike. A trail system connects parts of the community and the downtown.
- ❖ Well-paying jobs are available to Hardwick residents raising median income and reducing poverty.
- ❖ There is a growing and thriving agricultural economy in Hardwick.
- ❖ Hardwick is a town with an outstanding education system that's known for its excellence. Students in the school are connected to their community.
- ❖ Hardwick offers diverse recreational opportunities available to for youth, families, and seniors such as expanded trail networks, nature and educational programming, ice skating, and after school activities. Multi-generational programming connects all generations and serves everyone in town.
- ❖ Hardwick has a vibrant library used by people of all ages who see it as their own.
- ❖ There is a strong arts and cultural scene and programming in Hardwick.
- ❖ Hardwick is a community with a strong sense of identify where residents listen to each other and work well together regardless of our backgrounds. Long-time residents and folks newer to town have ongoing and mutually-respectful relationships.

IV. Hardwick Priorities

Determined by Hardwick residents at the VCRD Community Meeting, February 15, 2016

Proving that those who live, work and raise their families in a community are best qualified to understand its needs and potential, Hardwick community members whittled down a list of 19 issues through discussion, reasoned arguments and thoughtful reflection. In the end, voting with red and blue stickers, over 75 participants chose four issues that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources, and to strengthen the town through exciting new ventures. Residents concluded the February 15th meeting by signing up for one of four Task Forces in the selected areas.

Hardwick residents selected four priorities for future action:

✓ **Open a Recreational Center and Expand Recreation Opportunities**

Hardwick residents value their recreational, cultural, and educational assets including the Hardwick Trails, strong athletic programs, The Town House performance space, library programs, Hardwick First Friday events, Kids on the Move, Hardwick Little League, and others. However, residents would like to see recreation opportunities expanded and feel that the community, especially youth, seniors, and families, need a space in town where they can come together for recreational and learning opportunities that could include space for young people, computers, a pool table, scheduled activities for all ages, a bowling alley, arcade games, educational programs, and more. A Recreation Task Force could form to identify a location, secure funding, and build a multi-use Hardwick Community Recreation Center. The Task Force could also support and bolster the work of the existing recreation committee to expand recreational opportunities and offerings such as a summer youth theater program, a Hardwick Skate Park, community workshops and learning opportunities for all ages, community game nights, an artist-in-residence program, revitalization of the school ropes course and exercise course, multi-generational art programs, and more.

✓ **Expand the Jeudevine Library Space and Services**

The Jeudevine Library, with its youth and adult programming, story hour programs, space for students after school, and internet access, is widely recognized as an asset and community resource in Hardwick. Many residents feel that an expansion of the library's space and services would be of benefit to the community and would provide more space for youth programs, community computer access, and even innovative services such as a tool and equipment exchange. A Library Expansion Task Force could lend strength and support to the effort already underway to expand the capacity and space of the library to better serve the Hardwick community.

✓ Enhance Hardwick's Downtown and Build a Business and Economic Development Network

Hardwick is a community with many key economic assets including a strong business community, an industrial park, the Center for an Agricultural Economy, a strong downtown core, a supportive town government and municipal leaders, and its central location at the junction of several major roadways. However, residents and business leaders feel that more could be done to improve tourism and lodging opportunities, improve and expand industrial park space, unite the business community, and enhance Hardwick's downtown. A Hardwick Business and Economic Development Network could form to draw on community members and outside experts to bring strategic business growth to Hardwick's downtown and industrial park and advance development and jobs in town. Recognizing the downtown as a key economic asset, the group could also bring support and energy to the Hardwick Downtown Commission's work towards downtown improvements and becoming a designated downtown. The Network could work with community members and outside experts including NVDA to identify funding opportunities and a strategic plan to enhance Hardwick's downtown focusing on improving parking availability, biking, walkability, beautification of the downtown, accessibility, river access, and signage to redesign the downtown area to meet community needs, boost viability of downtown businesses, and attract visitors and new business to the town. The Hardwick Business Network could also work to identify funding to hire a point person for economic development that could support the committee in marketing Hardwick as a destination for businesses that fit the needs, values, and vision for Hardwick's economic future.

✓ Build a School and Community Partnership and Develop Mentorship and Career Building Opportunities for Hardwick Youth

Hardwick residents would like to build a better connection between students in the Hardwick schools and the greater community. A Hardwick School and Community Partnership could work to "bring the school into the community and the community into the school" by expanding ways to get students into learning and community service activities in town and get Hardwick residents into the school to help enrich diverse student experiences. Recognizing the new educational requirements around Personalized Learning Plans and community service as well as the numerous and diverse skills in the community, residents see an opportunity to better connect the schools and youth with the community and improve career development through mentorship and internship opportunities. A Hardwick School and Community Partnership which includes members of the community, students, the Hardwick schools and the Supervisory Union could form to identify opportunities to build a stronger connection between the school and the community. The Partnership could develop a career development network, pairing students with skilled mentors in the community, internship opportunities in local businesses and organizations, and other career development opportunities such as college fairs, job fairs, and visits to college and tech center campuses.

Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

Along with the four chosen priorities, the key opportunities listed below reflect other potential ideas for action that community members shared on Community Visit Day, and middle and high school students shared at the Hazen Union H.S. sessions. Though these opportunities weren't chosen as priority projects through this process, community members may find the list useful as they look to expand on current projects or take on new ones.

- **Advance Transportation Alternatives**

Hardwick residents would like to see regular and reliable transportation alternatives to accommodate travel around town, to reach Hardwick from other parts of the region, and for accessing services or commuting outside of town. A Transportation Task Force could identify and advance ways to increase public and shared transportation options such as vanpools, ride sharing, a commuter bus, or an in-town shuttle service.

- **Improve Traffic Safety**

Hardwick residents are concerned about road safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers on their town roadways and in their downtown streets and crosswalks. A Traffic Safety Task Force could come together to identify and implement strategies to control speed, improve signage, and address road safety on downtown streets such as sidewalk and crosswalk improvements, flashing traffic lights, or a timed stoplight. The group could also explore strategies to improve biker and traffic safety along roadways outside of the downtown core.

- **Develop Affordable Housing**

While several affordable housing options are available in the community now, Hardwick residents feel that more options should be developed to meet the wide range of housing needs. An Affordable Housing Task Force could form to connect with developers in the region to identify potential locations and to design and build affordable housing that meets the needs of community members of all ages and all income levels.

- **Improve and Expand Community Trails**

The Hardwick Trails, Jeudevine Waterfall Trails, Nichols Ledge, and other trail networks and public land are key community and recreation assets. However, residents would like to see improved and expanded trails in Hardwick, signage, and more connectivity between trail networks. Support for and participation in the Hardwick Trails Committee could be bolstered in order to focus efforts around the completion of the Hardwick portion of the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, improve river access, expand use of the existing trail networks, build new trails, improve connectivity, and create a Hardwick Trails Map.

- **Build a Community Health and Safety Partnership**

For many Hardwick residents, the safety and sense of community in town is a key asset. Many recognize and value the recent improvements in safety, the dedication of local police, the community restorative justice program, great health care providers, AWARE, SADD and other key organizations and service providers. Residents are concerned, however, about the rise in substance abuse and alcohol use in the community, lack of support for mental health issues, and the need to improve connections between police and the community, especially youth. A Community Health and Safety Partnership could form to build collaboration and coordination between the local police, community members, local non-profits and service providers to tackle these challenges, improving access to services, offering educational opportunities around substance abuse, health, and safety,

and identifying a vision and strategy to move forward in a coordinated way that builds community and provides hope and opportunity for the future.

- **Build a Hardwick Riverside Park**

The Lamoille River in downtown Hardwick is a beautiful but underused asset that could provide much more to residents and tourists. A riverside park could provide green space and open access to the water for kayaks or picnickers and add dynamism to the downtown.

- **Start a Hardwick Bike Club**

A Hardwick Bike Club, that includes community members of all ages, could form to improve and expand biking opportunities in Hardwick. The club could plan bike education opportunities on bike safety, fix bikes and offer repair workshops, build bike trails, lanes and paths in Hardwick, organize group rides, and offer bike rentals and loans to improve bike access for all members of the community.

- **Build a Non-Profit Hardwick Garage**

A task force could form to build a non-profit garage in Hardwick that would offer low-cost car repairs and make space and tools available to allow residents to make their own repairs. A program like this would reduce the maintenance and repair costs of car ownership, improve access to reliable transportation, and could offer educational programs and learning opportunities for students and community members.

- **Bolster Community Gardening and Food Education in Hardwick**

Hardwick residents value the long tradition in the community of gardening, small-scale agricultural production, and food produced and consumed locally. Many would like to see more support for back yard and community gardening as well as more opportunities for gardening and cooking education. A task force could form to expand community gardening and farming opportunities and to improve access to educational workshops on topics ranging from cooking with local food to small-scale food production and storage. Also serving as a gardening/micro-farming network, this task force could help participants expand homestead gardening, and exchange, aggregate and potentially collectively sell produce.

- **Create a Weekly Summer Music Series**

A task force could form to plan a weekly summer music series to offer an opportunity for the community to come together and to showcase local musicians and local food.

- **Build a Hardwick Skill Sharing Network**

Hardwick residents have a great diversity of skills that could be shared to provide activities, learning, fun and connection for residents throughout the community. A Skill Sharing Network could be set up where artists, writers, musicians, farmers and others with a great variety of skills could share their talents with their neighbors providing stimulating learning opportunities for young people and residents of all ages.

In Progress:

- **Build a Food Production, Distribution, and Tasting Center**

Hardwick residents are thinking hard about strategies to expand and strengthen the food economy in a strategic way that meets the needs and values of the Hardwick community. Many recognize the

need for expanded infrastructure beyond the current Food Venture Center facility at the Center for an Agricultural Economy to boost aggregation, distribution and storage, to grow agriculture and value-added businesses, and to attract visitors who are interested in the local movement. A Food Production, Distribution and Tasting Center could meet these needs and help take the food economy to scale in Hardwick, creating new business opportunities and jobs. Planning is underway at the Center for an Agricultural Economy to evaluate the feasibility, explore siting and funding, and plan for the development of such a center in Hardwick.

- **Develop Atkins Field**

Hardwick residents would like to see the space at Atkins Field utilized as a resource and benefit to the community. Residents shared several ideas for uses of the space that could meet community needs including a bicycle pump track, an expanded farmers market, an ice rink, a skate park and a community recreational space. Community engagement was stressed as a critical aspect of any future development. The Center for an Agricultural Economy is working with residents leading a planning process to advance these ideas, plus the redevelopment of the granite shed for commerce and community activities.



Community members reviewed opportunities and selected 4 priorities for action through a dot-voting exercise on Community Meeting Day.

V. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, March 16, 2016

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

✓ Task Force: Open a Recreational Center and Expand Recreation Opportunities

Chairperson: **Heather Davis**

Facilitator: **Jenna Whitson** (VCRD)

Resource Leaders: **Emilye Pelow Corbett** (VT Community Foundation), **Betsy Terry** (VT Recreation and Parks Association), **Craig Whipple** (VT Land Trust)

Hardwick residents value their recreational, cultural, and educational assets including the Hardwick Trails, strong athletic programs, The Town House performance space, library programs, Hardwick First Friday events, Kids on the Move, Hardwick Little League, and others. However, residents would like to see recreation opportunities expanded and feel that the community, especially youth, seniors, and families, need a space in town where they can come together for recreational and learning opportunities that could include space for young people, computers, a pool table, scheduled activities for all ages, a bowling alley, arcade games, educational programs, and more. A Recreation Task Force could form to identify a location, secure funding, and build a multi-use Hardwick Community Recreation Center. The Task Force could also support and bolster the work of the existing recreation committee to expand recreational opportunities and offerings such as a summer youth theater program, a Hardwick Skate Park, community workshops and learning opportunities for all ages, community game nights, an artist-in-residence program, revitalization of the school ropes course and exercise course, multi-generational art programs, and more.

Priority Action Steps

1. Build a recreation resource list that inventories activities available to the community as well as spaces for activities and programming. The list could be used as a resource for the recreation task force and committee, but also could be used as a public directory on the recreation committee's website. Additionally, informational materials could be developed that outline outdoor recreation opportunities in Hardwick and provide information on places such as Nichols Ledge, lake and river access, hiking and biking trails, and a pump track that is currently in the works.
2. Host intergenerational conversations to determine the needs and priorities of community members of all ages. Engage youth in meaningful conversations to discuss what recreation opportunities they would like to see. Poll seniors to determine what needs are not being met. The group will identify ways to have these conversations (what are the venues, how are they facilitated, how to bring people in) and will use these talks as a springboard to engage new people in recreation and build a more broad and diverse volunteer base.
3. Engage residents in the activities that are happening now. Enhance marketing efforts to get the word out about current programs and increase participation. One strategy to do this could be a

community recreation fair where residents are invited to visit booths to learn about the various recreation offerings in and around town.

4. Connect with and learn from other successful programs. The Teen Centers in Northfield and Bristol, 242 Main in Burlington are good resources for teen engagement and programming. Communities such as Milton and South Burlington have successful models for expanding and institutionalizing their recreation programs.
5. Build a structure that allows for accessing funding. Ensure a structure is in place to allow for donors and foundations to give money to enhance the work, and establish a fund raising strategy. One potential strategy to enhance offerings could be to build a Recreation Fund for Hardwick to offer funding for others to build programming opportunities in town.

Other Action Ideas

1. Improve transportation to ensure access to recreation programs and activities.
2. Engage youth in the construction of projects such as a skate park, pump track, or trails. Find ways to move youth programming off site from the school.
3. Address the barrier of insurance coverage for community-led programming.
4. Support the development of a bike club in Hardwick and connecting to the VT Mountain Bike Association.
5. Identify a coordinator to ensure collaboration between the new Heartbeat Community Center and the town.
6. Hold community trails events and other events for all ages to bring the community together.
7. Build a full-time recreation position with the town.
8. Build a skate park. Identify a location and access funding and community support.

Resources

1. South Burlington PACT is a good program to visit and learn from.
2. The VT Youth Conservation Corps is a resource for trail building and teen engagement.
3. The VT Recreation and Parks Association is a great partner to help connect with other communities and think about challenging issues such as insurance access and program funding. The group could join the Association and connect with Betsy Terry for support.
4. Northfield Teen Center, Bristol Teen Center, 242 Main in Burlington are teen programs that could be good models for youth engagement.
5. Johnson, Essex Junction, Hartland, and Hyde Parke have municipal pump tracks and/or skate parks.
6. The Vermont Community Foundation has several funds and grant programs that could be useful including the Northeast Kingdom Fund, the Small and Inspiring Grants Program, and the Collaborations and Innovations Program.
7. The Vermont Arts Council could be a source for technical assistance or funding for arts or culture related programming.
8. The Department of Forest, Parks, & Recreation offers a Recreation Trails grant program.
9. The Department of Buildings and General Services offers a Building Communities Grant program that could support community facilities.
10. The Heartbeat Community is building a Community Center that could be a great resource for programming and space.
11. The Craftsbury Outdoor Center.
12. The Art House

13. GRACE

14. The School is both an important community partner, but also could be a potential partner in finding recreation space for the community.

15. The faith community could be important partners in advancing this work.

16. Resources for local space include The Hardwick Fitness Center, Jeudevine Library, the Town House, the Public Safety Building, vacant commercial spaces, and churches.

Task Force Contacts

Emmet	Avery		972-6514
Joe	Brosseau	jpbinv@yaho.com	343-7856
Kathy	Ciarimboli	kathyciarimboli@gmail.com	473-2330
Heather	Davis	heatherd@vtlink.net	472-8024
Bethany	Dunbar	bethany@hardwickagriculture.org	472-5362 x 204
Jennifer	Eger	jennifer.lynn.eger@gmail.com	419-774-2635
Jean	Hackett	jhackett88@comcast.net	472-6213
Kathy	Hemmens	khemmens@vtlink.net	472-8749
Karen	Holmes	karen.vogan@gmail.com	
Katharine	Ingram	silverkat98@gmail.com	
Nancy	Kellogg	divinefarmer.nk@gmail.com	472-0516
Emily	Lanxner	emilylanxner@gmail.com	
Elijah	Lew-Smith	elgreysmith@gmail.com; elewsmith20@ossu.org	472-5084
Jessica	Manchester	jessicasmanchester@gmail.com	770-4278
Julie	Nichols	julienichols28@yahoo.com	472-5009
Michael	Reddy	reddymichaelj@hotmail.com	533-2296
Hannah	Schwartz	hannah@heartbeet.org	498-4180
Norma	Spaulding	nspauld@gmail.com	472-8724
Norma	Wiesen	r2wie2@yahoo.com	472-6517
Ron	Wiesen	r2wie2@yahoo.com	472-6517

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Open a Recreational Center and Expand Recreation Opportunities” Task Force

Visiting Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state. Their recommendations below encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS

- Recreational Programming:

It may be helpful to start by building programming rather than focus on space. That way, whatever programming proves to be popular and sustainable could help to inform what kind of building or space is actually needed.

