

WINDSOR

Creative Communities Program FINAL REPORT AND ACTION PLAN



JULY, 2006

Vermont Council on Rural Development

Windsor Creative Communities Program

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Introduction

Windsor is a community that prides itself on being “first”. It is the birthplace of Vermont, home to the first Vermont constitution, which was also the first constitution to ban slavery, provide for a public education system, and grant universal voting rights to all males. Windsor was where manufacturers first demonstrated the effectiveness of interchangeable parts. Made with highly precise cutting tools, these parts were a major engineering advance that became known as the American System. The Vermont state prison system first began in Windsor. Artists of the Cornish Colony, closely affiliated with Windsor, developed new styles and generated cultural “firsts.” The first seal of Vermont was designed and struck in Windsor. This strong history of innovation is being both recognized and continued today as Windsor is becoming a leader in Vermont’s creative economy.

Its mixture of strong artistic, cultural and engineering roots along the Connecticut River makes Windsor a unique Vermont community. The town’s current efforts to revive the dynamic interplay of innovations in multiple fields are a perfect starting point for creative economy initiatives, as they signal a celebration of creativity in every individual. Members of the visiting Resource Teams were truly impressed by Windsor’s innovative assets, and the town’s original application outlining these ingredients has become a model for other towns considering the Creative Communities Program.

Today, Windsor is taking new steps to pull together the components of a thriving creative economy to ensure strong local benefits. Part of this process has been recognizing what already exists. Another crucial step is drawing in more participants and resources to carry through with community projects. As one forum participant explained, Windsor has no shortage of ideas and opportunities, it’s the implementation that becomes a challenge.

Community outreach surrounding the Creative Communities Program has been one part of tackling the challenge of implementation. This process solicits input to choose projects that will interest many people, invites new people to the table for planning and carrying out action plans, and connects Windsor with a larger network of resources around the state.

Building capacity for implementation will continue from the community forums through the selected Creative Communities projects. The effort to **Form a Local Leadership Group** addresses this issue directly – intending to support the current circle of leaders, draw in new ones, and develop a strong volunteer base. The project team that will **Begin a PR Campaign** indirectly addresses the same question, by raising enthusiasm for local initiatives and better communicating the activities that offer a way for individuals to get more involved with Windsor’s community life.

The **Arts Incubator** will build capacity in entrepreneurship and creative skills. As outlined already, Windsor has made its mark as a town of entrepreneurs, from policymakers to machinists and spanning several centuries. An incubator space will allow

residents to follow their innovative ideas in the arts. It can also engage groups identified as lacking activities in Windsor, such as seniors, very young children, and teens.

Windsor's original application to the Creative Communities Program noted that a "creative economy" title had not been explicitly applied to economic development plans for the town. Nonetheless, as both the application and subsequent public forums demonstrated, the local desire to support commerce, community and culture as part of economic development fits well with a creative economy perspective. This organizing framework provides a chance to systematically advance the shared goals of Windsor area residents.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development has enjoyed working with everyone involved in Windsor's Creative Communities Program. We would like to especially thank our local steering committee for their hard work putting together the community forums, the Juniper Hill Inn for hosting steering committee meetings, and Judy Hayward for a preliminary tour of downtown Windsor. Finally, the forums would not have been possible without the space we fund at the American Legion, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Windsor Public Library and Windsor High School.

Accomplishments in the Creative Communities Program result from local leadership and community effort. However, VCRD is eager to support implementation. We suggest that you carefully review the Recommendations section of this report for concrete resources and ideas, and that you call upon members of the Resource Team (listed at the end of this report) and VCRD staff for help.

Overview of the Creative Communities Program

By 2003, the idea of the creative economy had become pervasive in Vermont, but few policy makers and local leaders had understanding of how to advance the opportunity of the creative economy systematically in state policy or in practice in towns throughout the state. The Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) convened the Vermont Council on Culture and Innovation (VCCI) to craft a strategic plan that would coordinate the work of statewide leadership, the congressional delegation and state legislature, and provide community leaders with a guide to practical action. The final product, *Advancing Vermont's Creative Economy*, was formally issued at the beginning of the 2005 Vermont Legislative session.

The VCCI report is available online at <http://www.vtrural.org>. It outlines the current strength of Vermont's creative economy and offers recommendations for increasing the contribution that a creative economy can make to the state's overall economic health.

One of the policy recommendations in the VCCI report was to establish a Vermont Creative Communities Program that would jumpstart local creative economy development projects by offering targeted assistance for community-led planning. VCRD received a grant from Jane's Trust to implement this program starting in 2005.

Today, the Creative Communities Program builds on both VCCI's findings and the successful Community Visit program that VCRD has managed for many years. Community Visits offer a way for communities to identify key issue areas and construct work plans for addressing selected public concerns.

The Creative Economy

Organizations around the world, including several in New England, have studied and set their own definitions of the "creative economy." Some definitions focus on the revenue generated by particular creative sectors that fit standard industrial codes, others focus on the individual qualities of creative workers, and still others attempt to pinpoint specific policies that spark creativity in *every* worker.

The Creative Communities Program considers all existing creative economy perspectives and uses a working definition with three key components that are common to most creative economy discussions:

•The Importance of Place:

Our discussion of "place" includes the natural, physical and community environments that form the foundation for creative economy work. Is this a place where people will *want* to work, live, and participate as active citizens? Is there a healthy mix of culture and commerce? Is there a strong community identity that distinguishes this place from any other?

•Creative Partnerships:

The 2004 *Advancing Vermont's Creative Economy* report began to outline the breadth of businesses, individuals, and organizations that contribute to a strong economy. These contributors include groups that have not traditionally been thought of as business partners, such as arts, heritage, place-based, and other (usually) not-for-profit organizations. They are core partners in economic development discussions. Who needs to be at the table to help build a strong local economy?

•Individuals' Creative Skills:

Businesses in every field generate a competitive advantage from new ideas and unique skills – how do we increase business' ability to capitalize on creative contributions? What type of environment attracts and retains today's top creative thinkers? What inspires creative thinking in *everyone* in a community?

The Creative Communities Process

The Creative Communities Program consists of three public meetings that generate the brainstorming, prioritized projects, and action steps detailed in this report. The goal is to bring a diverse group of community members to the table who are in agreement in their commitment to a strong future for their community and can begin to work together to identify key steps for ensuring that future. The timeline for Windsor's process was as follows:

April 24th, 2006 – First Public Forum

In the month leading up to the first forum, a local steering committee chooses 6 issue areas related to the creative economy to serve as the starting point for public discussion.

VCRD invites a resource team to a day of facilitated public discussion in focus groups formed around the 6 issue areas (pg. 9). Using notes from scribes and resource team members, VCRD develops list of themes that emerged during the day as concrete project possibilities. This list (pg. 25) forms the basis for the prioritization session in the second public meeting.

May 18th, 2006 – Project List Review and Prioritization

The first full community meeting places all issues of concern on the table. The second community meeting reviews and revises the ideas on the initial list and then allows individuals to champion issues seen as top priorities. Through discussion and voting, Windsor participants narrow the long list of projects that emerged from the first meeting to 3 priority areas (pg. 29), then sign up to participate in work teams on projects in these areas.

June 7th, 2006 – Project Team Working Day

In the final meeting run by VCRD, work teams for each project set specific strategies, identify available (and potential) resources, and outline a work plan for the next year around the projects selected in the second meeting. A new Resource Team invited by VCRD facilitates the group discussions, offers ideas and resource suggestions and answers questions from their experience. VCRD then writes up work plans based on residents' decisions (pg. 31). Finally, VCRD Resource Team members submit their ideas, suggestions, and resource recommendations for the use of the new committee (pg. 39).

Background to Windsor's Participation in the Creative Communities Program

Windsor was one of five pilot communities in the Creative Communities Program. The other four initial participants were: Hardwick, St. Albans, Rockingham / Bellows Falls and Rutland. A press conference in the Vermont State House kicked off the program in December, 2005. Work began with Windsor in January, 2006. However, as the application to the Creative Communities Program described, the roots of Windsor's creative economy reach back for centuries.

Windsor has a history of innovation. Vermont's first constitution, for example, granted freedoms to Vermont's citizens that moved far beyond what had previously existed. Windsor also has a history of mixing innovation across disciplines. The Cornish artists' colony, including world-renowned artist Maxfield Parrish, put the Windsor area on the map for art in the United States. The artist Parrish was also an avid machinist and once claimed that painting was a way to subsidize his fascination with machines. The lure of nearby engineering centers such as Cone Blanchard was one reason why he settled in the area. This spirit of creativity spanning different fields has been a key component of Windsor's character and economic development.

Windsor retains a connection to its creative past through cultural institutions and the impressive historic architecture of its downtown. The Constitution House is a Vermont Historic Site. The American Precision Museum is both a National Historic Site and an International Mechanical Engineering Heritage Site. The Cornish Colony Museum celebrates the work of the Cornish Colony artists. Saint-Gaudens, just across the Connecticut River, is one of only two National Park sites dedicated to a visual artist (Augustus Saint-Gaudens). Meanwhile, Historic Windsor is a popular nonprofit educational entity that protects local historic buildings while its Preservation Education Institute holds classes around the country on historic preservation.

Another important part of Windsor's creative economy is that it continues historic traditions in modern form. Technology-based companies in town show this trend. Seldon Technology, located in the former Cone Blanchard building, is a leader in nanotechnology research and development. The owners of Seldon located in Windsor because of the town's history as a leader in precision manufacturing and their personal connections with the communities of the Windsor area. The new Center for Precision Manufacturing plans to locate in downtown Windsor and serve as a center for research and development and an incubator for manufacturing businesses with a strong precision-manufacturing component. The nearby Thayer School at Dartmouth College helps maintain an environment of innovative engineering in the region.

Several initiatives underway target the heritage of the Connecticut River as an ongoing natural asset – again, bridging traditional assets with modern interests. The town hopes to revitalize the riverfront with a Rails-to-River project. A master plan for reusing space near the river was completed in 2003. At the time of Windsor's application to the Creative Communities Program it was in the process of being incorporated into the Town

Plan and zoning bylaws to encourage mixed-use development in the former industrial area. Windsor will also soon host a Waypoint Interpretive Center as part of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway program. This project will include a heritage tourism display, multi-modal transit center, and gallery space.

Windsor's artistic heritage also continues today. For example, the Vermont State Craft Center displays juried work of local artists from Windsor and the surrounding area in a downtown store.

Many dedicated individuals, businesses, and organizations are setting the stage for a strong economic future. The most recent round of revitalization work began after the loss of two major employers (Goodyear and Cone Blanchard) in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The Windsor Improvement Corporation (WIC) is currently the main economic development entity in town, made up of business owners, local officials, and representatives from the school and local government, and chaired by the director of Mt. Ascutney Hospital. The Downtown Committee organizes community events and projects to strengthen the downtown. Businesses also push forward creative economy concepts, such as the See It Made Industrial Park that offers visitors viewing of pottery making and glass blowing at Simon Pearce and tours of the state-of-the-art Harpoon Brewery, as well as owning extensive property along the Connecticut River that houses a sculpture and contemplative garden, mazes, walking trails, and an open-air performance venue.

Windsor is completing a transition from an industrial economy to a highly diverse economy that relies on technology research and development, entrepreneurs, artists, historic preservationists, craftspeople, and an innovative, growing local hospital. Windsor applied to the Creative Communities Program with the following goals:

1. Build on the growing presence of artists, craftspeople and innovators in Windsor to make the town a destination for those interested in working and participating in the arts, as well as for businesses seeking a creative community in which to locate.
2. Ensure that a fully revitalized Windsor includes cultural, aesthetic and historic features for a vibrant downtown.
3. Advance the connection between the creative economy at all levels of education in the community. Highlight the creative work being done in the school systems as a way of acknowledging Windsor's role in the creative economy.
4. Capitalize on Windsor's history of inventors by hosting the Center for Precision Manufacturing, a national center of excellence in precision manufacturing and an incubator for manufacturers whose products rely heavily on precision manufactured components.
5. Bring together individuals, businesses and organizations to build on Windsor's cultural strengths and to contribute to economic development efforts in the town.

I. Public Forum on the Creative Economy

April 24th, 2006

A local steering committee formed to plan the first public forum. The central principle behind inviting steering committee members was to bring together a diverse range of perspectives on what the creative economy could mean for Windsor. The individuals on this committee were:

Jonathan Barth
Becky Basch
Robert Dean
Alicia Fisk
James Haaf
Beth Houde
Ann Lawless
Jill Michaels
Peter Moeykens
Rose Wilson

The steering committee selected six topics to serve as the starting point for public discussions around the creative economy. These topics represented broad ideas that could open the door for participants to bring a range of specific concerns and project suggestions to the table (see notes below).

The American Legion Hall, St. Paul's Church and Windsor Public Library hosted a series of discussions on the evening of April 24th, 2006. Approximately 60 local residents took part in the focus group sessions along with a visiting Resource Team invited by VCRD. A community potluck provided dinner for the group. Below are the notes from the 6 discussion groups held that evening.

Celebrating Windsor:

Resource Team: Alex Aldrich (Executive Director, Vermont Arts Council), Richard Ewald (Development Director, Town of Rockingham), Kevin Graffagnino (Executive Director, Vermont Historical Society), Bruce Hyde (Commissioner, VT Department of Tourism & Marketing), Addy Smith-Reiman (NEK Arts, Hardwick), Bonnie Smoren (VT Council on Rural Development)

***What are some of Windsor's existing assets that should be highlighted?
How can this boost the Windsor economy?***

A list of Windsor's assets:

- History. The museums detailing that history should be promoted.
- National engineering landmarks.
- Heritage Days.

- People and their energy and commitment to making the town work.
- Much Ado About Vermont Program. Participants in this program throw a party, charging a small fee to guests, and that money is used for charity and to help the town.
- Physical attributes like Mt. Ascutney, Paradise Park and the rivers.
- The school. There is a state of the art new track and state athletic events bring in lots of people.
- Library.
- Architecture. Some buildings are in need of repair but have great potential.
- There have been author luncheons in the past.
- A small weekly paper, the Windsor Observer, is just getting started.
- Our creativity.
- Artist population.
- Rails to River program.
- Use of the river for canoes, kayaks and fishing.
- Simon Pearce.
- Path of Life sculpture garden.
- Harpoon Brewery.
- See it Made Industrial park – an asset because it draws visitors, but potentially a problem if it is drawing people away from downtown.
- State Crafts Center.
- Hospital. It is the largest employer and is active in community development and volunteer programs.
- Affordable Housing.
- Town Administrator.
- Farms.
- The correctional facility and the opportunities for partnership.
- Veteran’s memorial.

There are also current projects to pull together these assets and celebrate Windsor:

- The library has a fundraiser “Greening of Windsor”. It is a plant and bulb sale with prizes for landscaping homes and businesses. It brings in some women from the correctional facility to work on projects. It helps promote pride in beautifying Windsor.
- Heritage Days.
- Alumni Weekend.
- Moondance.
- Clear Channel has donated \$25,000 in advertising.

Other comments:

- Windsor’s self-perception needs to be overcome.
- We have a negative image to outsiders. People think of the Block Apartments, drugs, and loss of industry. It is the 1980s in people’s minds.
- We are in a media black hole. The press coverage is negative.

- We need more support and more volunteers.
- How can we engage citizens in seeing the Precision Museum as an asset? We need more volunteers.
- How can we get more women to be engaged in the Precision Museum? Women think there is nothing there for them to see.
- The correctional facility is a different institution now. We need to set an example so people will see it as an asset.
- There is an opportunity to work with correctional facility residents in partner projects.
- The size of the town is a challenge. One third of it belongs to the state and there is no place to expand.

Project Ideas

- Initiate a gallery walk.
- We need to get schools involved in the museums. We have the largest collection of Maxfield Parrish paintings in the world, but students don't come.
- There are "walls up" at the school. There is no outreach to the town.
- Teachers don't have time to involve students in museum visits.
- There used to be a museum/school visiting program. We need to regenerate that.
- We need an economic development zone where part of the sales tax is rolled back to the town. We could lobby for that.
- The Constitution House is not open year round because it is not winterized. Making that site available for more of the year would create continuity in our cultural amenities.
- The old armory used to be used as a kids' activity space. It should be returned to better use.
- The industrial building by the high school could be used as artist studios.
- The Annex building has potential. It offers great views of the river and the old gristmill.
- Advertising and promotion need to be more systematic. That is the key to our success.
- There is an empty lot on Main St. Some people are interested in developing a gardening lot. There is an opportunity for collaboration with the garden club.
- There is an old barn near the pond that could be used for something.
- We need to let people know about Windsor's history.
- Windsor needs to celebrate Windsor. We should start with something for residents to educate them about Windsor's assets.
- The historical society should be reinvigorated.
- We could unite artists and history to develop the town as a place for entrepreneurial machinists. The next generation of Maxfield Parrish.
- We could be the "new old Windsor".
- We used to have a bad reputation, but have improved considerably. We need to promote the positive.

- Start with educating the children.
- What is it we should promote? We need something tangible. Start with improving the town physically. Beautify and rehabilitate the place so it looks proud of itself. The corner at the center of town is a place to start.
- A walkway to Simon Pearce – maybe a river path would be a good idea.
- Some path discussions are underway.
- We have lost our focus. What is our purpose? Who is our target audience?

Resource Team Reflections

- A farmers' market might be a good idea.
- There is a divide between the See it Made park and downtown. There is no connection. Could passes be made so that visitors to the Brewery or Simon Pearce could help promote downtown businesses (by following the passbooks to explore beyond those stops)?
- Connect arts and business to each other.
- Maybe photos of downtown could be displayed in the See it Made Park – advertise the downtown in visitor attractions that are not in the downtown. The Tom & Sally's factory does that in Brattleboro.
- Lots of schools participate in history projects and activities in conjunction with their town. The teachers need to make the time. It comes down to the enthusiasm of the teachers and parents. The potential exists.
- Be proactive in filling your vacant spaces to help create an identity. For example, other towns no bigger than this have become known as a book town, filling spaces with antiquarian bookshops.
- Regenerate the local historical society. Newcomers that arrive here need to be reached by old-timers. Local history is a bridge.
- Your assets are tremendous and diverse.
- Strive for a closer connection between education and the town.
- Much could be done with promotion of the CT River Byway.
- What does the community want? Do you want to be high tech? Do you need infrastructure improvements? Most towns would die for what you have here.
- Your negative image can be overcome, as Bellow Falls has done. National trends are not the town's fault, but you are responsible for what you do with them.
- Nurture relationships between the Chamber of Commerce and the Historical Society.
- Step outside of yourself and see yourself as others see you.