The task force may want to start by focusing on a limited number of initiatives, perhaps three for the spring/summer, and really develop those. Additionally, the group could work to boost recreation opportunities that are more informal to allow folks to gather, have fun, and could provide early successes. Activities could include a community-wide kickball tournament that anyone can play without having to make a long-term commitment.

It could be helpful to visit with other communities that have built various models of recreational programs and facilities to learn what has worked well.

The task force may want to consider addressing transportation to and from activities to increase access and attendance.

One way to proceed could be to create a map of all of the existing outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities to share with residents and visitors.

The community could promote recreation opportunities online. The group could connect with the Town and the Chamber websites to see if there could be a space for recreation opportunities and to build this as a key feature of the town brand.

The group could build local buy-in for recreation through organized events and activities. Consider organizing fun outings such as the Halloween Ride that Local Motion organizes each year. Get local folks outdoors and having fun. Celebrate Hardwick's recreation assets together as a community and feature activities, music, and food.

- **Recreation Space and Facilities:**

Working with community partners such as the Center for an Agricultural Economy to obtain grant funding to support development of the granite shed building could be a great opportunity for community recreation. The granite shed building has the potential to be the heart of recreation in the community and could be funded through programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a Buildings and General Services Grant, and the Vermont Community Foundation. A site plan could potentially accommodate several of the aspects stated in the priority language.

In order to get a clear picture of current recreational spaces and facilities, the task force could conduct an inventory of existing resources and map them. Sometimes, location and accessibility can be as important as the facilities themselves.

It could be an important addition to the work ahead to include arts and cultural components in the development of community and recreational facilities.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE RECREATION TASK FORCE

- Recognizing the impacts that recreation and activities can have on reducing substance abuse in our communities, perhaps there are opportunities to apply for drug prevention funds for this work.
- The Vermont Recreation and Parks Association could be a great resource for learning from other recreation programs around the state and connecting with other volunteers and professionals. Benefits of membership to the Association include continuing education, leadership opportunities, networking and other resources. Contact Betsy Terry at 802-878-2077 or info@vrpa.org.
- The VT Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation is a great resource to contact with questions or technical support, and oversees grant programs that could be useful. Contact Jessica Savage,

Recreation Coordinator, at 802-828-1399 or Jessica.savage@vermont.gov or Craig Whipple, Director of State Parks at 802-828-1399 or craig.whipple@vermont.gov.

- Waterbury’s River of Light Lantern Parade is a great community building event that uses the arts to connect the school with the larger community. It has proven to be sustainable and has been replicated in a number of communities. You can learn more at <https://ariveroflightinwaterbury.wordpress.com/> or contact Gowri Savor at info@gowrisavor.com.
- The Vermont Arts Council’s Project Grants can be used to support activities that bring the arts to the center of the community (for example the community theater idea mentioned in the description of the priority). Contact Sarah Mutrax at smutrux@vermontartscouncil.org or 802-828-5425.
- The Recreation Director in Essex Junction could share successes from their programming and recreation center. Bradford and Brattleboro also have successful models:
 - Essex Junction Recreation and Parks Director, Brad Luck: recreation@ccsuvt.org or 802-878-1375
 - Parks and Recreation Director, Bonna Wieler: recreation@bradfordvt.us or 802-222-4727 ext 310
 - Brattleboro Boys and Girls Club Director, Beth Baldwin: bgcbrattleboro@gmail.com or 802-254-5990
- The Task Force could consider debt funding through Community Development Financial Institutions like NVDA, or could look to both Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital and Copley for community impact funds.
- The Vermont Mountain Bike Association could be a great resource and partner in bike trail development as well as a pump track. They can be reached at 802-342-7568.
- Funding Sources for outdoor recreation projects could include:
 - Vermont Community Foundation Small and Inspiring Grants for community building and civic engagement projects (Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup, 388-3355)
 - Ben & Jerry’s Foundation Community Action Team Grants
 - New England Grassroots Environment Fund grants for environmental or community organizing (603-905-9915)
 - Vermont Housing and Conservation Board Public Outdoor Recreation Grants (802-828-3250)



The task force working to “Open a Recreational Center and Expand Recreation Opportunities” met on Resource Day with a visiting resource team to begin to build a workplan.

✓ Task Force: Expand the Jeudevine Library Space and Services

Chairperson: **Jerina Page and the Jeudevine Library Trustees**

Facilitator: **Ben Doyle**, *USDA Rural Development*

Resource Leaders: **Paul Bruhn**, *Preservation Trust of Vermont*; **Amy Howlett**, *VT Department of Libraries*; **Karen Lane**, *Aldrich Public Library*

The Jeudevine Library, with its youth and adult programming, story hour programs, space for students after school, and internet access, is widely recognized as an asset and community resource in Hardwick. Many residents feel that an expansion of the library's space and services would be of benefit to the community and would provide more space for youth programs, community computer access, and even innovative services such as a tool and equipment exchange. A Library Expansion Task Force could lend strength and support to the effort already underway to expand the capacity and space of the library to better serve the Hardwick community.

Action Steps

1. Reconvene and expand the group to include other community members that would like to support a library expansion project.
2. Create a timeline with the group starting with where the project currently stands, what still needs to be done, and depending on what is feasible, projected dates for phased completion.
3. Create a communications plan to inform and engage the community around the project. Create a video showing need, provide scheduled updates via Front Porch Forum, and share information in the Hardwick Gazette.
4. Explore opportunities and write grant for fundraising a feasibility study to identify fundraising strategies and potential donors.
5. Convene a meeting of potential funders (Preservation Trust, USDA Rural Development, and Vermont Arts Council) to clearly understand the funding opportunities.

Resources

1. Misty Sinsigalli, Community Programs Specialist, USDA Rural Development, misty.sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov, 802-748-2641 ext) 122
2. Ben Doyle, CED Specialist, USDA Rural Development, benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov, 802-828-6042
3. Paul Bruhn, Executive Director, Preservation Trust of Vermont, paul@ptvermont.org, 802-343-0595
4. Lisa Ryan, Field Service Representative, Preservation Trust of Vermont, lisa@ptvermont.org, 802-917-2994
5. Michele Bailey, Senior Program Director, [mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org](mailto:m Bailey@vermontartscouncil.org), 802-828-3294
6. Martha Reid, Vermont State Librarian, Martha.reid@vermont.gov, 802-828-3265

Task Force Signups

Kathy	Ciarimboli	kathyciarimboli@gmail.com	473-2330
Diane	Grenkow	jeudevineyouthlibrarian@hardwickvt.org	472-5948
David	Gross	tracydave@comcast.net	472-3139

Perry	Heller	aphoto100@yahoo.com	472-1727
George	Hemmens	ghemmens@vtlink.net	
Steve	Jenne	vtnative3@yahoo.com	472-7003
Emily	Lanxner	emilylanxner@gmail.com	
Jodi	Lew-Smith	jlewsmith@ezcloud.com	472-5084
Kathleen	Mahurin-Volk	kathleenvolk@comcast.net	472-5950
Susan	O'Connell	bayleyhazen@vtelwireless.com	
Jerina	Page	jpage59@gmail.com	828-246-4949
John	Page	jpgiddler@gmail.com	

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Expand the Jeudevine Library Space and Services” Task Force

Visiting Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state. Their recommendations below encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS

- The task force could survey the community to identify priorities for the library.
- It may be helpful to clarify roles so that there are not parallel efforts, and energy and efforts are not divided. The group may want to clarify, along with the Board of Trustees, what the ways are that the task force members can become engaged and support the work that is already underway.
- It could be helpful to analyze the makeup of the library patrons and understand the scope of impact.
- The idea mentioned at Community Visit Day around the library providing unique services such as business incubation assistance and becoming a tool lending library was a great one.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE LIBRARY EXPANSION TASK FORCE

- The Vermont Humanities Council could be a resource to help in expanding programming. Contact Amy Cunningham, Director of Community Programs, at 802-262-1356 or acunningham@vermonthumanities.org.
- The Vermont Department of Libraries could be a key resource and may be able to assist the community as they move forward. Contact Martha Reid at martha.reid@vermont.gov, 802-828-3265, or Amy Howlett at amy.howlett@vermont.gov.
- The Onion River Exchange in Montpelier could be a good contact to learn more about their tool and time exchange program. Contact Heather Kralik, Outreach Coordinator, Onion River Exchange, info@orexchange.org, 802-661-8959.
- USDA Rural Development offers a Community Facilities Program for grant/loan options for expanding the building. Contact Misty Sinsigalli, Loan Specialist, misty.sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov or 802.748.8746 X122.

- Contact Michele Bailey, Program Manager at the Vermont Arts Council about the Cultural Facilities Program used to support library expansion. Michelle is at mbailey@vermontartscouncil.org or 802-828-3294.
- It may be helpful to research other successful library expansions in communities of similar size. Poultney is currently expanding their library using USDA Rural Development Loan and Grant program. Rebecca Cook is the Library Director and can be reached at ppl5556@yahoo.com or 802-287-5556.
- Other libraries who have been through recent expansions could help frame next steps forward: Morristown Centennial Library, the Waterbury Public Library, and the Lanpher Library in Hyde Park.



Jenna Whitson reviewed the Visioning Survey with community members on Resource Day.

✓ Task Force: Enhance Hardwick's Downtown and Build a Business and Economic Development Network

Chairperson: **Jim Lovinsky**

Facilitator: **Lucy Leriche** (VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development)

Resource Leaders: **Paul Bruhn** (Preservation Trust of Vermont), **Gary Holloway**, (VT Dept of Housing and Community Development), **Doug Morton** (NVDA), **Dave Snedeker** (NVDA)

Hardwick is a community with many key economic assets including a strong business community, an industrial park, the Center for an Agricultural Economy, a strong downtown core, a supportive town government and municipal leaders, and its central location at the junction of several major roadways. However, residents and business leaders feel that more could be done to improve tourism and lodging opportunities, improve and expand industrial park space, unite the business community, and enhance Hardwick's downtown. A Hardwick Business and Economic Development Network could form to draw on community members and outside experts to bring strategic business growth to Hardwick's downtown and industrial park and advance development and jobs in town. Recognizing the downtown as a key economic asset, the group could also bring support and energy to the Hardwick Downtown Commission's work towards downtown improvements and becoming a designated downtown. The Network could work with community members and outside experts including NVDA to identify funding opportunities and a strategic plan to enhance Hardwick's downtown focusing on improving parking availability, biking, walkability, beautification of the downtown, accessibility, river access, and signage to redesign the downtown area to meet community needs, boost viability of downtown businesses, and attract visitors and new business to the town. The Hardwick Business Network could also work to identify funding to hire a point person for economic development that could support the committee in marketing Hardwick as a destination for businesses that fit the needs, values, and vision for Hardwick's economic future.

Priority Action Steps

1. Pursue Downtown Designation for Hardwick.
 - a. Work with NVDA to complete grant application to hire a consultant and for help towards obtaining 501c3 status. 501c3 status will help to receive donations and funding, build membership, write town grants, and gain support and investment from local bank.
 - b. Work with NVDA to conduct a walkability and transportation study for the downtown.
 - c. Write a letter to businesses and residents explaining the project and proposal.
 - d. Conduct face to face interviews on the benefits and challenges for downtown businesses.
 - e. Work with the State to complete the application process.
2. Pursue Industrial Park development. Identify opportunities to expand available land for development and work with the town to expand town owned land or facilities. Look in to funding opportunities such as the Northern Borders Regional Commission grant.
3. Address Parking in the Downtown.
 - a. Take an inventory of available spots, how parking is used during the day, and possible additional locations to get an actual count of availability and need.
 - b. Look into having local employees park elsewhere.
 - c. Develop signage for available parking.

Other Action Ideas

1. Build a business to business directory.
2. Explore opportunities to expand lodging options. Look into collective advertising and identify who has spaces available for lodging.
3. Improve delivery access to businesses in the downtown.
4. Conduct a transportation assessment.
5. Apply for a Municipal Planning Grant to conduct either a Downtown Master Plan or a Transportation/Walkability Multi Model Study to include pedestrian, biking, and river access in addition to parking.



Resources

1. Heart of VT Chamber has a business directory and will be an organizational resource.
2. Preservation Trust of VT
3. Smart Growth Vermont
4. Vermont Arts Council
5. NVDA can be a partner in conducting traffic and walkability studies and accessing grants and funding.
6. Northern Borders Regional Commission could be a grant opportunity.
7. The Agency of Transportation could be a good source for transportation grants.
8. The Hardwick Downtown Commission.

Task Force Contacts

Paulette	Brochu-Colburn	mpbrochucolburn@gmail.com	472-6619
Joe	Brosseau	jpbinv@yahoo.com	343-7856
Shari	Cornish	shari@sharicornish.com	472-7163
Evan	Donovan	edonovan6938@gmail.com	274-0281
Stephanie	Fraser	sfraser@igc.org	225-8366
Larry	Hamel	lwhamel@aol.com	917-2886
Lise	Hamel	lshamel2@gmail.com	472-6350
Perry	Heller	aphoto100@yahoo.com	472-1727
Sue	Holmes	holmesue@aol.com	472-6228
Jon	Jewett	jon.jewett@hardwickvt.org	472-6120
Rachel	Kane	rkane@vtlink.net	472-6021
Nancy	Kellogg	divinefarmer.nk@gmail.com	472-0516
Emily	Lanxner	emilylanxner@gmail.com	
Kristen	Leahy	zoning.administrator@hardwickvt.org	
Jim	Lovinsky	jim@lovinsky.net	
Mary Ellen	Lovinsky	maryellen.lovinsky@gmail.com	472-9428
Tracy	Martin	tracydave@comcast.net	

Gary	Michaels	gary.michaels@gmail.com	472-7137
Helm	Nottermann	helmut.nottermann@uvm.edu	472-6135
Jim	Nudd		472-5497
Eric	Remick	eric.remick@hardwickvt.org	472-8025
Joe	Rivard	jrivard919@gmail.com	498-4523
Maria	Roosevelt	chamber@heartofvt.com	472-5906

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Enhance Hardwick’s Downtown and Build a Business and Economic Development Network” Task Force

Visiting Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state. Their recommendations below encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS

- The group could work with NVDA to develop a needs based planning-specific “wish list” or implementation strategy. This would identify what planning processes have already occurred, which plans are current, where the gaps and needs are, and help to prioritize action steps.
- The town may want to hire a consultant to act as an interim downtown coordinator, as well as focus on community and economic development. This individual could help establish a downtown board and structure, identify funding sources for maintaining the organization, organize downtown campaigns and promotional events, and recruit volunteers to serve on the working committee. A freestanding organization committed to the downtown is an important component of the Downtown Designation process and can also return substantial benefit to the community in the long-term.
- In creating a downtown organization, it may be beneficial to include a broad range of stakeholders including community leaders, business owners, and interested citizens. Some important components of Main Street revitalization include promotion, design, business support and economic restructure, and organization support and leadership.
- The task force could consider creating a downtown niche that leverages the local food and agribusiness that Hardwick has become known for. It could be a huge draw to maintain a bricks-and-mortar presence like the NEK Tasting Center.
- It may be useful to leverage Hardwick’s unique world-renowned brand as the center of the sustainable agriculture movement. A marketing awareness campaign among local businesses could be a relatively inexpensive way to leverage Hardwick’s unique food culture.
- The town could structure a team to provide technical support to new and expanding businesses, identify unserved markets, and develop a ways to track the circulation of local dollars. The committee could include bankers, economic development specialists, and business owners.
- It may be beneficial to coordinate and collaborate beyond Hardwick to identify consumer and visitor needs, perhaps partnering with Craftsbury, Greensboro, Walden, and Woodbury.