Balancing Space for Work, Community & Social Life

Resource Team: Ted Brady (Office of Senator Leahy), Amy Dillon (UVM Center for Rural Studies), Mary Ann Goulette (Executive Director, Downtown Rutland Partnership), Patricia Menduni (Office of Senator Jeffords), Aimee Pope (Planner, VT Agency of Transportation), Doug Porter (Preservation Trust of Vermont)

Windsor contains a mix of commercial and residential space, as well as places for social activities. Is this a well-balanced mix? What is missing?

- Windsor has some places that are real strengths in the community: Paradise Park; recreation center for children/teens/adults; ball fields in coordination with National Guard; fairgrounds; skate park; Kennedy pond; library; trails on Mt. Ascutney; Path of Life Garden; town green (concerts in the summer, skating in winter).
- The Connecticut River is an asset.
- Windsor still has active farms in the area.
- Windsor is a walking town (very social); it really has a sense of a small town (know community, know neighbors, feel connected); a “safe” feeling.
- There is a great school system, all schools on one campus, interaction between grades, within walking distance of town, a “near professional” performance space.
- There is a “dynamite” hospital that has a partnership with the school.
- The town has housing and care facilities for elderly.
- There are historic things to celebrate like important architecture (post office, church, bridge, etc.) and the area’s industrial heritage.
- The Center for Precision Manufacturing will be an excellent asset (research and development and business incubator).
- Moondance is a great event.
- The Craft Center has good activities, but their space is limited.
- One challenge is that residents aren’t in the village as much as they used to be. Not many people work in town, and since they don’t work in town they can’t be as involved in community activities.
- Windsor lacks things for families to do.
- There is no central meeting space.
- There is a teenage hang-out problem.
- Windsor has a “bit of a needle problem.”
- This is an elder-based community (good for elders, lacks activities for youth and younger parents).
- Recreation programs are geared towards younger kids, teens not as connected.
- 1/3 of the land base is owned by the state, so land for housing/tax base is limited.
- The price of housing is increasing (many people couldn’t buy their own houses today, renters can’t afford to buy a house) and it’s a challenge to maintain a mix of income/housing styles.
- Absentee landlords of multi-unit housing are a problem.

- Parking is hard downtown.
- Business space is expensive.
- Space itself may or may not be a problem, it exists but is it useable – i.e. in the right form for people who need it? Are the prices reasonable?
- The 72 acre, unused and dirty riverfront is the “elephant” in the room.
- More buildings that could be restored.
- Paradise Park is under-utilized and lacks a clear entrance.
- The ice skating pond seems to form older/younger kid links but is ephemeral.
- We need to keep in mind the 80 new middle-income housing units coming in.
- Coffee-House Music Night happens at Old South Church but needs advertising because now it has spotty attendance.

Project Ideas

- The Armory should be redeveloped. The building itself is dangerous and Windsor needs to do something to enforce safety.
- Kennedy Pond needs better facilities, including restrooms, food, and programming like a lifeguard.
- There needs to be a review of our planning process / master plans for zoning.
- The Rails to River area should be targeted for revitalization and mixed use. First it needs to be cleaned up.
- The Craft Center could have more programming if there were more space; try to secure a grant for the Craft Center to buy their building and do upgrades.
- Strengthen the local paper.
- Start an online visitor center.
- Windsor needs better diversity for restaurants; there needs to be a sit-down, nice lunch place where businesses can entertain clients, locals can get good food, visitors can have a nice lunch out.
- Develop programs for very young children – daycare and preschool (there’s a special needs program, but not non-special needs).
- Build a sidewalk to the playground.
- Create a central meeting place.
- Invest in programming for young kids and teens.
- Encourage a general store to both provide basic items and be an informal community meeting place.
- Start a local movie theater, maybe use the school theater, maybe at Kennedy Pond, host a film festival of old/foreign/specialty flicks, have food options.
- Create music venues, particularly evening performance options.
- Form an art organization for adults, create a series of programs in the evenings, use existing buildings (maybe in wintertime, do a “cabin-fever” series).
- Initiate a tree planting project, go for “Tree City USA” designation.
- Start an Art Walk—gallery space, artists and musicians (Craft Gallery is already bringing in more artists).

- Find a way to get the word out better-- advertising for town events; bulletin board in middle of town or a big chalk board with daily events posted, or a web-based info center to advertise events.
- The library could be expanded and developed as a more central place, could be a gathering space.
- Increase building accessibility for people with disabilities.

Resource Team Reflections

- Housing and economic development are two different sides of same coin. If you don't want a stratified "have" development be careful to think of "have-nots."
- There are so many opportunities/ resources, there is also a need to pull together resources.
- There sounds like a huge need for things to do, and Windsor could find lots of inexpensive way to encourage activities like movies.
- The Armory building sounds like it has lots of potential, maybe there's a way to rent the space out?
- A calendar of events is important, but consistency can also help—have events in similar places each week (e.g. movies on Wed. in the park).
- The natural assets could be great – water, green spaces.
- The covered bridge is kind of hidden and could be pointed out, other architecture could also be highlighted, maybe a walking tour of history and architecture.
- Windsor needs an info center to be a clearing-house of activity possibilities.
- Yes, restaurants are absolutely needed, maybe advertise to bring in restaurants, ask chefs/restaurants to relocate—Windsor just needs one great place and others will follow.
- Windsor has great pieces to work with: "outrageous" architecture, access to the river.
- Art-centric stuff should not be hard to get started.
- Lots of towns have similar sets of issues, in other places "field trips" have been successful, take people to a location where things are working and it may inspire local versions; e.g. affordable housing—look to Bellows Falls, partnering artists with affordable housing creates a highly desirable product. This Resource Team can help with arranging visits.
- Keep mobility in mind while developing ideas—how will people get to places? Public transit? Parking? More people is more traffic, more circulation issues.
- Keep the local planning commission involved, they have tools; use innovative ways to connect people to things.
- Lots of business/housing spaces are coming in, but there aren't enough encouraging vacant spots. There are lots of opportunities to make vacant areas more interesting.
- For an example of a Vermont community that helped a local restaurant get started, look at Poultney and the Red Brook Grill.

Leadership and Capacity Building

Resource Team: Paul Hill (Vermont Community Loan Foundation), Mark Blanchard (Small Business Development Center), Paul Costello (Executive Director, Vermont Council on Rural Development), Glenn McRae (Snelling Center for Government), Nate Michaud (Maine Rural Partnership)

***How does Windsor organize around projects and community activities?
How does this aspect of community life fit into the creative economy?***

- Windsor has assets like its history, architecture and lay out.
- There are only 10 people in town who make things happen. And there are not a lot of young people getting involved in leadership. 1,700 of Windsor's citizens are over 60 years old.
- People work out of town and don't have time for community projects.
- Even while people work out of town, investing in Windsor as a hub for the region improves the entire region, including the other places where people work.
- It takes a long time for "old" Windsor folks to welcome newcomers, especially if they're from out of state.
- There's a lot of apathy – people are hesitant to get involved, there's a lack of bridges to projects, some people don't have the confidence to step forward as leaders.
- Dartmouth is a center of activity, there's the Thayer School, spin off companies, and the incubator.
- The local school is a center of community activity, especially sports and the arts.
- Different groups don't get messages out to each other, the heads of different organizations need to talk and get participation in events.
- Windsor has a rich history in the arts, which could attract people who get involved in community life.
- It's a struggle to support local communication channels, the paper and the public access TV. People need to stay informed to be engaged.
- Part of the challenge is teaching leadership skills to kids – in the community but also as part of skill development for their future careers.
- Young people who grew up in Windsor need to come back to be leaders in town. Windsor also needs new people who can be excited and step forward in the community.
- The new precision manufacturing center may do some outreach to kids.
- The group that put together the Creative Communities forum are new leaders, and they did a good job with outreach that went beyond the current silos.
- Housing is a problem and it's made worse by the large amount of land held by the state that isn't taxable, by the infrastructure running through some areas (I-91, RR, Velco) and by the large amount of Section 8 housing.
- There are lots of great ideas for Windsor, but implementation is lacking.
- Windsor started to feel sorry for itself when Goodyear closed, and the town needs to get beyond that self pity.

Project Ideas

- The first step to having new leaders is *inviting* them to take leadership.
- Windsor needs housing and places to live for people who want to come back / move here.
- Educate kids about the opportunities in new manufacturing.
- Communication is difficult and the school, town, and organizations need to evaluate how they're communicating with everyone.
- The town website could serve as a central communications place and calendar. The town is working on improving the website.
- Windsor needs a kiosk.
- Get high school kids on Boards for the Chamber, Town and other committees.
- Windsor could be doing more with the community service requirements at the school to make community service about leadership, too.
- Part of taking leadership and getting involved in the community is if you really enjoy living there – especially if it's someplace where you grew up. Focus on projects that make Windsor an enjoyable place to live.
- Hold a community fair that's like a job fair but highlights volunteer opportunities.
- Give Boards a policy manual for new members.
- Armory Square should be redeveloped to include more mixed income housing.
- Windsor should inventory everything that's going on and pull it / the people behind the activities together. Knowing who is involved (in whatever capacity) and what their interests are lets us invite people to take leadership in places that match with those interests.
- Do more outreach to both kids and adults about what the different commissions / committees around town do. Maybe the town should chart its community development activities.
- Part of the outreach in schools could be linking job counseling to local jobs.
- Generate excitement around cultural resources. There are 3 cultural centers – the Precision Museum, Cornish Colony Museum and Constitution House – but the fact that they're only open in the summer hurts promotion.
- Windsor needs entertainment.

Resource Team Reflections

- Today's leaders need to invite tomorrow's leaders to participate.
- It's interesting to note what is referred to as "away". Are White River Junction and Springfield so far away that there can't be shared leadership to advance the region?
- Are churches involved? They never came up as centers for community or community leadership.
- Place-based learning is a huge step towards community pride and engagement. There are various programs around the state (including through UVM).

- “Youth on Board” is a program that helps youth get involved in Boards.
- Give people jobs as participants first, then look to them for leadership.
- Some towns use theater / indoor performances to fill the down season when other cultural attractions are closed.
- There’s a lot of talk about bringing *Windsor* youth back to Windsor, but the first question should be how the community welcomes *all* new people who move in, regardless of where they come from.

Regional Cooperation

Resource Team: Alex Aldrich (Executive Director, Vermont Arts Council), Richard Ewald (Development Director, Town of Rockingham), Kevin Graffagnino (Executive Director, Vermont Historical Society), Bruce Hyde (Commissioner, VT Department of Tourism & Marketing), Addy Smith-Reiman (NeK Arts, Hardwick), Bonnie Smoren (VT Council on Rural Development)

How do businesses and organizations in Windsor work with regional partners? Where are there missed opportunities for collaboration – how could Windsor benefit from improved regional cooperation?

- There is a lot of room for progress in strengthening regional cooperative initiatives.
- There are some active entities such as WIC (Windsor Improvement Committee), the Springfield Regional Development Board and regional planners.
- We need to communicate and educate people about the value of promotion.
- Heritage Days is an opportunity to collaborate with other towns. The program is taking a larger view statewide and telling the whole Vermont history. This should be a year round activity.
- There are some community partnerships with social services.
- The regional geography varies between agencies. For example, human services has a different territory than transportation.
- The shopping dynamic is driven by West Lebanon.
- People go to New Hampshire for products and to Windsor for recreation services.
- Sometimes it is challenging to work with the Mt. Ascutney Regional Chamber. They don’t always understand projects that could benefit Windsor.
- Saint-Gaudens national park has a potential for tourism in the entire region.
- Waypoint participation would bring tourists.
- The Byway is an opportunity for towns up and down the river to work together.

Project Ideas

- What stories are there to be told about Windsor?
- There is the Precision history.

- The correctional facility journalism project might draw a conference to the area.
- If transportation was regionally based that would create an incentive for collaboration.
- Clear Channel is offering multi-state promotion.
- We could exchange public access TV videos with other stations.
- Agricultural innovation is of interest nationwide. We could promote a combination of woodworking, high tech and artisan foods.
- Windsor is attempting to attract more high tech businesses; these businesses look for a dynamic downtown community. We have no appropriate living spaces for young people from Boston, for example. Why would they want to live here? We don't have the right environment for high-tech workers.
- There is a struggle to overcome divisions over simple issues between even local organizations. These groups need to sit down together and organize to be more effective / efficient.
- Can Windsor be well represented by Springfield?
- There is a challenge in maintaining this town's own identity when cooperating with other towns.
- Vital Communities is a relationship that is beginning to be fostered.
- Bring teens into participation in Heritage Days. Empower them. There is a plan to educate local kids and have them wear "Ask Me" T-shirts, so that they become a resource for tourists. This answers a human service and Heritage Days need.

Resource Team Reflections

- Windsor as the birthplace of Vermont needs to be promoted – perhaps as the rebirth place of Vermont.
- You could cooperate with Harpoon Brewery. Use their labels to tell your story (telling about Harpoon's home). It would be a good partnership.
- In general, use businesses that have a regional draw to promote Windsor as part of the region's story.
- The Byway works with other Waypoint communities and is nationally recognized. The Waypoint reemphasizes 3 modes of transportation – River, rails, roads.
- There is a charge for each Waypoint community to evaluate its own region. Does Windsor have a representative to the Byways? This is an opportunity to participate in a regional initiative.
- I see a number of parallel things happening. I still have not heard anything that answers the questions, "Why would I come to Windsor?"
- Some organizations have Quest Days to foster cooperation. There is also a Fitness Quest.
- Partnerships locally are the key. In Hardwick a group of non-profits got together for training and that developed into more cooperative relationships. Local partnerships will lead to regional ones.

- Windsor is historically a blue collar town. Now you want to attract high tech employees. What will you offer? Do you want to change your community in order to attract them? Or do you need to focus on attracting something else?
- Reward and encourage entrepreneurs. You want to capture high tech people from Windsor, not from Boston. The solutions are here. You need to find them.
- What stays is more important than what you give up. Build on the relationships you have. Think 15 to 20 years out, rather than 2 years from now.

Physical Spaces – Use and Re-Use

Resource Team: Ted Brady (Office of Senator Leahy), Amy Dillon (UVM- Center for Rural Studies), Mary Ann Goulette (Executive Director, Downtown Rutland Partnership), Patricia Menduni (Office of Senator Jeffords), Aimee Pope (Planner, VT Agency of Transportation), Doug Porter (Preservation Trust of Vermont)

How does Windsor’s physical environment connect to the creative economy? Particular areas of interest are downtown buildings, historic buildings and green spaces.

- Windsor has many green space assets:
 - Constitution Common
 - War Memorial
 - Paradise Park
 - 1000 acres of forest held by the State of Vermont
 - Mt. Ascutney State Park
 - Town Green
 - Connecticut River
 - Buena Vista Common
 - Fairgrounds
 - School Fields
 - Waterfall (no access)
 - Old Mill Pond
 - Local farms (4 working farms)
 - Play castle on Bridge Street
- Buildings that should be better used include:
 - Old Newbury’s Building
 - Armory and Armory Square
 - 2nd floor of the Post Office
 - Goodyear
 - Dressler Barn
 - “Great Seal” House
 - Ascutney Dam (national engineering attraction)
 - Spooner Building and Barn (next to Ascutney dam)
 - Kennedy’s Old Saw Mill
 - Rod Gray’s Machine Shop on River

- Patrice Room Club Car Building
- Stone Tracy Block
- 2nd stories to many downtown buildings (some have residential spaces above store fronts)
- Buildings behind the diner
- The whole southern entrance to Windsor needs to be improved.
- The Rails to River area still needs work.
- All of Main Street requires a beautification effort.
- Museums could go into underutilized buildings.
- Windsor needs basic Main Street things, like clothing stores, grocery options, ice cream / candy stores, paint store, car / trucking supply store, general retail space and lodging.
- Windsor needs a senior center and a daycare center – possibly the two combined.
- Make a theme, like a used-book theme or some other “beacon” to focus marketing of the community.
- Some of the people in town at night make others feel unsafe.
- Windsor needs an alternative to Price Chopper, particularly a Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s or other natural foods store.
- Windsor could have a water bottling plant – it’s got the best water in the state.
- There’s a lack of restaurants, particularly for lunch.
- Downtown isn’t very lively.

Project Ideas

- Deal with contamination. The Agency of Natural Resources assisted with assessment and repair of damaged properties when it was an issue with Rails to River. Windsor needs to figure out what redevelopment will be, assemble money.
- Attract discounted businesses that fit the historic architecture theme (e.g. renovator’s hardware, anthropology, Vermont salvage)— identify a niche, create a marketing plan to get businesses to bring their excess here and sell it at a reasonable price; this fills a local need yet also becomes a destination spot.
- Focus on bringing things into Main Street that are needed by locals (food/grocery/avoid “retail uselessness”). The big goal should be a “walkable” town where one can secure all needed things by walking; it’s about creating a community.
- People not only work outside of town, they also travel outside of town to find food, culture, entertainment, and places for their kids to play. Windsor should focus on what is drawing people back out of town after work and meet those needs more locally.
- Encourage entrepreneurs to bring in their business.
- Develop more parking so there can be more housing downtown.
- Youth downtown can be part of the vitality, but Windsor needs to offer interesting things for them to do downtown.
- Work on Kennedy Pond—infrastructure development (cleaning/parking/facilities) could be combined with fixing the dam and adding a bike path along the river.