- The task force may want to think about the story that Hardwick wants to tell and then start sharing it. Is the message really, “the town that food saved?” or is there another way to shape a narrative so that it includes more people and makes the downtown a destination?
- Members of the task force could visit similarly sized communities in Vermont who have undergone community and economic revitalization efforts over the past 10-15 years, and meet with the key people in those communities who could explain how they accomplished what they have. Some examples of these communities could include Vergennes, Barre, Bristol, White River Junction, and Bellows Falls.
- The task force could create a clear vision of what downtown Hardwick could look like in 10 years. What types of businesses are there? What jobs are available? What are the pedestrian elements in the town, and what does the riverfront look like? This sketch could be used to then determine the strategies and tasks that would need to occur to reach that vision. A budget could be developed for the level of investment needed for each aspect of this vision which would serve as the foundation for a funding strategy. It may also be important to review the town plan and zoning ordinances to ensure that the vision being created is in alignment with them. If not, it may be useful to update the town plan and ordinances to enable the vision in the long-term.
- In networking businesses and considering economic development strategies, it could be beneficial to include all types of business owners from forestry to real estate, to small shops, farms, and auto dealers in the conversation. Rather than segregate into groups, it could be useful to come together to at least understand each other’s needs and desires. Non-profits could be a good addition to the mix as well.
- A hired consultant or planner could help to find the best, most efficient, and most effective methods for both aesthetic and practical results for the Downtown. The object could be to make Hardwick’s downtown a great place to live, work, and play for residents, but this will also draw in visitors to the town.
- If a goal is to increase tourism and visitors to the town, it may be helpful to invite travel or food industry writers to the town and comp them meals or rooms to highlight the businesses in the area.
- The town could work towards a Complete Streets policy and then follow up with a Complete Streets implementation plan to could include sidewalk maintenance and new construction in town, convenient bike parking at key locations in town, signage in town for pedestrians, and mapping. Input could also be gathered from locals about what the key bicycling networks should be and then a map could be developed to list prioritized corridors.
- An inventory could be conducted of the existing sidewalk network that notes the current condition as well as any accessibility issues. Some planning could be done around gaps in the network and prioritization for repair and maintenance.
- The group could identify a small group of serial entrepreneurs with means who agree to make local investments in improving existing building infrastructure and supporting younger entrepreneurs trying to get established.
- Developing some way for the entire community to contribute to town transformation could be powerful. Some ideas include volunteer work days to clean up the river front or small community fundraisers to restore or improve downtown for new plantings, benches, or picnic tables.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE DOWNTOWN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

- Gary Holloway is the Downtown Program Coordinator at ACCD. He is available to help with Downtown Designation, organizational development, strategic planning and other technical assistance. Contact him at gary.holloway@vermont.gov or 802-828-3220.
- Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) is a key resource for planning and economic development strategies. Contact Alison Low, Senior Planner at alow@nvda.net or 802-424-1418.
- USDA Rural Development staff could help to develop a strong Rural Business Development Grant application to fund the formation of a downtown association. USDA RD can work with applicants and NVDA to make sure the application is as competitive as possible. Grants can be used to pay salaries, purchase equipment, conduct feasibility studies, or buy equipment for activities that connect to job creation in small business. Contact Susie Poland at susan.poland@vt.usda.gov or 802-828-6002.
- The ACCD Funding Directory offers information on funding options including grant timelines, funding specifics, and general eligibility: www.accd.vermont.gov. NVDA and ACCD can help to navigate grant options and develop a planning needs list.
- The Walk Your City templates could be a useful tool to put up signs with walking times to key destinations. <https://walkyourcity.org/>
- The Vermont Community Development Program has municipal planning grants available in the past to support the creation of downtown organizations (including St. Johnsbury and Newport). Contact Cindy Blondin, Grants Specialist, at cindy.blondin@vermont.gov or at 802-828-5219.
- Municipal Planning Grants are available for a Downtown Master Plan or other implementation plan to help support town capital improvement plans and other future planning goals. Contact Annina Seiler for more information at annina.seiler@vermont.gov or 802-828-1848.
- Potential investment sources could include: Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC), the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA), Vermont Community Loan Fund, or The Farm Fund at the Center for an Agricultural Economy.
- The NEK Collaborative could be an opportunity to network with neighboring communities and leverage opportunities for regional funding www.nekcollaborative.org
- Joel Schwartz, formerly of St. Johnsbury and now of Barre Area Development, Inc. to learn about best practices around hiring downtown coordinators or economic development specialists. Contact him at 802-476-0660. Patricia Sears of NEKTI Consulting and former economic development director in Newport could be a good resource as well. Contact her at 802-258-0873 or trish@kingdomcommons.com.
- Network with the Vermont Community Development Association and attend quarterly meetings to discuss best practices and study other successful models. Contact Mary Miller at mpmiller2@gmail.com or visit www.vtcd.org.
- The Small Business Development Center could be a resource to help existing and new entrepreneurs. Contact rhart@vtsbdc.org or 802-748-1014.

- State of Vermont Tourism and Marketing could be a partner in discussing ways to market Hardwick as a destination. Their online itineraries could be an opportunity to look into. Contact Steven Cook at steven.cook@vermont.gov or 802-522-2896.
- The Northern Borders Regional Commission Economic and Infrastructure Development Grant Program could offer up to \$250,000 to support a variety of economic and infrastructure improvements helping to add jobs in the area. For more information contact Jared Duval at ACCD at jared.duval@vermont.gov or at 802-272-2461.
- Tax Credits could be available for building façade improvements, ADA accessibility improvements, code improvements and technology upgrades. Contact Caitlin Corkins at ACCD at Caitlin.corkins@vermont.gov or at 802-828-3047.
- Contact Gary Holloway to learn more about Downtown Transportation Grants that could be available once downtown designation is achieved. This could help fund transportation related projects such as streetscape improvements, lighting, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, way-finding signage, ADA accessibility improvements, etc. Email gary.holloway@vermont.gov or call 802-828-3220.
- The Strong Communities Better Connections Program could fund transportation investments that build community resilience. Contact Jacki Cassino at VTrans at Jackie.cassino@vermont.gov or at 802-272-2368.
- VTrans offers a Transportation Alternative Program to help fund scoping studies and design and implementation for bicycle and pedestrian construction projects. Contact Scott Robertson at scott.robertson@vermont.gov or 802-828-5799.
- VTrans also offers a Bicycle and Pedestrian Program that can help support scoping studies and design and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian construction projects. Contact Jon Kaplan at jon.kaplan@vermont.gov or 802-828-0059.
- Preservation Trust could be a resource for preservation projects or other community initiatives. Contact Paul Bruhn at paul@ptvermont.org or at 802-658-6647
- The Vermont Arts Council's Project Grants can be used to support community projects that brings the arts to the center of the community. Contact Sarah Mutrux at the Vermont Arts Council for more information at smutrux@vermontartscouncil.org or 802-828-5425.
- The Heart of Vermont Chamber is an important partner in this effort. Contact Maria Roosevelt at 802-472-5906.
- The National Complete Streets Coalition could be a good resource for materials and support. Learn more at www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets. There is also a Complete Streets Guide for Vermont that can be accessed through www.healthvermont.gov.
- Good guidance around best practice of bike rack placement can be found on the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professional's website at www.apbp.org.

✓ Task Force: Build a School and Community Partnership and Develop Mentorship and Career Building Opportunities for Hardwick Youth

Chairpeople: **Amy Holloway and Clara Lew-Smith**

Facilitator: **Paul Costello** (VCRD)

Resource Leaders: **Chad Butt**, (Mobius), **Sherry Lussier** (GMTCC), **Lauren Traister** (UVM Extension)

Hardwick residents would like to build a better connection between students in the Hardwick schools and the greater community. A Hardwick School and Community Partnership could work to “bring the school into the community and the community into the school” by expanding ways to get students into learning and community service activities in town and get Hardwick residents into the school to help enrich diverse student experiences. Recognizing the new educational requirements around Personalized Learning Plans and community service as well as the numerous and diverse skills in the community, residents see an opportunity to better connect the schools and youth with the community and improve career development through mentorship and internship opportunities. A Hardwick School and Community Partnership which includes members of the community, students, the Hardwick schools and the Supervisory Union could form to identify opportunities to build a stronger connection between the school and the community. The Partnership could develop a career development network, pairing students with skilled mentors in the community, internship opportunities in local businesses and organizations, and other career development opportunities such as college fairs, job fairs, and visits to college and tech center campuses.

Action Steps

1. Build an inventory of skills, talents, businesses and organizations that could offer training or short educational enrichment experiences. The inventory can serve as a talent pool for a system of skill sharing, like a match.com or e-mentor for community skill sharing that can include students, home schoolers and adults throughout the community.
2. Work with the schools on an inventory of all the work the schools are already leading that bring the community into the school and the school into the community including apprenticeships, mentoring, community service and other activities. The Task Force can help publicize all this activity.
3. Take a hard look at ways to improve transportation options the can help student connect to programming outside of school hours, like a late bus.
4. Help renew and rebuild a Mentorship Program for the elementary school. Work with skilled technical assistance from Mobius to set protocols that provide for safety and appropriate oversight of Mentorship and Apprenticeship opportunities.
5. There are service learning classes and a Middle School Community Unit that could the Task Force could help connect more effectively to the community and the group could provide key outreach assistance in the development of the annual Career Fair.
6. As a bridge between school and community leadership, develop a strategic communications plan to build momentum and engagement. This could start with the group setting up a liaison with the Hardwick Gazette and working toward an ongoing section of the paper highlighting school news, student stories and student-led writing and articles.

7. Define the difference between mentorships and apprenticeships and encourage both as part of the enrichment of student and community experiences for the future. Some expanded apprenticeships and other learning opportunities could be available to home schoolers. There are opportunities for on-farm and food business apprenticeships that could be expanded, and so many other vocational apprenticeships that could be created.
8. Work with the high school to develop a speakers program to bring talented community members and people of diverse businesses and vocations to tell their stories and experiences as part of the school enrichment activities. Help build a calendar of these presentations. It may also want to develop other multi-generational events.
9. Host a business symposium in the schools that would help the schools share all that they are doing to help students be prepared for the world of work, and let business people think about what they need and what they can offer to enrich student experiences and preparation.

Resources

1. The Hardwick Gazette is a key community asset that should be invited to partner in this effort.
2. HCTV also could join this task force, providing opportunities for student and community voices and information sharing to move these initiatives forward.
3. Mobius, Vermont’s Mentoring Partnership, can provide technical assistance, can help identify sources of funding for Mentoring Programs, and can leverage peer coaching to support the development of mentoring programs.
4. South Burlington Schools and Twinfield’s Renaissance Program are excellent models that members of the Task Force can investigate or visit.
5. Hardwick Civic Groups can be critical partners: the Chamber of Commerce, churches, clubs and organizations.
6. The team may need funding, grants and volunteers to optimize these efforts.
7. The Center for an Agricultural Economy is a critical resource connecting Farm to School, VT Feed, partnering businesses and farms, and the Youth Entrepreneurial Institute
8. UVM’s Extension has business funding that could support student entrepreneurship.
9. The Teens Training Youth program
10. Heartbeat and its developing Community Center
11. Green Mountain Training and Career Center is a critically important partner, especially for working lands training and apprenticeships.
12. The Craftsbury Outdoor Center, Sterling College, Greensboro Performance Center, Circus Smirkus, and G.R.A.C.E. could all be partners with skills and opportunities to share.
13. The Reach after school program is an important partner.
14. 4 H can also provide activities and has regional funds for youth programs.

Task Force Contacts

Orise	Ainsworth	orisea@aol.com	917-4136
Helen	Beattie	hnbeattie@gmail.com	472-5127
Kate	Bertolini	kbertolini@ossu.org	472-2105
Joe	Brosseau	jpbinvt@yahoo.com	343-7856
Sequoya	Cheyenne	sequoyacheyenne@gmail.com	
Kathy	Ciarimboli	kathyciarimboli@gmail.com	473-2330
Elizabeth	Dow	edow1@earthlink.net	472-6424

Edie	Dunn	edunn@ossu.org	472-5411
Jonathon	Flint	jon@heartbeet.org	472-3088
Jean	Hackett	jhackett88@comcast.net	472-6213
Amy	Holloway	amyrholloway@yahoo.com	535-8871
David	Kelley	davidkelley05602@gmail.com	
Emily	Lanxner	emilylanxner@gmail.com	
Joanne	Leblanc	jleblanc@ossu.org	472-3210
Elijah	Lew-Smith	elgreysmith@gmail.com; elewsmith20@ossu.org	472-5084
Jodi	Lew-Smith	jlewsmith@ezcloud.com	472-5084
Clara	Lew-Smith	clewsmith18@ossu.org	
Kelly	Locke	klocke@ossu.org	472-2119
Chris	Miller	cmiller@ossu.org	472-2162
Nicole	Miller	nmiller@ossu.org	472-2523
Mike	Moriarty	mmoriarty@ossu.org	472-2198
Monica	Morrissey	mmorrissey@ossu.org	793-0242
Nancy	Nottermann	nancysnugvalley@gmail.com	472-6185
Susan	O'Connell	bayleyhazen@vtelwireless.com	
Rylan	O'Connell	rylanoc@gmail.com	472-5879
Lynn	Patenaude	lpatenaude@ossu.org	472-2105
Peter	Peltz	peter@peterpeltz.com	472-6524
Brianne	Ragno	brianneragno@gmail.com	730-3517
Katrina	Razionale	kvahedi@gmail.com	
Rachel	Stevens	rachelstevens21@gmail.com	
Sarah	Vecci	sarah.vecci@gmail.com	
Judy	Waible	jwaible@myfairpoint.net	533-9894
Sarah	Waring	sarah@hardwickagriculture.org	472-5362

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations for the “Build a School and Community Partnership and Develop Mentorship and Career Building Opportunities for Hardwick Youth” Task Force

Visiting Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state. Their recommendations below encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community’s unique assets and needs. Resource Team members are eager to support the Task Forces as they begin their work.

POTENTIAL ACTION STEPS

- The group may want to communicate with school leadership to ensure that they are involved and connected to the effort. The School Board may also be an important group to connect with and include in the work.

- A series of community forums on topics of interest could be a good strategy to build awareness and increase participation. Topics could include farm to school, healthy communities, homeschool/school partnerships, and more.
- The task force could help spread the word about great work going on in the school and in the community by sharing positive stories with the local press.
- It might be beneficial to look for opportunities to build a connection between homeschooled students, the school, and the community.
- This group, perhaps in partnership with the new recreation task force and the Hardwick Trails Committee could take on the improvement of the trail system behind the school. Hardwick could identify trail work projects in town and other recreational areas and work on them together as a community on an annual basis.
- It seems that lack of transportation could lead to a lack of access to extra-curricular activities. Perhaps the task force could explore transportation solutions such as a late bus for transportation from the school.
- It could be helpful to start this work with an analysis of the current situation facing Hardwick youth to establish a baseline of indicators such as academic attainment, high school graduation rates, higher education enrollment, extracurricular engagement, career development opportunities, crime, substance abuse, and more. Then the group could consider how they want those indicators to change over time with their interventions. This can help to better direct strategies, attract volunteer mentors, and track progress.
- Bringing all segments of the community together regardless of income, education level, or length of residency is important. This may need to be a facilitated process, at least initially, and may take more than one meeting to build the initial level of trust that will allow different parts of the community to come together and work towards a common goal.
- The task force could create a site plan or map for Hardwick that shows the current and desired resources as principal “activity nodes.” For example, recreation, learning, meeting, business, culture, or just casual interaction. Putting this on a map could surface issues and opportunities that looking at these separately would likely miss. It could help to galvanize community efforts and eliminate any competing or duplicating efforts. It also recognizes the fundamental interconnectedness of everything that happens on the ground in a small community.
- The task force could explore successful models of extracurricular programming, including afterschool enrichment activities. One great example is the 21st Century program out of the Caledonia Central Supervisory Union.
- The group could develop a shared community calendar so that community events are coordinated and publicized.
- Hosting public events could be a way to reintroduce and involve all parties.
- The town could coordinate a program where community leaders are paired with a high school student as a mentor. These teams could then gather together once a month to work on a list of priorities in the community. This could create momentum for a long list of initiatives, engage young people, and involve local leaders.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP TASK FORCE

- The Agency of Education could be a resource. The Secretary could be invited to come to town and be a part of fostering this partnership and improving opportunity for students. Hardwick could express the desire to be a leader in the state for excellent and innovative education and ask for help in making it happen. Contact Rebecca Holcombe, Secretary of Education at 802-479-1060 or Heather Bouchey at heather.bouchey@vermont.gov or 802-479-1030.
- The Vermont School Boards Association can help strengthen the school board. Contact Harry Frank, Director of Education Services at hfrank@vtvsba.org or 800-244-8722.
- Mobius, Vermont's state-wide mentoring organization, is a great resource. The Executive Director, Chad Butt, has his finger on the pulse of all the mentoring organizations and models working in Vermont. They may also have funding to support mentoring activities. Contact Chad at chad@mobiusmentors.org or at 802-658-1888.
- The Vermont Community Foundation's Small and Inspiring Grants can fund projects that build innovative partnerships between the school and the community. Contact Christopher Kaufman-Ilstrup, Senior Philanthropic Advisor, at cilstrup@vermontvf.org or at 802-388-3355 ext 295.
- Helen Beattie, a Hardwick local, and Executive Director of UP for Learning is a great resource to help bring young people and adults to the table as partners to design and implement this initiative. Contact UP for Learning at 802-472-5127 or at info@upforlearning.com.
- Vermont Afterschool, Inc. could be a great resource to help with afterschool programming and other youth enrichment programs. Executive Director Holly Morehouse can be reached at 802-448-3464 or at hollymorehouse@vermontafterschool.org.
- Vermont Youth Conservation Corps could be a great partner in finding funding for conservation project jobs in the community and could be a resource in thinking about ways to engage youth in the community. Contact the VYCC at info@vycc.org or by calling 1-800-639-8922.
- Victor Prussack from the Burlington School District would be a great contact for some advice on connecting schools and the community. Victor is the coordinator of the Magnet Schools for the district and has helped form partnerships with the BCA and the Flynn as well as Shelburne Farms and countless other local organizations. He can be reached at 802-864-8475.