- Look at creative ways to alleviate parking issues, like the suggestion of a bike path to Kennedy Pond. There should also be bike paths or sidewalks from downtown to the ball fields.
- Make a Museum to Museum Path: Bridge Street (bridge needs to be restored/reinforced) to Main Street to old Grist Mill, old video store owned by Precision museum would become a vantage point over old Grist Mill.
- Improve access to the Connecticut River: a bike-path to boundary of Mill Brook in Windsor could help, could be part of Byways Grant.
- “Green-Up Day” could gather a large group of people to clean up Mill Brook. Targeting youth involvement could start a better culture of civic responsibility.
- Clean up Armory Square, empower the people living there, take local responsibility for building maintenance.
- Give kids a healthy hanging out alternative, maybe a teen drop-in center.
- 4 historic buildings have already been restored, others could as well, perhaps concentrating on old churches.
- Form a cooperative of artists, train young people, sell products in local specialty stores, develop more space for such a project (perhaps develop Craft Center).
- Start an arts or science after-school program.

Resource Team Reflections

- Creative economy loves cultural heritage, historical preservation work sets the stage.
- The Preservation Trust has lots of resources that could be helpful in looking at the local building inventory. The Trust can bring technical assistance for architectural engineering or crafts, the preservation grant program can help give monies for construction, and there’s a partnership with Leahy that gives money to public service buildings that need smaller amounts than would be accessed through HUD
- Code and access issues are difficult for 2nd story development, Windsor has a “designated downtown” so there should be help available for zoning/regulation/coding issues.
- Consider transportation connections to new projects, particularly walking paths
- 1st floor retail needs demand; property owners rent to whoever wants space, so bring them a tenant (something that can be easier said than done).
- Rutland City had a green up effort that divided the city into 4 quadrants for fix-up, meeting with police department, etc.
- Windsor is blessed with lots of options: an impressive list of natural resources, lots of historic character and significance.
- Windsor must pick and prioritize the events and projects that are most important; the challenge is “telling your story.”

Opportunities for Youth

Resource Team: Paul Hill (Vermont Community Loan Foundation), Mark Blanchard (Small Business Development Center), Paul Costello (Executive Director, Vermont Council on Rural Development), Glenn McRae (Snelling Center for Government), Nate Michaud (Maine Rural Partnership)

How does creating opportunities for youth fit into the creative economy?

- There are assets here for youth – the library, Kennedy Pond, museums, VT History Days, Mt. Ascutney, Paradise Park, concerts on the green, skate park, playing fields, fairgrounds, a school near downtown.
- There are two kinds of kids in town – ones that will get involved in everything and take advantage of all our opportunities, and others that are simply not engaged and don't care about the opportunities Windsor offers. It's not clear how to get through to the second type.
- The town Recreation Department provides activities.
- There's a huge elderly population here that is very bored. They all walk for entertainment.
- People with small children are also bored and there aren't many activities for their kids.
- There isn't a central place for teens to get together, they just "hang out" wherever.
- There are strong music and sports programs.
- Even with the strong programs, there's still a group of kids who don't connect with what's available.
- There's a mentoring program – Windsor Town Partners.
- Youth need a space to follow their own interests.
- Part of engaging youth is to give them the tools to engage themselves – to lead projects / programs in town.
- There's a Community Resource Center and the Windsor on Air studio that already have space where some activities could be.
- Heritage Days has a bit of an identity crisis vis a vis tourists – it could be a larger source of community involvement than it is.
- There is a student representative on the Paradise Park Board.
- It's not clear that youth involvement should be a separate issue – strengthening the creative economy in general should open up more ways for youth to get / stay connected.

Project Ideas

- Entertaining kids can also get them ready for the workforce. One example is MIT's Computer Clubhouse that gives kids a space to mess around with computers and also develop a connection with college.

- Youth could be mentored by local entrepreneurs – for example Seldon Labs, WinCycle. Look to White River Junction, too, there could be great role models there.
- Use local businesses as an educational opportunity – for example the Craft Center or Musicians’ Junkyard.
- Build an incubator space for youth to play music and for other creative projects.
- Make better use of the school theater.
- Build a playground you can walk to from downtown.
- The school should start arts-related residencies.
- Revitalize the river.
- Do bicycle tours of the area, perhaps with an eco-tour component.
- Coordinate communications better. There should be a teen webpage connected to the town webpage and also a page in the Valley News.
- Start transportation to the Springfield Recreation Center.
- Connect the parents – they could be telling each other about opportunities for their kids.
- Work with the Downtown Program to attract more, younger families to live in downtown.

Resource Team Reflections

- Don’t lose sight of what the kids’ aspirations are – they may not match what we want for them.
- Identify what is wrong with “hanging out.” Presumably some kids are getting into trouble when they hang out or are doing nothing *but* hanging out; don’t forget that it’s normal for everyone to spend unstructured time with friends – we all do that.
- Help kids think in the long term – what do they want to do 10 years from now, and how does what they’re doing today, in Windsor, tie into those goals?
- Keep the regional perspective in mind. Windsor has facilities, like the theater, that can be used regionally, and at the same time it’s exciting to connect kids to activities in other towns, like White River Junction.
- Assess how Windsor’s strengths compare with nearby towns – this should be complementary, not trying to compete with each other in overlapping areas.
- One thing not discussed is what gives youth creativity. Imparting that creative spark is key.
- Find ways to bring youth and the elderly together.
- Expose youth to arts and crafts.

II. Initial List of Project Possibilities **May 18th, 2006**

The April 24th public forum produced stacks of notes from enthusiastic group discussions. The next step was sifting through the information to form a list of the major projects suggested that evening.

The Vermont Council on Rural Development looked through the forum notes, and input from the Resource Team on what they had heard, to pull together the first draft of a projects list. VCRD identified common themes that appeared throughout the discussions and blocked out a list of ambitious concepts that could provide a starting point for project teams to research and refine. VCRD did not filter projects based on feasibility or how closely they related to the creative economy. Instead, this process simply organized the notes, combined small ideas into larger ones, and connected general observations to concrete project possibilities.

Revisions to the initial list occurred at a public meeting, where participants added new topics, combined existing topics into single projects, and made corrections to each proposal. This public process produced the following, final proposed topic list.

Strengthen Major Outdoor Assets: Windsor has many outdoor assets that should be considered as a whole with specific projects that advance Windsor's outdoor environment overall. Below are examples of community priorities in this area.

Paradise Park and Kennedy Pond need greater community investment, including support of existing committees concerned with their future. Windsor should maintain a clear, attractive entrance to Paradise Park and celebrate the Park with a community fitness event. As a companion to the park development, Windsor should improve Kennedy Pond facilities, provide structured swim programs (with a lifeguard) and build bike trails that allow access without a car.

Sponsor a Windsor Green Up Effort. Green spaces in Windsor are currently celebrated by activities like the library's greening day. However, some larger efforts are needed. "Green Up" days should continue beyond the statewide Green Up in May and provide a way to get more people invested in community beautification. Another part of greening should be a major tree planting initiative. Windsor should connect existing green spaces with bike trails where possible as well as provide transportation to bring elderly residents to enjoy parks, ponds and the riverfront.

Revitalize the Riverfront. The Connecticut River plays a major role in the physical character of Windsor. For many people, it is their first view of the town. Windsor should complete riverfront clean up efforts, highlight existing access trails and identify where better access is needed, and take advantage of the Connecticut River Byway / Waypoint Center program to promote the river as a community asset.

Finally, a strong bike and pedestrian trail system is needed to connect all of these assets, as well as connecting major businesses located outside of downtown with downtown Windsor.

Launch a Teen Ambassadors Program: Windsor teens should be ambassadors and educators for their community. A Teen Ambassador program should include developing a guide to historical highlights, answering visitors' questions at large community events (as is planned for Heritage Days), and collaboration with other community members on a "Community Fair" day. The Community Fair would mimic a job fair, with booths promoting ways to get involved in Windsor including volunteer, town government and "buy local" opportunities. This ambassador program should also include projects that connect teens with other generations in town, particularly senior citizens.

Sponsor a Winter Performance Series: Windsor should expand its wintertime cultural offerings with a performance series that showcases talented area residents. An organized, winter-long events schedule could help promote existing events, such as the Coffeehouse Music Nights at Old South Church and High School performances, as well as providing a stage for new performers.

In addition to live performances, the winter performance series should include movies. A full movie theater may not be necessary, but movie screenings at existing locations with that capacity could be a popular evening activity for the town. In addition to regular movie nights, residents would also enjoy small film festivals. A movie task force could add a new dimension to Windsor's cultural and recreational opportunities.

A committee working on this project could add one more cultural dimension by sponsoring a Windsor Book Fair that includes lectures by writers in every genre. Adding a literary aspect to winter performances may expand the audience excited about the initiative as well as highlighting another pool of local cultural assets.

Inventory and Market Underutilized Space: Windsor has many spaces – both green space and building space – that are currently underutilized. To address this issue, Windsor should create an inventory of these spaces, identify general restoration needs, and provide matchmaking between those who need space and what is available. Windsor should also provide basic assistance with finding resources to make spaces usable, for example historic preservation work or brownfield clean up. Immediate needs suggested include more space for the Crafts Center, artists' studios, and more places for teens to hang out.

Begin a Public Relations Campaign: Windsor needs to do a better job of telling its story. Residents feel that regional media give the town unflattering coverage and often fail to report on success stories. Forming a PR team for Windsor can get out a better message to help transform the town image. PR work can find ways to advance greater appreciation for existing cultural institutions. PR work should include a dynamic, up-to-date webpage that residents and visitors can all use to find out what's happening around Windsor and a kiosk (non-virtual) for posting community notices.

There are two projects that a PR team could also undertake to showcase Windsor assets. One is developing a passport book that brings visitors to attractions outside of town (for example Simon Pearce, Harpoon Brewery and the See It Made Industrial Park) and in the downtown, and offering a prize for filling the book. A second suggestion is to create a cultural walking tour to visit destinations like historic architecture, museums, and

rotating arts/crafts displays. Older residents could be brought into the development by sharing their stories about Windsor's past. One evening each month during the summer, local businesses and cultural institutions should open their doors as hosts and help make the walking tour into an event for the community.

Recruit a New Restaurant to Downtown: While Windsor does have food options in the downtown, residents feel that there is need for more. The town should rally to recruit a restaurant that balances affordability with a high quality dining experience. It should offer an environment that one speaker described as a place where a business could take a potential client to lunch. Potential chefs should pay particular attention to incorporating local foods into their menu.

Organize a Media Training Program for High School Students: A media-focused teen program could both add variety to after-school student options and draw new energy into local media. The project should begin with media lab space that offers computers, cameras, and other equipment needed to explore media technology. This space for creative work could be paired with internships in collaboration with the High School. Other potential partners include Windsor On Air, the Windsor Area Observer, the Valley News and online media outlets.

Form a Local Leadership Group: A range of organizations, businesses, and committees provide leadership in community activities for Windsor. There should be a strong platform for both building this community leadership and coordinating activities across groups. There should be inclusive meetings (even if only a few times each year) where all groups can learn about each others' activities, share information across memberships, and plan outreach to Windsor area residents who might be interested in becoming more involved. A leadership organization should help develop Windsor's volunteer capacity. For example by building a list serve of individuals interested in one-time volunteer opportunities, exploring linkages with the correctional facility, and helping local boards write manuals for new and prospective members.

The Project Team implementing this project should also consider ways in which organizing human capital can tie into organizing information about physical spaces in town that may currently be underutilized.

Collaborate with Area Businesses on a Technology Education Series: The Windsor area is home to a variety of high tech businesses. Examples include Seldon Technologies, the planned Center for Precision Manufacturing, Wind-Cycle and the Thayer School at Dartmouth. A community learning series should join these nearby resources in offering workshops, lectures, tours and other educational events to community members of all ages.

Expand Preschool Options: Residents identify young children as an underserved group in Windsor. Community members can collaborate on affordable preschool options, as well as activities to engage families with small children. Senior citizens should be involved in developing and running programs for children.

Celebrate the Art of Science: Windsor has a long tradition of combining arts, science and engineering. Exploring this combination today can break down barriers between different groups in town that don't often find reasons to work closely together. Windsor should sponsor a town-wide competition for displays that explore the interface of art and science. These could be constructed in downtown locations for everyone to visit. Displays should encourage creative partnerships, create a field trip destination for area schools, and provide something that appeals to everyone's interests – whether those are in the arts, sciences, or both.

Create an Arts Incubator: A Windsor Arts Incubator can provide space for *everyone* to explore their creative ideas and build a sense of community. An incubator should provide room for several levels of work, from new learners to professionals. Options would include studio space and offices for arts-related businesses, classroom space, places where community members can practice music, display areas for both professional artists and interested community members, and connections with High School programs like the theater. As with all of the projects proposed for Windsor, arts incubation should include a strong intergenerational component.

An arts incubator in Windsor may or may not be a single building. The final project should find a way to incorporate existing cultural resources as active partners. These existing spaces are potential hosts for arts incubator events and programs. If a distinct building is converted to incubator space for this project, using existing structures should be considered before building a new one.

Provide Seniors with an Activities Center: Seniors in Windsor face a shortage of activities to keep them engaged in the community. This weakness becomes particularly apparent during the long winters, when seniors look for indoor activities and ways to socialize in spite of the poor weather and short daylight. All projects undertaken in the creative economy should seek involvement from community members of every age category. That general inclusion should be paired with a center dedicated to year-round senior activities.

Design and Implement Plans for a Sustainable Windsor Community: As Windsor considers community development projects, residents see many ways in which to incorporate better environmental principles. Specific concerns include purchasing local foods, providing basic goods within walking distance of the town center, increasing the number of residents who can find satisfying work within Windsor (without commuting elsewhere), green building design, alternative fuels, and historic preservation initiatives that retain the town's architectural character while also favoring use of existing buildings before bringing more open space into development. Creating a single committee to consider sustainability initiatives across the board is one strategy for promoting a healthy Windsor environment and building a culture of environmental responsibility.

III. Priority Topics **Selected May 18th, 2006**

The Windsor High School provided space for the second community meeting of the Creative Communities process on May 18th, 2006. This meeting is the center point of the democratic decisionmaking that takes place through the Creative Communities Program, where residents select priority areas that will become the focus of year-long project teams. This is a forum where ideas flow freely, arguments are offered, perspectives shared, and people have the opportunity to champion their beliefs and then vote their priorities.

After discussing and revising project proposals, voters used a weighted system, starting with 8 votes to distribute among the topics, which cut the list to 8 possibilities. After a second discussion session, voters received 4 more votes to distribute and reach the final 4 topics. This system allows voters to select multiple topics and also indicate their degree of enthusiasm for each topic by potentially giving multiple votes. Level of interest is key to this process, as the end goal is to find projects that Windsor residents will line up behind to make happen.

The three priority issues selected by Windsor are:

Create an Arts Incubator: A Windsor Arts Incubator can provide space for *everyone* to explore their creative ideas and build a sense of community. An incubator should provide room for several levels of work, from new learners to professionals. Options would include studio space and offices for arts-related businesses, classroom space, places where community members can practice music, display areas for both professional artists and interested community members, and connections with High School programs like the theater. As with all of the projects proposed for Windsor, arts incubation should include a strong intergenerational component.

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Form a Local Leadership Group: A range of organizations, businesses, and committees provide leadership in community activities for Windsor. There should be a strong platform for both building this community leadership and coordinating activities across groups. There should be inclusive meetings (even if only a few times each year) where all groups can learn about each others' activities, share information across memberships, and plan outreach to Windsor area residents who might be interested in becoming more involved. A leadership organization should help develop Windsor's volunteer capacity. For example by building a list serve of individuals interested in one-time volunteer opportunities, exploring linkages with the correctional facility, and helping local boards write manuals for new and prospective members.

The Project Team implementing this project should also consider ways in which organizing human capital can tie into organizing information about physical spaces in town that may currently be underutilized.

Begin a Public Relations Campaign: Windsor needs to do a better job of telling its story. Residents feel that regional media give the town unflattering coverage and often fail to report on success stories. Forming a PR team for Windsor can get out a better message to help transform the town image. PR work can find ways to advance greater appreciation for existing cultural institutions. PR work should include a dynamic, up-to-date webpage that residents and visitors can all use to find out what's happening around Windsor and a kiosk (non-virtual) for posting community notices.

There are two projects that a PR team could also undertake to showcase Windsor assets. One is developing a passport book that brings visitors to attractions outside of town (for example Simon Pearce, Harpoon Brewery and the See It Made Industrial Park) and in the downtown, and offering a prize for filling the book. A second suggestion is to create a cultural walking tour to visit destinations like historic architecture, museums, and rotating arts/crafts displays. Older residents could be brought into the development by sharing their stories about Windsor's past. One evening each month during the summer, local businesses and cultural institutions should open their doors as hosts and help make the walking tour into an event for the community.

IV. Action Plans **June 7th, 2006**

Community members have organized into Project Teams to implement the ideas generated during the earlier strategic planning sessions. Each Project Team has a chairperson to run sessions for the next year. At the first team meetings on June 7th, committee members worked closely with facilitators and small resource teams to develop step-by-step action plans, and to devise a list of human and financial resources to help achieve their goals. This final phase of the program marks the time when residents begin the exciting work of turning ideas into action.

Create an Arts Incubator

» **Create an Arts Incubator:** A Windsor Arts Incubator can provide space for *everyone* to explore their creative ideas and build a sense of community. An incubator should provide room for several levels of work, from new learners to professionals. Options would include studio space and offices for arts-related businesses, classroom space, places where community members can practice music, display areas for both professional artists and interested community members, and connections with High School programs like the theater. As with all of the projects proposed for Windsor, arts incubation should include a strong intergenerational component.

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Action Steps

1. *Organize Next Meeting.*

Have a fun / informal meeting to learn about each other and why each person loves the arts / their connection to the arts.

Brainstorm about a vision for what everyone wants 15 years out.

2. *Create a vision / mission statement out of shared experiences.*

3. *Expand Group.*

Draw in others who are already doing / presenting arts (e.g. summer concert people).

4. *Create an Inventory of Activities.*

List arts activities/ events that are already happening.

Think of how to connect existing projects in town and surrounding area, including connecting with potential partners (see “Resources”)

See also “Resources” section re. inventorying available space.

5. *Identify Activities that People are Passionate About.*

Decide who will commit to facilitate & develop ideas of how to make these activities happen.

Subgroups for these activities will create detailed plans.