The "Build a School and Community Partnership and Develop Mentorship and Career Building Opportunities for Hardwick Youth" task force group on Resource Day.

VIII. The Town Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 130 Hardwick residents and the VCRD Visiting Team on January 20 2016

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.

Housing, Health & Safety

Visiting Team: Will Belongia, Megan Camp, Jill Chapman (scribe), Dr. Harry Chen, Ben Doyle, Harry Frank, Trisha Ingalls, Margaret McCoy, Michelle Salvador, John Sayles (facilitator)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Safety has improved. There was a community forum a couple of months ago on safety. People are happy with Rescue and Police. They are more comfortable after dark than in recent past. There is less trouble on Main St.
- The Town makeup has changed. We are losing some of our young families.
- Police report indicates that most arrests are from driving without a license (maybe a sign of poverty?), so the feeling is Hardwick is a pretty safe place.
- We are fortunate to have a Primary Care and two dental practices.
- We are lucky to have an active group of people doing preventive work with exercise, wellness, food, and diet.
- There are many new and rehabbed apartments. We have a pretty good inventory and homes are relatively cheap.
- We have quite a few affordable housing units from Lamoille Housing Partnership. However, many are not actually very affordable.
- There is a good range of economic diversity throughout the town.
- The Flood plain in a residential area is a challenge. There is good housing stock, but affordability is factor. We have seen very positive changes over the years recently. Lamoille Housing Partnership has had an impact on Main St. where we've had an outstanding improvement. Cherry St. is a Multi-Family Housing project.
- The Coop is an asset to the community.
- There is a building above the Gagnon studio where he rents out very small apartments, but affordable. It meets that niche that many towns don't have. The same person also owns a place on opposite side of Post Office.
- A former builder wonders how many apart,emt units are in Hardwick. How many are Rural Edge or Lamoille Housing Partnership? There are good, safe places for people to live. There are also some extremely unsafe places. How many are subsidized and how many private?
- There is an incredible chiropractic healing practice. It's magic.
- It feels safe sending children downtown and there are neighbors are looking out for them.
- One resident had a sister with MS who had issues with falling. She could call specific members of rescue squad for help. It was remarkable.
- There are people who are real assets such as the Public Service officer for the Selectboard, Larry Hamel.

What are the Challenges?

- Housing is a challenge. There needs to be a way to live in affordable housing with others, inter-generational and with the ability to grow food.
- Numerous people are hit in the cross walk near coop. We needs a "walk light."
- We need to eliminate parking spaces to allow for better cross walks.
- Four years ago, there was a special investigation unit for Caledonia County that specialized in investigating sexual assaults. When they address problems, you see an uptick in reporting. Now, there is better reporting and services for clients. We see a huge jump against domestic violence. There was a week-long training in Burlington to better handle domestic violence. Again, we saw uptick in reporting. We need a new program to better investigate.
- Single women on social security are an overlooked population. Ideally there would be single units available with a community room that are well lit.
- Co-housing in Burlington is expensive, but they pulled it off. The wait list is long and it is not very affordable. But they do have a lot of subsidies and some affordable homes with community facilities and community gardens.
- Need people to help people figure out Social Security and Medicare. One resident tried to volunteer her time to help but was told they needed to be an employee of one of the agencies.

- Need 20 acres of land in Hardwick for housing for mixed age, mixed income, gardens. One resident owns land in town, has approached Housing Trust people but they are not interested.
- The Hardwick Trails are amazing as a place to walk. Can walk around for 5 hours. You can also walk the halls of Hazen after school, or use the commercial gym.
- Walking the sidewalks is not easy or safe. There is a gorgeous walk behind florist. It is on private property with a public right of way. There is a concern about liability and the owner doesn't want vehicles down there. That is why it is posted.
- There is a lack of help with people with mental health issues. Police hands are tied. Land lords don't help. There are subsidized houses, so mentally ill are in the community which is fine, but there are no safeguards and no one to call to help. Public safety said mental health is not health – this is not enough for when a neighbor needs help. Like you can call DCF

- if you see a child in trouble. Whole point of putting mentally ill people in community, is they should have support.
- State agencies have an on-call emergency team and hotline that is on the state website. Part of the issue is confidentiality and another issue is transportation.
- Police officers are not trained to make the determination about how to deal with a mental health crisis. It must be a mental health worker but there are not enough mental health workers. Hardwick is on the edge of counties and service areas. Law enforcement want to do the right thing but are frustrated – people turn to them and their hands are tied.
- Mental health issue is huge in many communities.
- Also children are classified as “under trauma.” Supervisory Union covers 4 counties. Hardwick is left out.
- Can't get the attention from Montpelier, Newport, St. Johnsbury or Morrisville. We are on the edge of everything.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We should develop a mental health committee in the town.
- It is difficult to find affordable housing for offenders. The plan is to get the, back in the community where they came from. Restorative justice.
- Attention to mental health issues.
- Buy Jim's land for affordable housing community.
- Kayak festival is great.
- Identify resources to help people upgrade housing under Section 8 or another program.
- We have to consider the cost of tax base and the lack of economic development. The more affordable housing that comes in, it means the rest are bearing the tax burden.
- There is a huge need to give ex-convicts opportunities outside of their communities so they don't relapse. We need to separate them from the dysfunction of home communities.
- We need a healthy economy.

- How can we sustain ourselves from within? So we are not on the edge on everyone's service list?
- Hardwick has history of not supporting business due to permitting issues. People complain about mall-type or big box stores, but that's what's affordable for many families. Now we have to go to Morrisville or Burlington to shop. It would help other local businesses. If you build it they will come.
- There is land available – it would take a tremendous amount of money to do something with it. It is too much money for the property owner personally and does not want to see other developers come into it.
- Slum land lords are drawn to large affordable buildings. We need to address this issue in Hardwick – perhaps it's a matter of a zoning change. We are struggling to pay taxes because of the wrong mix of affordable housing.
- SASH at Maple St. could be expanded to help Seniors age in place.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Cross walk safety is an important and doable action step.
- You have shared very insightful perspectives on mental health issues and the relationship to other issues.
- Housing is working well, but there are mismatches – it is not affordable enough. The elderly population are not meeting their needs. There could be potential for a housing needs assessment.
- Seniors have expressed that they want housing to be more creative.
- I heard a lot of people agreeing. I grew up in Sutton, heard a lot about Hardwick growing up and it is so positive now.

- The location and distance from county seats creates confusion and gaps. Where does Hardwick sit is a real issue. There is confusion in Hardwick and where to turn and then when services are found, they are far away. These are big obstacles.
- It would be helpful to see the numbers – to look at a grand List and what is subsidized to see where we are and the impact on other issues and services. NVDA has those numbers.
- There are 1401 units, 14% rented, 86% owner-occupied. 18% vacant, both second homes and homes not habitable.

Youth

Visiting Team: Ted Brady, Paul Costello (facilitator), Minner Hobbs, Ellen Kahler, Jolinda LaClair, Lucy Leriche, Allison Low, Jenny Nelson (scribe), Carl Powden, Buzz Schmidt, Gus Seelig, Lars Torres

What are the Assets in this Area?

- There is a small park for little league, another park for baseball, soccer, basketball program from Kindergarten up.
- Sports are very strong and represent good activities, but there is much less going on for young people who are not interested in sports teams.
- There is a strong Forestry program with GMTC in Hyde Park that includes 15 students.
- We trade students with another school.
- The Library kids room is an asset and older students walk in to look for space to study or hang out...there is not enough space.
- AWARE
- Hardwick has enthusiastic kids.
- Kids collected clothes for refugees and felt great doing community service...but there aren't many systematic ways for them to volunteer or contribute today.
- The recreation committee is challenged to fund recreation within town budget but is very active and thinking about next steps.
- We have a new town recreation staff person for 10 hours a week.
- We have Farm to School at elementary school but much less happening around food at the high school.
- The Center of the Agricultural Economy is working in a positive way with the schools.
- The NEK Arts Council at Town House built a stage in last couple of years and that facility has seen steady progress.
- We have a Restorative Justice program as well as youth shelters, and family services are available out of Morrisville.
- There are part time farm jobs for high school students.
- There is a summer swim program: Hardwick owns the beach at Caspian Lake.
- Kids On the Move teaches healthy habits.
- We have Hardwick Lake with hiking trails though it is not used much...it's not really a swimming place.
- McLam Pond Beach
- Hardwick Trails are pretty extensive and some young people use them; some teacher take classes out.
- Kids in the athletic programs seem connected but some seem to fall through the cracks.
- Kids are proud of Hardwick schools.
- Youth like being involved. Have been involved in Atkins Field and in building raised beds for the Community Garden. They were proud of doing good work for the community.
- There are Summer programs through the Friends of the Library endowment.
- Hardwick spring festival brings out kids and there is an opportunity to engage young people in helping to organize it in future years.
- The Pumpkin walk is also fun and HS volunteers are important in setting it up.
- There is a Cooperative program – mentoring with pay for students.

What are the Challenges?

- With sports, there is no time for anything else.
- Internet access is limited.
- Access and affordability of internet is limited and there are not enough computers in the library.
- Limited hours of school library being open.
- Limited hotspots for wifi in town.
- Not money for devices and spaces where you can connect and be able to concentrate and develop good study habits.
- To young people Hardwick can seem a long way from anywhere.
- We could concentrate on alienation and disengagement, which affects many Hardwick youth, or more on the positive activities that could make the town more interesting and fun for them.
- We don't offer enough to keep kids occupied/ don't have resources.
- Some activities may not be the wisest.
- Cafeteria seating in group/separation starting in 4th grade based on different groups of kids, different socio-economic positions.
- Where do you fit the disenfranchised? That's how some young people feel.
- There is isolation due to distance. There are transportation needs.
- There is a lack of exposure to work and jobs.
- There is very little workforce preparation except for those students who go to the career center, and some young people don't develop the basic skills to be effective workers.
- Space is limited for kids to study or hang out—thy have no place to go that's for them.
- There is a possibility of expanding the library. Library building trustees need money to build + staffing and operational costs. We rely on Town budgets for the majority of funding.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We should have a dialogue with the recreation committee; they are working forward with the new hire and good ideas but could use help and support.
- Hardwick should identify a space that might work for youth programming such as the Knights of Columbus. There is no youth center and not enough room in the library.
- Identify buildings in Hardwick where there could be computers for youth, or perhaps a pool table, space to hang out.
- Should Hardwick develop a youth center? A Community Center?.
- It would be good to survey young people to find out what is needed or wanted – could include adult provisions as well as youth.
- There is more money coming for library expansion and that expansion could meet some of the needs of the community for space, and some of the needs of youth.
- There are so many talents in town. We could pair people with skills with youth that want to learn. For example, farming, music, or artists. A catalogue of skills offered for sharing could be developed and youth could build connections to learn arts, instruments, and even skills toward future vocations.
- We could restart mentorships in elementary school and connect the community to the school.
- Find more jobs to break the cycle of poverty and support the progress of all young people.
- Identify job opportunities for adults and students.
- Develop reliable transportation RCT (one day/ week). There was an attempt to get some transit routes, and the company asked for a petition with lots of names who would use buses to justify expanding services to Hardwick...it petered out, but if enough people lined up to take the bus, it might be possible to attract services.
- Get names on petition to warrant a public bus.
- Look into school buses as multi-use public transportation.
- Connect with the Vermont Farm Youth Corporation or something similar to bring youth programs to town—maybe at the granite sheds in Adkins Field?
- Create a list of adults and skills to build into capstone projects. Check out what Craftsbury is doing.
- Seek out David Adler, the Curriculum Coordinator at OSSU to identify productive job and learning opportunities.
- Find a way to address the antagonism between police and students. Find a way for police to interact with students.
- Some young people feel targeted and are often involved in traffic stops.
- For kids in trouble, the police can refer them to a pre-charge program so they never get into the court system.
- Offer conflict resolution skills.
- It might be good to study referrals/ trends and issues that youth in trouble are facing.
- It would be good to increase the availability of preschool and head start.
- It's important to recognize drug accessibility in the community, including alcohol.
- Find solutions to drug abuse and alcoholism that can offer hope.
- It would be really great to offer late buses again. Many students cannot take part in afterschool activities without it. The high school serves rural students from the surrounding area who can be very isolated because they can't participate in after school activities.
- It would be great to develop a place to go after school and a way to get there.
- Find career education opportunities.
- Could Hardwick create a small group that meets monthly to plan and advance youth activities, a group that includes young people in leadership with others?
- Invite adults to come into school as vocational speakers.
- Hardwick could create an Artists In Residence program. Rosters are available from VT Arts Council.
- Expand the Trade Fair at Hazen Union and help young people get out for really short internships to see what the world of work and business is really like as well as to explore potential vocations.
- After school program is for grade school, but then 7th grade there is a void, unless you do sports.
- It would be great to start a bike club to bike, fix bikes, and improve trails to give exercise and freedom. Young people could be leaders with adult partners.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- There's energy, enthusiasm, enrichment: a lot going on.
- People could work together to provide more employment opportunities and on the job mentoring for young people in town.
- Restorative justice could be expanded.
- Find that space to learn from adults (arts and talents, skill sharing). Think about speculating about what youth want vs. engaging youth. It could be a Maker space with an outdoor space.
- There are space/infrastructure needs, and there are activities that could be done...which would be the right place to start?
- Visualizing rural space: bikes, tracking workshops, bird watching. Think about ways to engage youth of various backgrounds.
- It may be important to find connectivity – connecting spaces, transportation, how to pay attention.
- This is a community that is very concerned about youth, and about youth that are disenfranchised by socio economic status from an early age. How to work with youth of all backgrounds – we don't want gaps in service.
- 1 in 4 people are in Hardwick are youth! That's a high percentage!

- Programming can happen before building new space.
- But maybe what Hardwick youth need is really a “Gathering space.”
- Are you serving youth or engaging them? Give them a voice. Engage them. If a task force were to form, it would be crucial to engage young people in leadership.
- Give them a “voice”/ engage them
- What is available after school hours? Schools could be open and available to all, including during the weekend.

- This town has resources and potential. This is an aspirational town. No real sense of business problems – what is happening in families? You need indicators and objectives to keep track and be methodical.
- From this conversation, it seems there are two real avenues – there are structural issues such as space and transportation, but there is another aspect which is programming.

Transportation

Visiting Team: Michele Boomhower (facilitator), Jody Fried, Gary Holloway, Michael Moser, Dave Snedeker, Michael Snyder, Tim Tierney, Jenna Whitson (scribe)

What are the Assets in this Area?

- There was an NVDA traffic study in town to try to improve parking and traffic flow in the area. The designs are interesting.
- We’re in the center so there are a lot of access points. We’re a hub.
- A lot of people pass through. It’s really easy to get here – go down 91, down 89, etc.
- We have a park and ride that we put in by the firehouse that seems to work well.
- Growing up, there wasn’t much traffic, but now we have more activity. More folks are passing through.
- The RCT Van System provides a really good service in town. They help to transport people who are in need of rides.
- Many people have cars in town. The roads are well maintained and plowed and you can get places.
- If you don’t have a car, friends are willing to pick you up and carpool locally.
- My husband and I both had car issues yesterday and two neighbors called up to offer their car. There is a good community network.
- A future asset will be the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail.
- Meals on Wheels.

What are the Challenges?