6. *Draft a 5-Year Plan.*

Set specific actions for each year.

7. *Go on a Field Trip* (suggested by facilitators)

See what other arts organizations are doing and *how* they are doing it.

Resources

1. List Underutilized Spaces.

Include dream spaces to renovate.

Brainstormed List:

- Antiques place – basement area for rent.
- Old Firehouse – space in front of bakery (museum upstairs), unclear what other tenants might be.
- Brownfield buildings (old factory spaces). Harpoon is not – opened restaurant.

- Arts Walk.
- Recreation Center (municipal building).
- Community Resource Center.
 - Small theater & conference center
 - Community access media (Windsor on Air)
- Senior Housing – dining and recreation areas.
- Legion Hall – hall, theater.
- Churches.
- Coffeeshouses.

2. List Spaces Used Currently for Arts Activities.

3. Community Partners:

WinCycle, Library, Hartland Film Series, Inn, Merchants

Form a Local Leadership Group

» **Form a Local Leadership Group:** A range of organizations, businesses, and committees provide leadership in community activities for Windsor. There should be a strong platform for both building this community leadership and coordinating activities across groups. There should be inclusive meetings (even if only a few times each year) where all groups can learn about each others' activities, share information across memberships, and plan outreach to Windsor area residents who might be interested in becoming more involved. A leadership organization should help develop Windsor's volunteer capacity. For example by building a list serve of individuals interested in one-time volunteer opportunities, exploring linkages with the correctional facility, and helping local boards write manuals for new and prospective members.

The Project Team implementing this project should also consider ways in which organizing human capital can tie into organizing information about physical spaces in town that may currently be underutilized.

For more information on this group contact: Don Howard (dhoward@windsor-vt.org)

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Action Steps

1. *Select Chair for Project Team.*

2. *Identify Existing Leaders and Organizations.*

ID who would be benefited by a group that can build volunteer capacity, manage peripheral activities, adjudicate differences, coordinate information and raise money.

Succinct description of group's role will be needed.

3. *Create a Coordination Mechanism / "Partnership" for Activities.*

4. *Create a Coordination Mechanism for Information.*

Existing resources for communication:

- Community calendar
- Local cable channel
- Newspaper (weekly)
- Post Office (community bulletin board)
- Town Website (others = Chamber, library)

When IDing best ways to coordinate information for getting involved in the community, consider producing a community resource directory.

5. Build Opportunities to “Learn about your community.”

6. Develop a Volunteer Base

- Volunteers Fair (first step = find a better title)
- Networking opportunities

Additional Brainstorming (Transcription of background notes on roles for a leadership group)

- Raising money
- Creating community ownership
- Conveying excitement over Creative Communities
- Adjudicate differences
- Manage peripheral activities
- Deal with community coordination
- Volunteer development – including identifying ways to volunteer, coordinating information about how to volunteer, outreach around volunteer opportunities.
- Leadership training
- Volunteer fair
- Networking opportunities
- Coordination of information

Begin a PR Campaign

» **Begin a Public Relations Campaign:** Windsor needs to do a better job of telling its story. Residents feel that regional media give the town unflattering coverage and often fail to report on success stories. Forming a PR team for Windsor can get out a better message to help transform the town image. PR work can find ways to advance greater appreciation for existing cultural institutions. PR work should include a dynamic, up-to-date webpage that residents and visitors can all use to find out what's happening around Windsor and a kiosk (non-virtual) for posting community notices.

There are two projects that a PR team could also undertake to showcase Windsor assets. One is developing a passport book that brings visitors to attractions outside of town (for example Simon Pearce, Harpoon Brewery and the See It Made Industrial Park) and in the downtown, and offering a prize for filling the book. A second suggestion is to create a cultural walking tour to visit destinations like historic architecture, museums, and rotating arts/crafts displays. Older residents could be brought into the development by sharing their stories about Windsor's past. One evening each month during the summer, local businesses and cultural institutions should open their doors as hosts and help make the walking tour into an event for the community.

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Action Steps

1. Information Gathering

Inventory what is already happening with marketing efforts – include encore of Ann Lawless' presentation, getting input from local businesses, find walking tours (see #11).

Inventory where gaps are in getting the word out – example of Tourist Information booth not knowing that there are places to stay in Windsor.

Research websites – including both what exists for online clearinghouses of Windsor information and ideas for future website design.

2. *Track Windsor Coverage in Regional Media*

Start ad hoc newspaper clipping immediately, but also think of better structures, for example could this be a class project at the High School?

3. *Tour Other Models*

Visit and/or talk with other towns that have successfully turned their image around.

Bellows Falls could be a good first stop.

4. *Tie into Existing Marketing*

Understand what has already been done with marketing plans for Windsor region and be sure that publicity work done by this group is consistent with that message.

Ask Rudy Hanecak III re. taglines.

5. *Visioning Session*

A facilitated meeting for all groups marketing aspects of Windsor to develop shared goals and a mechanism for remaining connected / collaborating in an efficient way.

Additional action steps would come from this session. Several should relate to branding work.

6. *Website Design*

Set firm plans for a dynamic, accessible website connecting Windsor groups (preferably by upgrading an existing site instead of starting another).

Ethan Goldman has volunteered to do initial consultation.

Set plan for obtaining resources to fund continued upkeep of final site.

7. *Upgrades for Windsor on Air*

Talk to Windsor on Air about equipment needs / plans for upgrades / any need for assistance from this group.

Examples: DVD capacity, compatibility with other TV stations in the area, capacity for distance learning and teleconferencing.

8. *Outreach to Newspapers*

Editorial meetings (also meeting with Sarwar Kashmeri)

Take out a 1 page ad in local papers

9. *Familiarity Tour for Area Employees*

May need to both host a formal tour and set up other mechanisms (e.g. free passes to museums) to get employees to explore the town and then talk knowledgeably to customers about what's happening in Windsor.

10. *Passport Book for Exploring Windsor*

Develop a passport book that leads to attractions both inside and outside of town with a prize for visiting all destinations.

11. *Walking Tours*

Build community events around updated walking tours (e.g. Historic Windsor, trees). For example, local businesses and cultural institutions could open their doors as hosts one evening each month during summer.

12. *Connect with State, Regional, and National Networks*

Start with a tour of the catchment area – taking the message of what Windsor has to offer on the road to target audiences (many of which will be close to home) and hearing their ideas / impressions/ interests.

One network to tap: Scenic Byways program for Connecticut River.

Resources

1. Some Notes on Related Happenings:

- Historic Windsor has high quality survey work on historic assets, revising up from 80 buildings to 360.
- Mike Quinn has tours on significant trees, Paradise Park.
- Tours connected with state program that encourages walking.
- Marker text and artwork designs for signage have been funded.
- Windsor is a Scenic Byway location.
- Upper Valley Life magazine includes ads and articles on Windsor.
- Welcome package being distributed to new homeowners.
- Windsor is working with Quests (see Vital Communities).
- The town has a large downtown development budget.
- Local paper and local TV station
- State marketing campaigns - Heritage Days (need to talk to the program), historic site.

2. Anticipated Resource Needs

Website – Funding for implementation and maintenance.

Visioning Session – Outside facilitator and various incidentals (eg food)

Producing and Distributing Materials – Organizations and businesses would invest if they're benefiting from the campaign, but seed money would be needed.

Windsor Recommendations

Resource Team members represent a wide array of professionals from across the state, and agree to serve as partners and advisors to the Windsor Project Teams. Their recommendations encompass their experience, past success, and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs. It is hoped that community members will turn frequently to these pages for concrete ideas, resources, and support. Resource Team members are eager to support the Project Teams as they begin their work. Call on them for help (contact information is found at the end of the report). The following are recommendations compiled from the Resource Teams' comments.

Leadership Development

A large part of Leadership Development relies not on finding new leaders, but on developing a local base of skilled volunteers that can support existing initiatives and (eventually) be a pool of new leaders when one is needed. Volunteers tend to emerge because they are interested in specific projects. The challenge, then, is to clearly identify projects that are helping the entire community and then engage the particular skills / interests of each volunteer. As one step, this work team could coordinate with the PR team on outreach.

There are tools that exist for non-profit communications that could help with a general campaign to raise community involvement. **Cause Communications** is one source of reference materials, including its **Communications Toolkit** that gives an overview of strategies for organizations along with an extensive list of what, more detailed, references exist on a range of topics (www.causecommunications.org).

A helpful way to get information out about volunteer opportunities is to establish a physical place, in a central area where foot traffic already exists, to post notices about community events. Building a kiosk could create that central place. If people get in the habit of seeing announcements in a particular location, they will be more aware of what's going on – especially when those announcements are reinforced through e-mail lists, newspaper calendars, etc. It will be important to remove out of date information regularly.

There are Vermont programs that specifically target leadership skills. A statewide program is run by the **Snelling Center for Government** (Contact: Linda Wheatley, (802) 859-3090). Some emerging leaders from Windsor might want to apply to participate in that training. Franklin County determined to start its own leadership program to broaden the benefits of leadership training and key in to the practical needs of the community; they formed the **L.E.A.D.** program in Franklin County (Contact: (802) 527-7418 or jeff.moreau@verizon.net. Brian Searles began the program).

The **Vermont Museum & Gallery Alliance** has a mentors program that can help historical societies, museums, and galleries on a broad range of topics, such as finances, governance, strategic planning, board development, and bylaws. Usually it takes the form of a day long session with a mentor, often a half day of prep and review of the group's materials ahead of time, then a half day meeting, with follow up recommendations (<http://www.vmga.org/>, or call Mark Case at (802) 457-2671).

The **Southeast Vermont Leadership Program**, chaired by Peter Andrews at Dufresne-Henry happens every few years. The group usually visits Windsor to hear a presentation by Judy Hayward and sometimes visits the American Precision Museum. Peter Andrews can be contacted at (802) 886-2261.

A variety of organizations and consultants offer practical short-term training in meeting management, facilitation and mediation, agenda setting—the crucial, operational side of committee leadership. **Woodbury College** (<http://www.woodbury-college.edu>) may be able to offer such workshops to Windsor residents; **VCRD** also has experience in this area and could be called on for help (Paul Costello, (802) 828-6024).

Youth may be a strong pool of new leaders. The Massachusetts-based Youth on Board program offers assistance for youth engagement in community leadership <http://www.youthonboard.org/>.

PR / Marketing Campaign

The first step in a marketing campaign will be refining what image Windsor wants to project and how different groups will work together to build the Windsor image. Some communities seek grants to fund professional marketing studies, such as the **O'Neal Branding Study** recently completed for **St. Johnsbury Works** (Linda Fog, (802) 748-7121). For a shorter, one-day facilitated session contact the **Vermont Council on Rural Development** for recommendations (Paul Costello, (802) 828-6024).

The **VT Department of Tourism and Marketing** (Diane Konrady, (802) 828-3683) and/or **Upper Valley Chamber of Commerce** (<http://www.uppervalleychamber.com/>) could provide training or support to a marketing effort.

This group could designate one or two point people to focus on building long-term relationships with media representatives. That work includes finding out who the beat reporters are for the newspapers that cover Windsor and also contacting the papers to find out if they would devote column space on a weekly basis for community news (written by the selected point person). Work teams could send updates on their activities for inclusion in a variety of stories.

Members of this project team can also each use their own channels to get out information that was written for papers – for example by posting copy on the town's website or passing through email list serves. This would create local reinforcement of stories that are picked up by outlets with a larger coverage area.

Align internal communications. This team should be plugged into what other teams are doing and should also work with local government officials (select board, town manager, town clerk, school superintendent/ principals) to ensure a consistent positive message.

There are some basic components of getting good media coverage:

- Press releases about the group's efforts are great, and you want to let people know what you're doing and invite them to join in. But resist the temptation to send out a press release after every meeting or every time you make a decision, unless you have news, especially something tangible people can see.
- Send out an advisory at least a week before an event letting the media know what's going to happen. Make sure to play up visuals for the television people.
- Send out a press release after the event has occurred. Package it just like a news story: Headline; dateline; punchy lead (first sentence); quotes from participants; background information; and a Web address to go to for more information. Your communications person's contact information should be on the release.
- Know the medium's deadlines: Morning daily papers vary but a late afternoon or early evening deadline is standard, especially for inside copy/features.
- Television has to have the footage shot a couple of hours before airtime to edit.
- Same rules for radio, except for community stations that go on the fly.
- Generally, give features more lead time.
- Unless your story is HOT, you're competing with stories that are. Monday is always a good day to launch a press release because the cupboard is usually bare.
- Fridays are iffy because the Saturday paper and Friday newscast not the most watched or read. On the other hand, reporters looking to leave for the weekend may be looking for stories to put in place.

Having a solid web presence is important and technology can help out with many forms of communications. A great resource for technology and software is **Tech Soup** - www.techsoup.org. There are a variety of database programs that integrate with email newsletters and are simple and low-cost or free.

Consider whether members of a leadership program or college class could help Windsor implement its plans. Vermont's **Public Manager's Program** requires that groups take on projects such as this, and **Chittenden County's "Leadership Champlain"** program has engaged diverse teams of business and nonprofit leaders in this type of project. Explore www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/training_pubman.php for more information on this type of training.

College students may also be able to get involved as part of a service learning project – for example helping develop information about what is happening in Windsor, finding ways to support the local paper, and other projects. **Dartmouth College** could be a source of student help (<http://www.dartmouth.edu>).

Get the high school involved. A school newspaper funded by the community will be a learning experience and will give teens ownership and an understanding of the town's

activities. Be sure it goes to senior citizens and non-school age families, too. Work collaboratively with the school to learn how to share information about community activities. Students could potentially also be leaders in the development of a Windsor page in the Valley News or providing material for the Windsor Area Observer.

Invite area journalists (TV, print, radio) to speak to this group of residents to share their thoughts about what is news, and how to get the message to the media. Journalists like to talk about their craft, and this would create a forum where residents could discuss their concerns about news coverage of the area in a structured, facilitated setting. Build relationships proactively, so journalists know whom to call when there is a story or question.

Another component of this PR campaign is working with well known local destinations (for example Simon Pearce, Harpoon Brewery and nearby ski areas) to enhance Windsor's reputation as a whole and draw attention to other aspects of the town. There are examples of businesses, organizations and individuals working together as spokespeople for their community in other parts of Vermont.

Tom and Sally's Handmade Chocolates is a major tourist draw in Brattleboro. When they left downtown for a larger facility, they decorated the walls of the new location with murals of their previous home as a reminder encouraging visitors to also explore Brattleboro's downtown (<http://www.tomandsallys.com/home.php>).

Another example is **Hunger Mountain Coop** in Montpelier. Hunger Mountain is a popular local destination for regular grocery shopping. Every year the Coop holds a large Expo in downtown Montpelier. This event allows everyone to meet with (and sample from) the Coop's vendors. Participants begin to build relationships and seek out individual local companies at more venues beyond the Coop, like area farmers' markets (www.hungermountain.com).

Find out what other creative collaborations exist (the **Chamber of Commerce** in different regions is a good place to start) and find out how other towns' efforts are working.

Make sure all tourism-related businesses are participating in the Dept. of Tourism and Marketing's free online **Travel Planner** (www.vacationvermont.com). Businesses must first register in the Business Registry at www.thinkvermont.com, then register additional data for tourist use. Carol Batchelder at the Department of Tourism and Marketing, (802) 828-3619, can help you add information to the Travel Planner.

A key activity that many towns undertake to build internal and external communications is to develop a common community calendar that everyone uses to get word out about their activities and to be sure not to schedule on top of other positive activities. A unified schedule at a town web page, published in the paper, and posted in a kiosk can help all parts of the community feel invited together, and can help systematically market all the events and activities of the community.

Arts Incubator

The resources available for an arts incubator will depend on what goals the incubator has. Inventorying community needs and forming a specific plan should be a first step.

There are many arts and business incubator developments in Vermont.

- **Studio Place Arts** in Barre combines studio, gallery and classroom space. Janet Van Fleet, from SPA, joined the Windsor Resource Team for the Creative Communities Program and can describe the successes of SPA and on-going challenges of managing an arts incubator (see Resource Team information).
- The **Rockingham Arts and Museum Project** in Bellows Falls (Robert McBride, 463-3252) offers an example of incorporating artists' living space with retail space in a downtown building as part of a larger community revitalization project.
- The **Burlington Community Land Trust** established an artists' cooperative including living space in Burlington through their affordable housing programs – the **Rose Street Artists' Cooperative**, http://www.bclt.net/c_rosest.shtml.
- The **Tip Top Bakery Building** provides reasonably priced studio space in a building that generates a “creative collaborative environment” in White River Junction (Matt Bucy, <http://www.tiptopmedia.com/>).

The project team might set a schedule to tour several of these facilities and learn from them about what works, where they've found financing, how they've attracted artists and businesses, and how their business model works.

The team should take time to inventory major options for available space in Windsor and talk to the **Regional Planning Commission** and **Regional Economic Development Corporation** to seek their advice and assistance. Depending on the strategic plan for the incubator, needed space may range anywhere from single rooms for classes a few hours a week to a full building dedicated to the arts.

If the incubator focuses on helping small, arts-related businesses, USDA Rural Development **Rural Business Opportunity Grant** (RBOG) might be able to fund a comprehensive development planning activity. These grants can exceed \$40,000 and could serve as a starting point for a development strategy around assisting emerging businesses. Contact Rhonda Shippee at 828-6033.

Community Development Block Grants can provide funding for incubators. Check with Molly Dugan at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. (802) 828-3211.

This project team might also explore what statewide programs provide to help get community members interested in the arts, inspiring creativity and an interest in exploring further.

The **Vermont Humanities Council** can help non-profits find new ways to engage people in town – there is a small grants program to support community initiatives of certain

kinds (call Peter Gilbert at (802) 262-2626 with questions), a one-book statewide community reading program in which students and adults across VT read one book and participate in related activities, public talks, reading and discussion series, and more. Program resources and assistance for literacy audiences include literacy training for childcare providers and parents, and weeklong day camps during the summer for middle schoolers.

The **Vermont Arts Council** also offers arts programs that engage the full community, most recently with the **Palettes of Vermont** project. Visit their website at <http://www.vermontartscouncil.org>.

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