- You really need to have a car here. There are not many alternative options.
- RCT is not available for everyone. It’s need-based.
- People are on a fixed income. We only have so much coming in per month. When inspection stickers are due there are usually a lot of neglected repairs that need to be fixed to pass inspection. Along with other costs (license, registration) it can sometimes be really expensive and that can be devastating to a family. People end up not paying their rent, electric bill, etc. Then there is the looming worry of a ticket if you don’t do it. Many people in the town get into that situation every year.
- There are access issues. The ability to get chunks of people (20 people at a time) to larger outer-hub services, but then another need to getting folks within the smaller hub to their jobs etc. You can’t hop on a bus, can’t walk, we can’t get people from inner hub in or from inner hub out.
- There are many young mothers who need to transport their kids, but they get tickets when their cars aren’t inspected. They can’t pay the ticket then it snowballs and there is no way out.
- Seniors aren’t able to drive and they don’t have extended support from family and neighbors to shop, get food, or get to appointments. They are stuck.
- St Johnsbury has a commuter van to Montpelier but we don’t have one in Hardwick. St Johnsbury has state offices that generate flow both ways. There are many cars that are heading from Hardwick to Montpelier.
- RCT isn’t always reliable. It’s based in Morrisville. It’s not an ideal solution. You have to give 24 hours’ notice so if you need to get somewhere quickly, you don’t have that option.
- You have to cross the street multiple times to get around town. There is no sidewalk to the Greensboro garage – it’s not safe to walk there. It would be great to not have to constantly cross the street to get there.
- The sidewalks need repair. They were done in concrete which isn’t ideal, and it’s a lot of money to work on. They are too narrow for a plow so that keeps people from walking in winter.
- The crosswalk doesn’t have a lot of visibility. There is no bump out into the street. It is especially dangerous in the evening during commuting time.
- There is a lot of irregularity in transportation needs– part time work, etc.
- A lot of kids walk from school and there is a group of preschool kids that walk to library. There is no crosswalk between where they come from on the hill, and the library. There should be a crosswalk once they get to the main road to cross.
- The sidewalks are designed in a way that are difficult to navigate for people in wheelchairs, and they even get too slippery sometimes to walk.

- A lot of driving burns fossil fuels.
- We can't ride bikes on rt 14 or other main roads – it's too dangerous. The roads are narrow and the guard rails make it even more dangerous. Even as a driver it feels dangerous.
- It is easier to get to Greensboro from East Hardwick than to Hardwick.
- If you don't have a car and don't have a skill that fits into the Hardwick community, you're unemployable.

- Log trucks that go through intersections downtown are dangerous. There is no way they can get through. It's as state highway so it can't be regulated.
- Pain on crosswalk is not reflective and it fades quickly. Only repainted once a year.
- Accessibility is limited in the downtown. It can be unsafe to get out of the car in the downtown and move around the town.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We should build a non-profit garage for repairs in the location where Greensboro garage is. There could be wholesale parts and subsidized labor. That would take a huge financial burden off of local folks on a limited income. It would be like Good News Garage in Burlington, which doesn't serve our area. Funding could come from educational and rehabilitation resources. It could be a training opportunity for students.
- Commuter van to Montpelier.
- Flashing lights for when people are crossing the street.
- Work on ways to get people to slow down before crosswalks and indicate when they're coming up.
- State grants could be available for towns to address safety concerns.
- We could develop bike lanes on rt 14 or a network of bike trails to avoid biking on dangerous roads. Bikes are fuel efficient and good exercise. It's a potential solution.
- We could offer bike education so that more people are comfortable and build a campaign to get bikes on the road. Make bikes available for people to use.
- Cars always break down in the winter time and there is no heated garage. It would be great to have a place to do car work – a shared heated garage. A community shop to get work done.
- We need to find strategies to get food from the pantry to people or to bring people to the food pantry. Use of the pantry goes down in the winter.
- Other counties have had an amnesty for folks that have had fines – people that aren't criminals but can't pay the bills. If that could happen for Caledonia, that could make a huge difference. Maybe Hardwick could do a letter campaign to support the bill that's in the statehouse now.
- A meetup to do Sunday morning bike rides when there is less traffic on the roads.
- Bike rentals.
- We should fix our section of the rail trail. It would take the bikes off of Rt. 15 which is one of the scariest place to ride. We could fix the wash outs and bridges.
- We could develop an Adopt a Trail program like adopt a highway to maintain the Rail Trail.
- Improve public transportation - Inter-regional as well as getting folks from towns outside in to Hardwick.
- Taxi service.
- A bus from St Johnsbury to Morrisville stopping through Hardwick would help commuters. There is a bus that goes from Marshfield. We need to get to that area to access the Montpelier bus. Montpelier is important but social services are in St. Johnsbury and Morrisville.
- A shuttle that goes out and back throughout the day.
- RSVP could sponsor a corps of drivers that could be reimbursed for offering trips.
- This summer, there are plans to do some work on Main Street around Positive Pie. Paving and some reconstruction.
- We could build a parking garage at the current municipal lot-like in South Burlington – a multilevel ramp where you can park under and on top to provide more parking. This would be very expensive.
- Figure out incentives to use less cars. Make it easier to ride bikes and offer alternatives rather than always cars.
- We could fundraise money to address parking.
- Update the parking study. NVDA has funds to update that for the town now.
- Purchase one of the gas stations in town for parking.
- Have a sign that indicates congestion during certain hours.
- RCT has an office in St J and Morrisville. Each year, the board looks at possible new bus routes. They have public meetings, but no one goes. RCT could be invited to Hardwick to talk about possible routes and invite them to think together.
- Get a community grant to get a van and start a bus service.
- VTrans has a vanpool program. We could organize a vanpool and get a discounted rate van with easy financing mechanisms. Just have to share the driving.
- Use Front Porch Forum as a ride-sharing forum.
- Use HCTV to advertise a ride share.
- Connect food network traveling with commuters. Find creative solutions to move people around such as school buses. What is the traveling that is already happening?
- Electric bikes in Hardwick.
- Advocate for a carbon pollution tax.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- I am a big fan of a connected bus and public transportation system. That was mentioned in a lot of different ways – think about how to coalesce around a system so that not every person has to rely on a car. It doesn't sound like there are too

many issues with the roads themselves other than core parking.

- It would be a great idea to update the parking study. NVDA will do that right away and could connect the community with

RCTA. A lot of these challenges are faced by many communities around the Kingdom.

- When you start talking about routes, hubs, and connecting points – thinking about the food network – is there an opportunity there to connect? You have vehicles transporting products from food producers in the area and they are traveling the same routes, is there some sort of public private creative way to find a solution that’s good for everyone? A delivery truck with a few rows of seats – that would get national news for Hardwick and would add to the story coming out of Hardwick right now.
- At Kingdom Trails, when we’re building a trail and there is a ton of blown down trees, sometimes we go around it because path of least resistance. But sometimes the best place for the trail is right through the mess. Maybe there is an opportunity

to look outside the box and not limit yourself for cultural or historical reasons.

- Going to and from Hardwick – it is a great idea of riding with the food. I’m a big proponent of tapping in to existing resources to extend existing transportation systems. Also I would encourage you to steal ideas from other communities. Encourage folks to talk with neighboring communities to see how they’re addressing those issues.
- It’s never popular to remove parking, but sometimes it can be helpful to experiment with temporary events, such as put bump outs or taking away a parking space to see what might be possible.
- Great idea about the non-profit garage that people in the community could use.

Education, Schools & Young Families

Visiting Team: Will Belongia, Megan Camp (facilitator), Jill Chapman, Dr. Harry Chen, Ben Doyle (scribe), Harry Frank, Trisha Ingalls, Margaret McCoy, Michelle Salvador, John Sayles

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Everyone in the schools district is committed to the students. I was struck by how dedicated the teachers are. They want to do well by their students.
- People in the in the education system and in the community at large care; the kids feel known and that they have access to adults. It’s a community with a heart.
- We do well without a lot of resources.
- We have a great piece of woods behind the school with 3 or 4 season accessibility. The trails committee does a good job of ensuring students have access to them. There is more potential for it to be used as a resource for the community.
- Our educators are creative and flexible.
- The afterschool program (which serves other communities as well) is strong.
- For the preschool-age children, the superintendent has really encouraged a collaborative atmosphere between school districts.
- We have great leadership at Hazen Union High School. They are solid and forward thinking. There’s a lot of good stuff happening there.
- There are a lot of exciting learning opportunities particularly in technology. We are a one-to-one computing school (each student has access to a laptop).
- The middle school has been forward thinking with personalized learning plans and is working on proficiency based graduation standards. We are doing lots of good anti-bullying work. We also are starting with foreign language.
- Sports are big but so are our arts programs. The school takes a great pride in these programs.
- The Center for Agricultural Economy has some programs and opportunities that are great for the kids.
- GRACE has been providing some excellent art opportunities for young people.
- The library has great story hour programs, even on weekends.
- The schools have embraced restorative work as opposed to punitive discipline programs and students are leaders in this.
- Four Seasons is a pre-school in the area that is highly rated and encourages kids being outdoors. Hardwick has a successful program.
- The Town House is also an asset. The schools use it to put on plays and other performances. We are hoping to encourage more use.
- The health center is a great resource for kids.
- The newspaper does a good job of telling the story of the community.
- Students are teaching each other about how they learn. It’s a model that has been replicated around the state.
- The local broadcasting company publicizes events for kids.
- There are a lot of activities for kids and families with young children: musical, parades, trails.
- It’s nice where there are a lot of homeschoolers—you don’t feel alone.
- The libraries are awesome. There is great programing, puppet shows.
- The Hazen forestry program is very strong.
- The local schools have websites which are a great resource. This is a good way for people to learn about what kids are really doing.

What are the Challenges?

- There aren't enough people to serve on the school board.
- The budget is a huge challenge. The municipal budget and school budget seems out of whack.
- People in the community don't seem to understand what proficiency based learning is about. There is a disconnect between what kids are learning and what the public expects. Times have changed, but not everyone is on board. This makes it tougher at budget time.
- Poverty is everywhere in the community. Access to food is a challenge. Socio-economic issues affect behavioral and academic challenges. Everything is connected.
- The library struggles because people face food insecurity and have limited resources. Folks don't have access to computers or the internet so education opportunities aren't always equitable.
- In our schools we are dealing with kids who have a lot of trauma. Teachers need to know how to address it. Parents also need help. There aren't enough local resources.
- It's tough to engage people in conversations about educational issues. We rarely have people at school board meetings even if we offer childcare, food, etc. There is not enough engagement with the community. We need to know how to get more people involved.
- Act 46 is a big deal and we need to hear from the community.
- Trauma affects kids who don't have trauma. A lot of parents pull their kids because they are dissatisfied with the schools as a result of the behavioral challenges.
- There isn't an option for a half day kindergarten.
- Afterschool engagement opportunities for kids are limited; they end after 6th grade and during the summer.
- Very low income families need more childcare so that parents can find better employment. Lack of transportation is tough.
- People have a lot of outstanding transportation fines and it impacts their ability to get around and transport their kids. This is a huge issue. It snowballs.
- Transportation affects kids' ability to participate in school sports.
- How many kids don't play musical instruments because they can't afford to purchase them?
- There could be stronger connections between other schools.
- There is a lack of organization among homeschoolers.
- Some people feel a lack of meaning and purpose in our education system. Kids should spend more time in nature.
- A lot of people are homeschooling not because they think they could do a great job, but because they are worried about the environment at school. Homeschoolers don't have the resources they need and positive dialogue with the school doesn't exist.
- Kids want/need unsupervised recreation time. Unstructured time for youth is important and there isn't enough of it at the school.
- Act 77 (Personalized Learning Plans) is a great opportunity, but we have to create those pathways. We need to strengthen the bridges between the schools and the greater community.
- There is increasing obesity among kids and a lack of access to quality food.
- Screen technology culture is leading people to consider homeschooling.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Increase the number of bus runs so kids without access to transportation can participate in extra-curricular activities. It doesn't have to go to every house but we can pick centralized locations for drop offs. Perhaps this can be funded in part by the booster club.
- Service organizations (rotary, elks, etc.) might be able to pick up kids and bring them home.
- It's important to be building interdependency and networks of support. We are over-exposed to fear in this country—we need to rely on each other more. Let's let down our guard to build community.
- Develop mentorship programs so that kids work with community members. It builds community and helps develop curiosity for kids.
- Increase intergenerational tutoring opportunities. It builds confidence in kids.
- Student to student mentoring is a great opportunity and should also be encouraged.
- Build bridges between homeschoolers and schools.
- Increase safety so that kids can bike from Hardwick to East Hardwick. Create a culture of biking. Transportation alternative. Bike-share?
- The Schoolboard should hold a community meeting about why people are homeschooling.
- AOE is a great resource on homeschooling. We should engage them in a dialogue
- We should encourage a welcome environment for homeschoolers for some of the classes.
- We need to find ways for people to influence the school outside of the traditional paradigm.
- We should continue the conversation with the library to see if they can fill some of the needs.
- Create opportunities to connect homeschoolers and schools kids. Do this through schools gardens and leveraging the work already happening on farms.
- Spend less time indoors. Kids should be able to go outside even if it is below zero. We need to be positive about being outside. Let's get the gear for kids to be outside even if it's cold.
- Develop a program for middle schools and homeschoolers providing a wide range of cultural opportunities.
- We need to increase the participation of members on the school board.

- We need to also think about lifelong learning—it’s not just about the kids. It’s about quality of life.
- Expand the Grow Your Own Program for the center for an ag economy.
- Engage UVM Extension around home cooking classes (This is already happening).
- Build relationships with Farm to School and OSSU.
- Find a better way to coordinate services and provide training for parents.
- Provide necessary counseling for kids to address issues of trauma.
- Find a way to make therapy timelier. Find money for services for kids.
- Educate people in the community.
- Get community buy in.
- Find more opportunities to communicate with parents.
- We need to fix the transportation issue. We should develop offering here in school.

The Next Stage of Hardwick’s Food Economy

Visiting Team: Ted Brady, Paul Costello (scribe), Minner Hobbs, Ellen Kahler, Jolinda LaClair (facilitator), Lucy Leriche, Allison Low, Jenny Nelson, Carl Powden, Buzz Schmidt, Gus Seelig, Lars Torres

What are the Assets in this Area

- Center for the Agricultural Economy is an asset.
- The Coop has been really committed to local sourcing and advancing local agriculture for 40 years.
- There is community support for agriculture.
- Town support for business development.
- Food Venture Center.
- Farmer’s Market.
- Local businesses purchase locally.
- Vermont Place Restaurant.
- “Local grown for local usage.”
- Hardwick has a reputation for local food and agricultural economy. We can use that.
- Green Mountain Technology Career Center is going to teach sustainable agriculture.
- Sterling College.
- The Venture Center is working with food shelf and schools.
- Community Gardens.
- Food Pantry gotten support to buy local produce.
- School has a greenhouse.
- Elementary school is working on local sourcing.
- There is a sustainability team of teachers in the elementary school.
- There is a community Green House at Atkins Field.
- Hazen Union is at the forefront on personalized learning intersecting with food.
- The Town has an economic development fund. The revolving loan fund has \$175K feeding farms and producers.
- There is a tiered network of businesses, big and global plus 40 to 50 small incubating businesses working through the Food Venture Center.
- We have great state and federal partners. VHCB helped with the purchase of Atkins Field. USDA and Congressional offices are all supporting Hardwick food systems development.

What are the Challenges?

- Some of the wonderful things we produced are unaffordable to the community. This a challenge to producers and to the consumer.
- Lack of available space with water and sewer to site businesses or incubate new ones. Some need to move out of town.
- Some businesses in value added can find a place to stay and grow.
- The Industrial park is full.
- The other area behind Lamoille Valley Ford is quite expensive.
- Flood plain issues or hills make it hard to grow new business space.
- The cost of farmland for young people who want to start up enterprises is a challenge.
- Small farmers trying to find new markets.
- Some farmers are older and transitioning out, but are there markets and distribution to support diversified agriculture development?
- We haven’t really asked for state and federal help on economic opportunity here.
- Access to capital, especially for startup and expansion is needed.
- If you have no equity, you have no collateral.
- Young people move here because of what they hear about the ag economy or are connected to creative businesses and then they want to start their own—Hill Farmstead, Jasper Hill, lead to spin off youth entrepreneurship.
- Distribution can be a challenge, but hard to get delivery. We tend to do it on our own.
- We are lucky to have good broadband, good wifi, and VTEL but if you go out of town, you lose it.
- Fairpoint internet is not very good. There was an interruption for months. That really hurts businesses.
- Decline of dairy means infrastructure declines; less tractors...you worry about commodity dairies dependence of commodity price. Farm supply business went away.
- To get grain you have to go to 30 miles out of town.
- Hardwick’s location makes it isolated from some services.
- Where do you want to be in the next 10 years?

- It would be great if a farmer could make a living. There are some young farmers coming to the food shelf.
- Most farms have the wives working off the land.
- We have farm with chickens, pigs, dairy, sugaring, value added, and vegetables.
- There are 560 farms in Caledonia County, 72 Dairy Farms.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- There's a part of the local food movement that doesn't get mention. Some have been around forever – homesteaders that don't want to be entrepreneurs. Regulations for big producers get applied to small scale local operations, like raw milk regulation.
- I would like to see more support for local living on the land without scaled business development.
- Industrial park could model centralize co-generation of energy and make it a draw for tourism. Visitors could watch tofu made, watch the processes and generate energy.
- There could be a formal relationship between Hazen and ag and CAE—a place-based career path in school.
- Systematically expand mentorship programs.
- So much space in town is big yards – Could we do a tax incentive or coordinated way to help people grow and put food into distribution right from their homes? It would encourage not just gardening, but real production at small scale but aggregated for marketing and distribution.
- Build a cooperative farm for community members and youth.
- Coop has 30 local producers plus regional cheeses. Is the coop going to grow? It's squeezed for space but doesn't really have a place to grow. Would expansion really make more sales? Not sure.
- The town took a new direction towards organic production. There is a schism between generational locals and new entrepreneurs, we're working on building bridges.
- We ought to build another industrial park.
- Expand agricultural production to encourage markets for new farms. Hardwick can't move forward without new productive space.
- Folks to move out of Food Venter Center. Production space, municipally owned or non-profit owned.
- Next stage evolution - raise prices through production for value added milk and meat that will make a market for the local beef producer, dairy farm, etc.
- Grain is a real challenge.
- Distribution out of town is needed. We could look at a distribution collective
- CAE is interested in aggregation distribution.
- We could build a tasting center with shipping, storage, offices, business expansion space.
- Build a slaughter/processing facility.
- We need to get shovel ready or even built to attract businesses.
- We need shared cold storage space. East Hardwick has space but no water and sewer.
- Buck's in Wolcott is a good space but now needs water and sewer infrastructure.
- We need to do a better job getting in touch with young entrepreneurs.
- Some local producers have no problem with distribution. Jasper Hill distributes to NYC.
- Connect ag. tourism with Atkins Field. You could get on a bus, go to different farms and get meat, eggs, veggies, cheese, etc. It could be a farm shopping tour. Rural Shopping.
- Atkins Field did surveys, talked to kids in school, it connects log yard, industrial space, local development...stabilized the building. We could store food there, we could move the food pantry there, we could use granite shed for historic site. There's an old 30 foot granite column. We could get a tenant, encourage use for youth education. Perhaps the coop, or Northeast Stewardship Program could be partners.
- We could do a FFA program at Hazen.
- Culture gap. There is a vast storehouse of knowledge in these old farmers could be tapped into. Build the link between youth and seniors.
- We have celebrations. We have the Laggis corn fest and Spring Fest. We could welcome new employees and young people with celebrating the place and historical people.
- Immigrant labor, Mexicans, are working invisibly. We need to welcome them into the community.
- The Grange in East Hardwick is available for community events. It is a nice resource.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Amazing! There are 25 Visions Here...what does this look like 10 years from now?
- What are the limits, infrastructure and capital. How about the balance of the economy; how is that going? Is there an opportunity to bridge the schism?
- Land and space, attracting young families - building for infrastructure.
- You folks have done so much. There is so much pride in all that you have accomplished. A real model. I love the rural shopping idea!
- Maybe the community needs to bite the bullet and buy land or build infrastructure for the future of the economy.
- Don't accept that anything is impossible.
- Don't accept schism. Find common ground.
- Hardwick has pockets of productive soil. It is important to secure the best of it.
- It is powerful, what is going on here. The secret is confidence and hope. That is missing in some other communities.
- Infrastructure is key.
- Connect fish and wildlife with food.

Future of Downtown, Parking, Streetscape & Walkability

Visiting Team: Michele Boomhower, Jody Fried, Gary Holloway, Michael Moser (scribe), Dave Snedeker, Michael Snyder, Tim Tierney, Jenna Whitson (facilitator)

What are the Assets in this Area

- Parking is always available, if not immediately in front of the place you are trying to go, at least just down the street.
- The walking bridge is an asset.
- The Local Economic Development Fund.
- Hardwick Trails are close to downtown.
- Hardwick is the hub of three major VT transportation arteries.
- Hardwick is the center of many downtown and peripheral businesses in the area.
- We have a walkable downtown.
- We are a close knit community.
- Safe and comfortable downtown.
- Polite drivers (mostly) make for safe crossings at crosswalks.
- We have Low Crime. It's a safe community.
- We are enjoying a good reputation right now, compared to what it used to be.
- There is a strong public desire to keep making Hardwick better.
- Most everyday needs can be met in the downtown area.
- Historic buildings are well used in the downtown.
- There are municipal parking lots.
- Diversity.

What are the Challenges?

- We need more parking.
- Crosswalks are dangerous. There were two recent pedestrian injuries on downtown streets.
- There is a lot of traffic during commute times.
- Too many crosswalks. They take up valuable parking spaces and can be confusing.
- The blinking light intersection is not clear to non-residents and is a safety concern.
- There is no way to walk from one end of the downtown to the other without having to cross the street multiple times. Sidewalks are not contiguous, especially down toward the shopping area.
- There are several empty storefronts.
- Delivery access is a huge issue as trucks must block street to deliver to core businesses.
- Current plans to reduce street lighting is concerning.
- Winter snow blocks pedestrian access and makes streetside parking dangerous.
- Larger vehicles have trouble maneuvering downtown streets.
- There is not much vegetation, few trees downtown.
- No place to sit and gather- no benches
- No good river access.
- "Peace Park" is underutilized and overlooked.
- Old building stock that is not kept up.
- Downtown commission is trying for downtown designation but struggling to gain momentum.
- Lack of eatery diversity – limited options.
- Limited community gathering space or activity space.
- No winter spaces for indoor gathering or activities.
- Vacant, underutilized, unkempt lots and buildings.
- During high traffic times access from side streets is very difficult. There is no traffic control.
- Sidewalks are not very handicapped/stroller accessible.
- Downtown buildings do not have handicap/stroller accessible entrances.
- Limited overnight accommodations in Hardwick .

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Redesign the Peace Park with seating, screening and signage.
- Develop river access by rail tracks and/or Daniel's block areas.
- Develop Hardwick trails maps with businesses, access points, points of interest, etc.
- Address the unkempt lots and buildings with volunteers and students.
- Fix the industrial park sign for more visibility.
- Move Town garage area and repurpose. This is underway for parking.
- Think about removing all parking from downtown core and use new space for pedestrians, benches, outdoor commerce, etc. Do a complete street redesign to make the downtown more pedestrian friendly.
- Ensure downtown core employees do not use downtown parking- per town ordinance.
- Turn Village parking lot into multi-level garage.
- Add a timed stoplight to coincide with high traffic volume times- traffic control.
- Review sidewalk quality and address to encourage walking.
- Raise/ramp sidewalks into downtown buildings to create handicapped and stroller access.
- Strategic planning for crosswalks.
- Add crosswalk connections between school and downtown.
- Speak with AARP about livable communities opportunities.
- Start tree steward and planting program in the downtown.
- Review the American legion parking lot for options.
- Improve Trails signage and wayfinding.
- Rite Aid or Kwik stop lots clean-up, repurpose as community entrance and add visual cues.
- Develop signage for municipal lots to increase awareness of parking opportunities.

- Clean up unsightly municipal spaces and lots to encourage private lot clean up.
- Consider removing dilapidated buildings for more parking.
- Review “Old Catholic Church” green space for use options.
- Redevelop memorial park greenspace.
- Connect Hardwick trails to downtown via riverside properties and facilities.
- Encourage redevelopment of unused and underutilized lots just outside downtown core.
- Encourage development of lodging and a hotel in Hardwick.
- Develop process and plan to address blighted/unused/underutilized spaces.
- Atkins Field development for ice rink, track, farm market, pump track. Offer a variety of activities.
- Build community engagement in Atkins Field ongoing development process.
- Develop organizational structure and process to actively encourage downtown business development.
- Get local non-profits to coordinate better on development efforts.
- Increase youth recreation facilities.
- Increase volunteer and vendor participation in First Friday events.

Substance Abuse

Visiting Team: Will Belongia, Megan Camp, Jill Chapman, Dr. Harry Chen, Ben Doyle (facilitator), Harry Frank, Trisha Ingalls, Margaret McCoy (scribe), Michelle Salvador, John Sayles

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Recovery Center in Morrisville.
- We have AA and NA meetings and mentorship opportunities.
- Treatment for opiate addictions through medications, such as suboxone.
- AWARE, a community organization that deals with domestic violence. Many situations involve substance abuse in one form or another. Do some education processes.
- Police Department is an asset. Primary purpose is enforcement but end up being counselors, fathers, try to look out for other resources and refer people into those resources like AWARE, the churches, AA meetings. They don't always heed their advice. Neighbors will raise concerns about neighbors, friends, and relatives.
- Restorative Justice Program referrals, 1st time marijuana offense or other drugs. With assessment they are required to do counseling.
- Hardwick Area Community Coalition does prevention. Aims toward youth through education and staying up on the trends.
- SAP at Hazen is a resource. The funding has changed but they do activities with SADD (students against destructive decisions).
- We have independent counselors that do substance abuse counseling.
- Not enough providers.
- Prevention is partly a function of positive activities in the community.
- Person that is susceptible and resilient to resist the substances, need robust recreation program, activities at the school, etc.
- Make it easy for people to understand what substances might be easily abused. Like Ritalin is a drug in the same category of cocaine. Need to do it in an unbiased manner.
- Great doctors and people trying to make a difference but lack easily accessible information that is easy to understand. Education in a simple format to help people make good choices.
- The opiate summit in Hyde Park. Benzodiazidines is a gateway to opiates, mixed with klonopin or alcohol and get same buzz as heroin. Brings kids into the drug culture. Legislation passed in MA and NH to bring in physicians who prescribe to have a database at the pharmacy to know who are the white collar medical drug pushers. Pharmaceutical companies should be responsible for drug education. They fund multimillion ads and TV shows to sell their drugs.
- Close-knit community, we value that we know our kids friends families and where they are going after school and who they are hanging out with is a benefit.
- Hardwick Trails volunteer run 11 miles of trails for biking, hiking and skiing. Two folks that run the program are wonderful community members. Ties in with the school.
- We have a strong school community, sports events are well attended.
- The legislature this year wants to control pill counts on prescribed drugs, 30 day supplies for chronic pain, 72 hours for acute pain, recalls physicians to do drug screening on longer than 30 day quantities. Funding for meaningful intervention when needed.
- Strong after school program in elementary school. NEK kids on the move promotes staying healthy and active for the youth.

What are the Challenges?

- Appreciate legislature taking a look at the prescription issue but it only talks about opiates. Physicians are one aspect of the substance abuse issue. The benzodiazepine drugs assigned by psychiatrists are easy to get, prescribed easily, no regulation on it. Need to address other items that are also a problem. Need a comprehensive approach, not just reduce number of pills.
- Prescribing practices haven't changed on a broad basis.

- This is one of the smallest groups today. Why aren't more people participating in the conversation?
- A lot of people don't want to change, heroin abuse, prescription drugs, alcohol.
- Alcoholism abuse, studied underage drinking prevention. The Police Dept is on the enforcement end of it, at the end of the chain. Parents hosting parties for kids drinking parties, they take the keys and think it's OK. They don't look at the physiological changes of the brain that is a problem with youth drinking. Parents allow the kids to continue that with the attitude that it's OK because they did it.
- There is a culture here with lack of urgency or awareness about how significant the problem is. It is a generational cycle. It is hard for law enforcement because don't feel they have the community support as a whole.
- With Heroin abuse, the drug task force is doing a great job but there are not enough of them and they are getting pulled into the big cities, hitting the bigger dealers in those areas. But it pushes them out to the small communities and can't get help from larger enforcement agencies.
- Prescription drugs were a huge issue, and now heroin is cheaper and easier to get. The Government says we have a heroin problem and unless the problem is heroin, the administration isn't interested in the other substance abuse issues. We don't have specialized drug agents. No specialized people dealing with the drug problem, lack of capacity to deal with the extent of the problem.
- Stigma connected to AA or NA programs, so people don't come to the meetings. People don't realize that there's support. Not enough help for them to get past the suboxone. Both lack of awareness and stigma so they don't partake.
- People feel that it's too local to go to the meetings and there is no transportation to get to meetings in Morrisville or Montpelier.
- This is a problem all around the state. We need to cut across the lines. We need facts at our fingertips in order to make accurate decisions. We need to set up programs so we can statistically track problems in different areas. The problem won't go away immediately. We can't change the status quo alone. We need help from the state in order to make inroads.
- A challenge in how the issue is framed. There is a fine line between substance use and substance abuse. Substance use is glamorized, advertising. People think the only way to have fun at parties is to drink. We don't frame it in terms of quality of life issues. What does it do to families where parents are drinking? Kids fall away from sports or activities in high school because their parents are strung out or abusing and unavailable to the kids.
- How do we frame the conversation that makes us all responsible for it? We're all responsible for our kids' friends. Make it a message of health and not a deficit.
- Kids who are not into sports are getting into trouble. They are more susceptible to what's going on with older kids or young adults that are still hanging out on the street. We need things to engage our youth.
- There are a lot of parties, but hardly any parties where there isn't alcohol. Kids need an example of people having fun without alcohol. Positive community events without alcohol.
- Medical professionals grapple with the problem that they are overprescribing, there is a cultural shift going on in physician offices and helping people manage their pain without opiates. Challenge of people that identify as people with addictions.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- People want to be in the in crowd. Working on a motorcycle ride for drug awareness with the message that it's OK to not do drugs. It's OK if you're doing drugs to get off drugs. Travel the whole length of Vermont.
- We need drug education materials available to non-profits to use locally to give share with the community, anybody in long-term recovery, those currently addicted, law enforcement, teachers.
- Ask kids at Middle and HS level what activities they want to do.
- Add no cost or low cost activities. School has great after school programs and elementary programs that are quite expensive for kids to participate in.
- Teen center downtown was shut down a few years ago because of lack of supervision.
- Office of Price Chopper in Schenectady NY will fundraise as long as have a non-profit sponsor. They will have the nearest Price Chopper fundraise. We can create funding to support those types of activities.
- Find more positive prevention activities.
- How does the High School recruit kids for the SADD program?
- Educating parents around alcohol and teens.
- Hardwick has its own public access TV and own newspaper that could frame it in a positive way and could be a forum for education for the parents.
- What creates a healthy community? The shift is to what we want people to do, not what we don't want them to do. Positive psychology program.
- Make a statement of what we want Hardwick to be that encompasses all the things we want healthy responsible kids to do. How do they know that's what we expect of them and that becomes the culture. The red ribbon ceremony. The kids have the sense that driving is a right, rather than a privilege. Help them understand what it means to be part of a community.
- People that have resources to help don't know how to be involved and help the community.
- Law enforcement needs help. In 5 years, heroin problem could become epidemic if we don't deal with it now. Need more officers, task force in the state to remember the small towns and not just the cities. They need to come in and clean the town of dealers. We need that here to prevent an epidemic down the road. The small department can't handle it.
- Finding a way to consistently send that message to the powers that be.
- Available treatment and a model of long-term treatment that can turn addicts back into good citizens. Be a model that dealers go somewhere to a better market. Cut the market here and the dealers will leave.

- We don't talk enough about prevention. There is not enough money in prevention. The resources in comparison to funding for treatment is no match. To get to the cultural piece that needs to shift we need to work with kids to teach them how to be healthy, and work with families to support the cultural shift.
- More and more seniors are turning to pharmaceuticals to self-medicate. So we need to also focus on seniors. How to counter their push to sell drugs in society?

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Empower youth to help them identify their aspirations and have some hope for the future. Hardwick is a close-knit community and the lack of anonymity could be a help.
- It is important for adults to speak to this rather than just think of it as a problem of young people, of doctors, of others, etc. It's actually our problem. Each individual has to take that challenge and try to address it.
- Start from a positive point of view. Not actually talking about substance abuse but positive activities for kids and engagement for kids. Have some tools in the community that could help communicate that.
- Spend so much time talking in the negative that people get numb to it.
- I heard a lot of resources in this community and the challenges seem to be bigger than the resources. The community is deciding to change the culture, it's a big thing to take on and overwhelming. Have to start somewhere, it's a culture change.
- Country music songs are all about drinking. After school program after 6th grade would be good. The trail system in the woods behind school is great. But the woods are where all the drug abuse is going on. In Newport, Improbable Players from Boston acting troupe are recovering addicts put on plays in high schools do workshops with kids to create their own skits. The Health Works Coalition brought them in.
- Issues are interrelated, there are some levers that have positive impacts. The summer programs, after school programs, programs with youth address so many issues. Seems less overwhelming when you realize that levers are there where action can be taken.
- All resources from AWARE, recovery center, churches, police department, close-knit community. Recognize that a lot of people are involved and community leaders are involved. 13 years ago the local pharmacist was concerned about prescription drugs, and had 100 people at a community forum. Seems like a decrease in either community readiness or interest in having the conversations. The culture around alcoholism and acceptance and norms across the state, also the stigma around addiction and challenge in knowing what resources are available. There are barriers to substance abuse resources for young people. Identifying the young people that need help is a challenge. Prevention is about public health, the environment we live in, the culture of acceptance around substance abuse. In looking at how to prevent it, we have to look at policies in town and what messages they are sending. Build factors that protect young people, decrease factors that set them up for risk.

Growing Economic Development and Entrepreneurs

Visiting Team: Ted Brady (facilitator), Paul Costello (scribe), Minner Hobbs, Ellen Kahler, Jolinda LaClair, Lucy Leriche, Allison Low, Jenny Nelson, Carl Powden, Buzz Schmidt, Gus Seelig, Lars Torres

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Hardwick has a good pool of workers in demand in the region.
- There is a strong business community, we all know each other and we communicate. It's very positive.
- A strong and growing downtown.
- First Friday is a great community building event.
- The industrial park is a huge asset.
- We are at the intersection of 3 highways.
- We have a Chamber of Commerce that's active.
- Great agricultural base with value added development here and around in other towns.
- We are expanding and diversifying.
- There are 4 or 5 places to choose from for lunch.
- This is a good place to live...so that's good for business.
- There have been a lot of downtown building improvements.
- We have a strong downtown core.
- The town has economic development funds that support it. Lots of town loans have been paid back.
- The town government supports the business community.
- Jon Jewett and other town officials help people find space. We welcome people and try to help them succeed.
- We have affordable housing.
- The town owns our electric utility.
- Beyond the revolving loan fund, the town has a tax stabilization program for new businesses.
- Schools are the biggest employers.
- We don't have just one big employer.
- Lamoille Valley Ford and Sugarman are bigger businesses, 50 and 30 people respectively.
- The Coop is a huge asset.
- We have locally owned businesses rather than chains.
- We have a vacant building at the blinking light that we have been trying to rent for a year. Maybe it could be used as a makers or co-working space...It can be hard to attract entrepreneurs into it.
- Hardwick is on the way to other places for employment, but not high density so not a great base for customers.
- Broadband is available here.
- The newspaper is a huge asset.

What are the Challenges?

- We are bumping on the edge of our infrastructure on sewer and water.
- The Industrial park is full.
- We looked at new locations—it's either river, prime ag soils or hill.
- Blessed and constrained by geography.
- We have fiber optics. It runs through the school, but is that available to other businesses?
- Small food businesses are trying to scale up but have challenges accessing capital, and then distributing out of Hardwick.
- Distribution and money.
- Parking is another issue and deliveries are impossible downtown.
- Some businesses struggle with permits, which is not business friendly, yet the ag community is growing and no one is giving them a hard time with permits.
- There is some perceived preferential treatment.
- We need to improve perception or reality of our school. There are concerns with our school system.
- We lack an association with an institution of higher education.
- There are a very limited number of places to stay.
- We aren't a tourist town...we have charm but we aren't Greensboro or Craftsbury.
- We need to truck out to get products out as we are not a big enough marketplace. This is a distribution challenge.
- The river is asset and challenge, we haven't realized its potential. We don't have tourists because we do not have an inn, we have no inn because we have no tourists.
- We could improve the riverside as a tourism place.
- We haven't enumerated all our assets. We haven't built the story to attract the story...we don't have a position.
- One of the largest untapped markets is retirement community.
- Hardwick has an opportune package to offer to retirees. There could be a retirement community of professionals without the support of federal money...50 units would lead to more restaurants.
- Hardwick has the river. Craftsbury did it with sports center, burke with Mountain Bike trails...how do we get assets to advance river?
- The Rail Trail will eventually be a big opportunity.
- I co-own two digital economy businesses but banks won't look at me because I don't have dollars or collateral.
- None of the business support organizations can lend to us. Could grants be developed to take some risk?
- The restaurant community was supported but in the end it didn't succeed.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- We need to spend money, invest.
- We need a gym in town, people have offered a franchise, but no money.
- Hardwick needs promoting without ruining trails and waters.
- River, tourism, rail trail, canoe trail are all great ideas for action
- We need to build another industrial park.
- When business people get together they form specific ideas and move them forward.
- Lots of businesses are off on the back road. We should increase networking. We don't even know who's out there with small businesses.
- We could do an assessment of the number of businesses and set up informal meetings to latch on and find others who might join together, rent an office together. It all starts with networking.
- Would love to see information on funding sources and folks that are encouraging small businesses with information and resources to help people move businesses forward.
- The Chamber talked about building a directory of talents, businesses, artists, and other resources in the community, not all chamber members but to share information for folks looking for products and services.
- Marketing and promoting have been a problem. We don't have it. Hardwick trails and the river might help. Could we market small businesses so they would not need too much help? Marketing workshops would be the place to start.
- NVDA is a one stop shop for resources. There are loads of workshops but maybe not right in your town.
- Downtown Designation might bring resources for a downtown/economic development staff for town.
- Digital economy could be a real boon. I'd like to see this come to a focus. Could we be a digital customer service center?
- We have no economic development person or committee.
- Everyone does everything for themselves.
- There has been talk about getting a community development person, but it's never gotten too far.
- I want to do another major project.
- The Town Manager serves as economic development officer.
- We could claim leadership in a new way like we did on agriculture, but this time around the digital economy.
- What about a zip equipment business, like a lending business, vans, and equipment for daily use?
- There is a group, the small farm guild, that shares equipment. The grange is looking to give them a tax umbrella. The Library has also talked about tool and equipment exchange. The Library is a huge asset.
- Library would like to be a business, training, info exchange, micro business spot.
- We have talked about getting an economic development person. Our downtown designation discussion was thinking that if the downtown committee was successful then they might hire a part time person at least to lead it and economic development. This is still a possibility.

- The Town would need to have skin in the game.
- We have assets in Hardwick Town House and GRACE.
- Atkins Field- could we work with Hazen and Lamoille Tech Center to do place based career units in businesses in town?
- Atkins Shed is now stable and could be a useful asset in economic development; Creating activity for Atkins as a community space.

- Venture center graduates - let's keep them in Hardwick. There's 60,000 foot space possibility right there. Keep investing in the same thing.
- Build on what we've already started.
- We buy from each other. We have a real need and awareness of that, or we will lose key local businesses.
- Bookstore is a wonderful downtown asset; I won't buy from Amazon.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- This is a positive community. You have the ingredients. This really comes down to marketing.
- Integrating river and trails with downtown is a key idea. Marketing is important, especially tax stabilization, high speed fiber and town fund.
- Fabric and connectivity here is huge. The internet can stop us from talking to one another, meeting and sharing.
- There is a concern about demographics and the need to attract young people, young parents.
- You've got the cluster for food system, but need to ensure strong resources.
- Atkins field sounds like a great opportunity. There is so much in the hopper already.
- Setting priorities and working as a network is important.
- Industrial park with infrastructure.
- Hotel...maybe its time.
- Networking connecting businesses, identifying gaps and helping others pick up.
- Affordability of housing could be a huge attraction.
- Build on success...that attracts the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Recreation, Trails & The Arts

Visiting Team: Michele Boomhower, Jody Fried, Gary Holloway, Michael Moser (scribe), Dave Snedeker, Michael Snyder, Tim Tierney, Jenna Whitson (facilitator),

What are the Assets in this Area?

- We have a great Historical Society.
- We have rail corridors for redevelopment and use.
- Town House performance space.
- Lots of informal "gallery" space to see local art.
- We have a Trails Committee that brings programming to the Hardwick trails.
- We have an active snowmobile club.
- The Recreation Department offers swimming lessons for Hardwick youth.
- Atkins Field Ice Skating Rink.
- Recreational ski programs (through the school).
- We have a Community TV station.
- GRACE arts building.
- Hardwick First Friday events are a fun way to build community and enjoy the downtown.
- Farmers' market.
- The river and Hardwick lake boat access.
- Buffalo Mountain food co-op is an asset.
- Caspian Lake (not in Hardwick, but close).
- We have unused tracts of land.
- The NEK arts council maintains the Town House.
- Nichols pond and ledge is a great recreation opportunity.
- Mackville Pond is located at a walking distance from school.
- We have a good 21st century afterschool program at the elementary school.
- Hardwick area little league.
- Kids on the Move is a great after school program encouraging healthy and active kids.
- Vermont Vaudeville.
- Library youth programming is a community asset.
- We have a Spring Festival put on by the Kiwanis club.
- We have a Local Movie Rental shop that offers a great variety.
- We have a Crafts festival to showcase local art and crafts.
- The Lamoille valley rail trail is a potential asset.
- Four winds is a environmental education program out of the elementary school.
- NEK youth services.
- We are planning a bike Pump Track.
- Atkins Field and the Center for an Agricultural Economy.
- We have various communication outlets: PPF, Post boards, town website, community calendars.

What are the Challenges?

- The Lamoille Valley rail trail is stalled.
- There is misuse of existing trails by unauthorized use or use at the wrong time of year.
- Hardwick is not a destination spot. There is an opportunity, but no buy in or marketing.
- We have trails connectivity issues.
- Volunteers are tapped out.

- Funding is scarce.
- The Youth swim program is faltering for lack of qualified instructors and volunteers.
- We have a lot of unused land.
- There are conflicting uses on trails: maple lines in town forest reduce trail use in the forest.
- Internet connectivity is poor.
- Town House is closed in the winter.
- Funding is not guaranteed to support the part time recreation employee at the town.
- There is no skate park. Skateboarding in town is dangerous and there is no safe alternative.
- The Library is too small. We need an expansion.
- Lack of adequate community gathering space.
- Lack of information about level of desire for a given activity/opportunity/facility to make best decision.
- Lack of playgrounds.
- Apathy.
- Lack of information sharing or comprehensive communication about recreation opportunities.
- Town website not good and underused. Though it is being rebuilt.
- No recreational outfitter shop in Town to access the gear needed to take part in outdoor activities.
- Siloed organizations and leadership each doing a lot, but not collaboratively.
- Poor lake/river access.
- Lack of local arts programming.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done?

- Increase access to and use of river frontage.
- Local funding to complete our section of Lamoille valley rail trail upgrades.
- Design a wayfinding map of the community.
- Increase public participation and buy in for new efforts.
- Build a park by the river within walking distance of downtown core.
- Atkins Field planning is under way.
- Support increased mountain biking trail development.
- Use the underutilized tennis courts for a skate park.
- Get students writing grants for proposed programs, activities, and facilities.
- Develop visitor friendly website.
- Open all committees to youth membership. Encourage youth membership.
- Gather data from the community for decision-making.
- Remove maple lines from some parts of the town forest.
- Better utilize the High school community service requirement.
- Develop a summer theatre program for youth.
- Weekly summer music series, perhaps at Atkins Field.
- Open the school for weekend and evening activities.
- Revitalize existing school ropes and exercise courses and promote use.
- Utilize the Heartbeet Center open community space.
- Daniels Block parking lot could be river access point.
- Increase and strengthen coordination between school and community.
- Build a local talent inventory and utilize for local workshop series.
- Develop a year round community space. Get funding for the Town House for year round use.
- Increase communication about the (potential) use of the Town House.
- GRACE could gather input from the community as they have paid staff.
- Recreation committee wants to compile a resource list.
- Develop a centralized space for community resource listings.
- Strengthen collaborative communication to public through numerous channels.
- Publicize the existing Hardwick Trails.
- Communicate resources needed to the public.
- Increase connection between school and community.
- Communicate opportunities to wide audiences.
- Develop a grant writing course in the school.
- Expand all offerings to multiple generations.

Youth Forum Notes

Compiled from a youth forum held with Hazen Union High School and Middle School students and VCRD staff on January 14th 2015

What is successful about the Hardwick community?

High school:

- There is a strong agricultural presence so there is really good food in the town.
- We have a Coop. It's a good hub for good food.
- There are a lot of people with diverse interests, people who are experts in a variety of things.
- The Community comes out for sports. There is a lot of community support for basketball and soccer. It connects the school and community. It is normal for people to come to games even if they don't have kids playing.
- The school feels like the center of town. Alumni comes back to visit the school. Parking here, so it's easy to come and just happen to have a game.
- Strong teacher/student relationships. Still working on it, lots of teachers really invested and students close to their teachers.
- Students appreciate the school and the community.
- The school is the hub of the town.
- There are good restaurants in town.
- The Food Venture center is helping with new businesses and small businesses popping up.
- A lot of people moving in that helps bring new experiences to town.
- I like talking to visitors that are passing through.
- A nice place to walk around on a nice day.
- Small and community-based. Everyone knows everyone.
- We had had an image change over the last decade.
- It's beautiful here.
- We have a cool history, it's reflected as we move into the future. We're proud of our past but moving on to the future.
- We have the American Legion, have two grandfathers that served in the war and it's a great social place for him.
- We are renovating the good parts of our past: the centennial building is renovated and it's now a center of town with a lot of businesses there. They have clothing, the gym, boxing, offices, massages, yoga.
- Many good changes for downtown in the last decade.
- First Friday's are an asset – there are sales, cookout at a garage, music, etc.
- Farmer's market every Friday.
- GMTCC in Hyde Park for kids that want to access career opportunities.
- Most said they won't stay here after high school but almost all raised their hands saying they see themselves coming back here after they grow as a person.
- Family would be the draw to come back and a strong school.
- It's nice because it's quiet, not loud traffic and busy.

Middle School:

- Atkins field is being turned into something cool, that still holds value from the past. Turning into a community center place.
- There are so many people here that care about making Hardwick a better place.
- The community gardens at Atkins Field. People said they would like more community gardens. We did community service to build the gardens. We want to expand that.
- We are doing personalized learning plans. Doing a lot with food shelf, repurposing things like at the local grocery store. Using the PLP to do work in the community.
- Everyone likes going to sport events.
- Access to hiking trails and family walks.
- No cost to the community to attend concerts.
- In the summer we have First Fridays. The community has come together to make it better every year. There are fire dancers, but it blocks the traffic.
- Memorial Day parade is fun with a fair.
- Farmer's Market is cool.
- Fun Run for community members to run 5K before the parade.
- Starting to be fun little shops: bookstore. Don't have to go to Burlington to shop.
- Dollar General is nice to have.
- Hardwick Gazette – we have a town paper.
- The Food Shelf is awesome.
- It's a small town, but we have a lot here. A small place with a lot of things: Chiropractors, doctors, Positive Pie.
- The renovated yellow building in town, is now an inn.
- Larry Hammel is also working on 2 other buildings in town that he's trying to fix up.
- Bake sale for the necessities closet – a word of mouth thing where people can go to pick up items to keep themselves clean, or to get a toothbrush, deodorant, shampoo, etc.
- Middle schoolers made cakes for having tea with their grandparents and senior citizens, invited friends from historical society to sit and visit.
- We have a TV station. They live stream the basketball games.
- A couple years ago there were a lot of issues with domestic violence but AWARE has been a positive force to help stop it.

There is support for people going through domestic violence, they give support and everything a person needs to get through it.

- Lots of fishing opportunities to do in Hardwick, lots of things to do outdoors.

- Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) educates people. Does mock crash and a mock trial about the crash and makes school more aware of the devastating risks of drunk driving.

What are the challenges in the Hardwick Community? What do you wish to improve?

High school:

- Not much to do in town. We go to Morrisville to the movies. It would be nice to have more to do.
- We worry about the youth, a lot of behavioral or substance abuse problems. The atmosphere of the town allows it. Challenges are happening at younger ages.
- We have more to do to help prevent substance abuse.
- Summer is the best time: Green, Cascade Lake.
- We are all about sports and there are fewer opportunities for people that don't play sports like after school groups that are not sports oriented.
- There are fewer things to do in the winter. There is some support for the arts but not as strong as for sports. It is hard to get funding for music, it's expensive. An imbalance of resources to go to other opportunities.
- We don't have many opportunities for STEM related things. Also foreign language. Not a focus on academia so much. Cultural experience and language would be nice.
- One student is taking online language classes because they only offer French here. We have to reach outside of the community to expand into different areas. Not so much focus on academics or language arts, or other arts.
- There is a lot of turnover with language teachers in pas because there isn't al of funding or support. We have a strong teacher now in languages.
- Community could benefit from more cultural experience.
- The Food economy isn't prominent in my life, we know it's part of the community but we don't necessarily take a big interest in it. Feel neutral about the food renaissance that Hardwick is known for. Would be nice for Hardwick to branch out and focus on other areas too.
- Know 2 or 3 kids experiencing parents abusing drugs. It's affecting our youth.
- There is an issue with people hiding stuff in ceiling tiles at school bathroom so they closed the bathroom. It is annoying that their choices are affecting the education of others. Those prone to smoking don't take education seriously, they joke about it. Some people have substance abuse in their family so they might not feel safe by comments like that.
- Not a lot is done about substance abuse. We talk about the problems, but don't do anything about it.
- There are a lot of factors that push people to do drugs. We need to help them rather than persecute them. Because of social factors, they appear that they don't care, but it's hurtful to say they don't care. Peer pressure pushes people and their family life can be causes. We need to help them feel safe at school. Find a trustworthy adult that they trust to talk with.

Middle School:

- Transportation: the town is so small and it is hard for people to get to their jobs or walk to the store because they don't have cars. We need cheap or free public transportation.
- People want more transportation.
- Littering.
- The town is missing art and places to see art.
- There are a few parks in town, but the mural fell a couple years ago, it was really pretty. They rebuilt it and now it's just gray. There are places in town where public art is displayed.
- Great buildings in Hardwick are run down and sad. Could renovate them. A small movie theater would be so great to have.
- The boxing place could be turned into a movie theater.
- There's aren't places to do things, like no movie theater.
- Drugs are an issue here. Lots of people in the school have issues, or know people with issues.
- People without cars can't get to Montpelier or St J or Morrisville to see a movie.
- It would be cool to have a community pottery making place. Like Stowe has one. Really nice and relaxing. Would be great for the community.
- Not many fun things to do here. Things that aren't boring. Hardwick doesn't have activities to do. It's kind of boring. Would be great to have a place kids could hang out and play ping pong or something like that, a big room where kids could hang out before games, etc.
- If there isn't something fun to do, kids might do drugs or drink alcohol.
- Instead of Dollar General, put in a family center where families can go to have fun.

What can students and the community do to make sure Hardwick is an exciting and dynamic place to live and learn?

High School:

- Mural park next to Positive Pie could be a place to show movies. Put white tarp in front of the mural. Would give High School students something to do.
- Finding an outlet for people that don't have supportive families. The outlet of art or poetry.
- Ask students what their interests are, having community members help with it and offer those opportunities. Inventory students to see what they want and need.
- We have Personal Learning Plans, but it's generalized. Do more of a poll one to one would be more intriguing.
- Act 77 has multiple parts. PLP directed by interests, passions, challenges. Work based opportunities for internships, early college, dual enrollment.
- But the PLP is forced on us and nothing is happening with it. have to fill out their rubrics, it's to constricting, and hard to connect with their guidelines when it's my personal learning.
- Plug into more places in the community with internships, open up more opportunities.
- Students need to go to the community, get kids into specific places. Maybe someone in the community has skills that can help students reach their goals. Like maybe someone in town knows Mandarin.
- Youth based center to bring more of these kinds of conversations.
- Create more afterschool opportunities at the school for students.
- More recognition for the clubs outside of sports. Like drama.
- Bring athletics and arts together. Unite them.
- Publicize other activities on the website.
- Put editorial in the Gazette. Create a student newsletter.
- Have students share exciting things going on with the Gazette.
- Have art students attend the games, or they could talk at half time what they are doing.
- Field trips for High School students in the community. The middle school is getting out into the community more and doing activities, planting trees, building stuff. HS students want to do that too. Field trip to High Mowing Seeds for example.
- School organized trips to colleges, or college fairs, post-secondary opportunities.
- Every 4 years Morrisville takes a soccer team to Spain. Incorporate opportunities like that or a French trip or music trip to Europe. It is so expensive and we don't have the funding. The sports do a lot of fundraising and get a lot of donations.

Middle School:

- GMTA bus route from Hardwick to Barre would be good. RCT could go to different places: East Hardwick, Morrisville, Barre. Have a bus stop for them, but get 3 buses and drivers to do that route. 2 buses go out of Hardwick and one stay in Hardwick to go around the town.
- The old bookstore: make it a place for teens to go with arcade games, show movies, a youth center.
- Atkins Field ice rink in the winter. With more time and money it could be really fun with rental skates. Currently they just pour water and let it freeze rather than tend it.
- A roller skating rink.
- What can go in the Greensboro Garage space? A fun center where a family could go to have fun together, like a bowling alley with snacks. A lot of families can't afford to travel to do stuff.
- A child/family center where people could stay after school before games to hang out. Part for bowling and the other space has arcade, ball pit, slides, etc.
- Wolcott Street building could have giant laser tag.
- Be creative, use resources, just use tables to hide behind, etc.
- Trail guide for trails out back would be helpful. There are bird walks now.
- A hot cocoa station at the end of the Hardwick Trails network.
- Sliding hill.
- Community events: snowman building, winter Olympics where people race, skijoring, have a winter festival. Winter Olympics, skies, snow shoe races.



One of many posters with positive messages in the Hazen Union High School cafeteria

Additional Action Ideas

Comments sent to VCRD following the Community Visit Day from Hardwick Residents via Email or Facebook

- Gather community and outside support to help move forward with an addition the Jeudevine library. I have worked in several libraries in the area, and I have seen the incredible impact a vibrant library has on a community supporting early learning, offering a space for teens after school, incubating businesses, offering internet access, etc. A library is a community and cultural gathering place. A strong library is a criteria for many people who are considering relocating to this area.
- I'd love to see more indoor recreation opportunities in the winter. An indoor pool in town would provide entertainment to many, draw in people from outlying towns, provide physical therapy opportunities, exercise/aquasize classes, swimming lessons for kids, and a way for the physically handicapped to have more movement and exercise options.
- Vermont Vaudeville seems to hold the secret to reviving the arts with their ability to pack the townhouse for three shows a weekend, twice a year. We should use that model to identify other opportunities. We could learn from them.
- The best way to maintain cultural vitality, economic resilience, and physical health while reducing carbon emissions is to return to the old ways of ensuring food 'security' through solid, committed relationships of barter, trade and friendships. We should offer tax breaks for folks who grow their own food and share with their neighbors.
- We should do a little soul-searching as a community and find a loving way to connect with people in more meaningful ways, like genuinely befriending people who may be different from us instead of approaching folks as the certified expert.
- We could spend some time rethinking some of those assumptions and move toward creating a more meaningful, life affirming, non-commodity-based experience for young people that addresses their concerns.
- It is important to have a place where young people can have fun—play games and socialize. We should build a place with a bowling alley and ping-pong tables and maybe an old-fashioned soda fountain. Maybe Ben and Jerry's would help with that. There should be a manager but youth should be employed and involved in the running of it.
- We should identify ways to clean up and beautify the town and address the buildup of trash and deteriorating houses.
- There is a need for more transportation for seniors who need wheel lift vans and strategies to keep them involved in activities.
- We need to maintain and redevelop our historical buildings—to keep those spaces in mind vs. new facilities.
- We need to keep good restaurants thriving on Main Street and make sure that building fronts look good.
- Develop a multi-use recreational community center for teens.
- We should have a contest to choose a new name for Wolcott St. It confuses people and it's more than Rt 14/15 going through the town. Choosing a new name for it could be very town-proud, or it might promote town spirit.
- We should have a Facebook or website spot where local businesses can communicate w/ each other regarding items that the community members would like to be able to purchase locally, but which they are having trouble finding locally. That way we could fine tune the use of our shelf space and expand what is available, by filling our shelves with things that are uniquely our own niche, not duplicating what another business has. We could, essentially, become a town-sized department store where each department would know what others have to offer.
- Find a way that local businesses and an entity along the lines of the rec committee could work together in events that benefit both. Something like a community game night.
- I would like to see new rope lights strung across the bridge and, during the holidays, light-up snowflakes on street lights through the center of town.

VII. Hardwick Community Visit Participants

Orise Ainsworth
 Shawn Ainsworth
 Wes Aksender
 Robin Arnell
 Kate Arnold
 Gordon Auchincloss
 Emmet Avery
 Lucian Avery
 Jason Bahner
 Erica Bather
 Helen Beattie
 Judy Bellairs
 Keith Bellairs
 Kate Bertolini
 Michael Bielawski
 Andrea Brightenbach
 Paulette Brochu-Colburn
 Joe Brosseau
 Lesa Cathcart
 Sequoya Cheyenne
 Kathy Ciarimboli
 Aaron Cochran
 Ross Connelly
 Diane Cornish
 Shari Cornish
 Ruby Dale-Brown
 Rachel Davey
 Heather Davis
 Evan Donovan
 Elizabeth Dow
 Dianne Drown
 Bethany Dunbar
 Edie Dunn
 Jennifer Eger
 Charles Emers
 Paul Fixx
 Jonathon Flint
 Stephanie Fraser
 Joyce Frederick
 Ron Frederick
 Rose Friedman
 Annie Gaillard
 David Gaillard
 Ruth Gaillard
 Phil Gallant

Ceilidh Galloway Kane
 Melissa Gardner
 Ted Gates
 Ann Gilcris
 Mike Glodgett
 Claudia Gohl
 Michael Gohl
 Steven Gorelick
 Diane Grenkow
 David Gross
 Dominique Gustin
 Jean Hackett
 Larry Hamel
 Lise Hamel
 Perry Heller
 George Hemmens
 Kathy Hemmens
 Denise Hill
 Amy Holloway
 Karen Holmes
 Sue Holmes
 Chris Ingram
 Katharine Ingram
 Steve Jenne
 Jon Jewett
 Suzanna Jones
 Liz Kane
 Rachel Kane
 David Kelley
 Nancy Kellogg
 Emily Lanxner
 Marie Lapre Grabon
 Joyce Larro
 Patrick Larsen
 Evelyn Lavelli
 Kristen Leahy
 Joanne Leblanc
 Patti LeBlanc
 Roger Leblanc
 Beth LeCours
 Jim LeCours
 Clara Lew-Smith
 Elijah Lew-Smith
 Jodi Lew-Smith
 Michael Lew-Smith

Kelly Locke
 Jim Lovinsky
 Kathryn Lovinsky
 Mary Ellen Lovinsky
 Liam Lyman-Leas
 Kathleen Mahurin-Volk
 Jessica Manchester
 John Mandeville
 Joyce Mandeville
 Linda Markin
 Tess Martin
 Tracy Martin
 Harold McCoy
 Anne McPherson
 Andrew Meyer
 Gary Michaels
 Linda Michniewicz
 Alberta Miller
 Chris Miller
 Nicole Miller
 Sarah Morgan
 Mike Moriarty
 Monica Morrissey
 Charlie Morrissey
 Julie Nichols
 Tim Nisbit
 Helm Nottermann
 Nancy Nottermann
 Jim Nudd
 Rylan O'Connell
 Susan O'Connell
 Jerina Page
 John Page
 Lynn Patenaude

Peter Peltz
 Jon Pepe
 Rev. John Perry
 Carole Plante
 Nancy Pope
 Brianne Ragno
 Steven Ragno
 Kesha Ram
 Katrina Razionale
 Michael Reddy
 Eric Remick
 Joe Rivard
 Maria Roosevelt
 Michael Roosevelt
 Judith Ruskin
 Carole Schminke
 Jerry Schnieder
 Hannah Schwartz
 Sandy Scott
 Norma Spaulding
 Rachel Stevens
 Caitlin Strong
 Brendan Terranova
 Tricia Tetreault
 Chip Troiano
 Sara urban
 Alex Utevsy
 Sarah Vecci
 Judy Waible
 Sarah Waring
 Durrelle Whitmore
 Norma Wiesen
 Ron Wiesen



*Karen Holmes,
 Hardwick
 Community Visit
 Chair
 extraordinaire!*

VII. Visiting Resource Team Members

Will Belongia, *Executive Director*
VT Community Loan Fund
will@vclf.org
802-223-1448

Michele Boomhower, *Director of Policy Planning and Intermodal Development*
VT Agency of Transportation
michele.boomhower@vermont.gov
802-828-5753

Ted Brady, *State Director*
USDA Rural Development
ted.brady@vt.usda.gov
802-828-6080

Paul Bruhn, *Executive Director*
Preservation Trust of Vermont
paul@ptvermont.org
802-658-6647

Chad Butt, *Executive Director*
Mobius, Vermont's Mentoring Partnership
chad@mobiusmentors.org
802-658-1888

Megan Camp, *VP/Program Director*
Shelburne Farms
mcamp@shelburnefarms.org
802-985-8686

Jill Chapman, *Rural Housing Specialist*
USDA Rural Development
jill.chapman@vt.usda.gov

Harry Chen, *Commissioner*
VT Department of Health
Harry.Chen@vermont.gov
802-871-3009

Amanda Churchill, *Director of the VT Youth Development Program*
Washington County Youth Services Bureau
achurchill@wcysb.org
802-229-9151

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

Ben Doyle, *Community Development Specialist*
USDA Rural Development
benjamin.doyle@vt.usda.gov
802-828-6042

Harry Frank, *Director of Board Education Services*
VT School Boards Association
hfrank@vtvsba.org
802-223-3580

Jody Fried, *Executive Director*
Catamount Arts
jfried@catamountarts.org
802-748-2600 x105

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

Lars Hasselblad Torres, *Executive Director, Generator*
director@generatorvt.com
802-540-0761

Minner Hobbs Conboy, *Philanthropic Consultant*
minnerhobbs@gmail.com
802-233-5736

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

Amy Howlett, *Library Development Consultant*
Vermont Department of Libraries
amy.howlett@vermont.gov
802-463-0142

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

Ellen Kahler, *Executive Director*
VT Sustainable Jobs Fund
ellen@vsjf.org
802-828-1260

Ariane Kissam, *Homeownership Programs Manager*
VT Housing & Conservation Board
akissam@vhcb.org
802-828-2965

Jolinda LaClair, *Deputy Secretary*
VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
jolinda.laclair@vermont.gov
802-828-2430

Karen Lane, *Retired Director*
Aldrich Public Library
karen@briggslane.net

Lucy Leriche, *Deputy Secretary*
VT Agency of Commerce & Community Devel.
lucy.leriche@vermont.gov
802-828-5204

Alison Low, *Senior Planner*
Northeastern VT Development
Assn.
alison@nvda.net
802-424-1418

Sherry Lussier, *Director*
Green Mountain Technology and
Career Center
slussier@gmtcc.net
802-851-1572

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

Jennifer Nelson, *Legislative
Liaison / Ag Policy Advisor*
Office of Senator Bernard Sanders
Jenny_Nelson@sanders.senate.gov
802-748-9269

Emilyle Pelow Corbett,
Philanthropic Advisor
Vermont Community Foundation
epelowcorbett@vermontcf.org
802-388-3355 x230

Carl Powden, *Regional Director,
Northeast*
Vermont Land Trust
carl@vlt.org
802-635-7611

Michelle Salvador, *Regional
Prevention Consultant*
VT Dept of Health Substance Abuse
Prevention
michelle.salvador@vermont.gov
802-888-2581

John Sayles, *CEO*
VT Foodbank
jsayles@vtfoodbank.org
802-477-4101

Arthur Schmidt, *President*
Retreat Farm, Ltd.
bschmidt@retreatfarm.org
802-257-2259

Gus Seelig, *Executive Director*
VT Housing & Conservation Board
gus@vhcb.org
802-828-3251

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

Michael Snyder, *Commissioner*
VT Dept. of Forests, Parks &
Recreation
michael.snyder@vermont.gov
802-828-1534

Betsy Terry, *Executive Director*
VT Recreation and Parks
Association
betsy@vrpa.org
802-878-2077

Tim Tierney, *Executive Director*
Kingdom Trail Association
tim@kingdomtrails.org
802-626-0737

Lauren Traister, *4-H Teen &
Leadership Coordinator*
University of Vermont Extension
lauren.traister@uvm.edu
802-888-1647

Craig Whipple, *Director of State
Parks*
Vermont Department of Forest,
Parks and Recreation
craig.whipple@vermont.gov
802-343-5318

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



Visiting team members gather for a briefing before Community Meeting Day.





A panoramic view of Nichols Pond from the vantage point of Nichols Ledge.

Photo courtesy of Perry Heller

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PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384

802-223-6091 | info@vtrural.org | www.vtrural.org