

# NEK TODAY and TOMORROW

A Northeast Kingdom  
Summit Conference on  
Managing Change for the  
Best Future of the NEK

Lake Region High School, June 15, 2013

## Final Report

*The NEK Today and Tomorrow Summit was designed by the Northeast Vermont Development Association and Vermont Council on Rural Development to build action to advance the health and prosperity of NEK communities while maintaining their character and protecting the working landscape that surrounds them.*

*With the positive economic growth on the northern tier of the NEK, residents of the Kingdom want to be sure to optimize the benefits to communities, strengthen downtowns and village centers, support the character of the NEK, and enhance the region's farm and forested landscape.*

*The NEK Today and Tomorrow Summit on June 15, 2013 brought residents together to think about key issues connected to the future of the economy, land, and towns of the Kingdom, contribute ideas for local and regional planning efforts, and consider actions that can be taken to advance local communities.*

*This interim report documents Summit work group deliberations and action priorities and identifies next steps to address issues for the NEK Today and Tomorrow project.*

### NEK TODAY AND TOMORROW GOALS

- A. Engage the people of the NEK region to define key points of vision for the future.
- B. Gather concerns and ideas for actions that can be taken to respond to economic development and support strong community centers, the working landscape, education and health, in ways that enhance the quality of life and the strength of local communities throughout the region.
- C. Add up public ideas that can help shape local and regional planning goals for economic development, advancing energy systems, supporting the farm and forest economy, and addressing key needs ranging from housing to education and health care.
- D. Address special needs around three key components of regional development: Housing, Tourism, Education and the Working Landscape.

- E. Encourage the local sourcing of goods and services in the developments in process, especially in the use of local wood and other materials and systematically connecting to local food sources to support the future of the regions' indigenous and working lands economies.

## Summit Work Group Priorities

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### Housing

1. A deep Housing Assessment for the NEK should be produced, getting below the surface data and looking at costs for retrofitting, looking at demographics for needs.
2. Develop a framework for housing choices for everyone including sustainably affordable and around village centers.
3. Increased technical assistance and capacity building to towns re Zoning. Technical does not refer to computers, rather to processes and best practices around community building, effective communication, and civic participation. How best to go about getting the above done? Finding people with experience in this sort of change.

### Tourism

4. Develop a process to cooperatively identify, adopt and embrace an NEK brand.
5. Cooperatively market that brand on products, services, locations, activities with all organizational partners.
6. Develop a NEK Commission on Border Issues to set an open line of communication between the border patrol and the NEK community. Formalize a schedule of communications pro-actively on a quarterly basis. Work to establish standards of behavior, wait times, and serve as a clearinghouse to identify issues and resolve problems.

### Working Lands

7. **Follow the money.** Find and leverage access to capital, including the EB-5 model, to support:
  - a. Building access to local markets for agricultural and forestry production;
  - b. Developing incubator spaces and infrastructure for new forest products initiatives similar to the great examples from the agriculture and local foods initiatives in Hardwick and Newport.

8. **Reflect community values.** Develop a coherent, consistent, and unique Northeast Kingdom land ethic and vision that:
  - a. May drive community-based planning and regional and state policy as expressed in regional planning, regulation, and incentives;
  - b. Preserves community values, character, and traditions as they relate to the working landscape;
  - c. Recognizes the reality of climate change and what it means for the future of the NEK working landscape.
9. **Be present at the business table.** Work with developers in the other sectors of the NEK economy (Tourism, Education and Health Care, and Manufacturing) to create business relationships that draw on local foods and forest products, strengthen the NEK brand, and sustain downstream support services and businesses.

## Education

10. **Strategic Planning for Transformation.** Connect educators, community, employers, and families in creating a strategic plan around specific needs in the NEK and develop goals and objectives collectively.
11. **Collect Data / Build New Models.** Schools need to match education to relevance of job opportunities and recognize today's new ways of doing business by:
  - Working with businesses and industry to identify skills that high school and post-secondary schools incorporate into their curriculum; understand the new business opportunities coming to the Kingdom; and recognize the new ways of doing business that includes co-work spaces, "Fab Labs", and new access to capital for people creating their own jobs, etc.
  - Building experiential/apprenticeship education opportunities into curriculum;
  - Building curriculum around the "learning to learn" skills that are needed for the future such as adaptability, creative problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration.
  - Incorporating community resources into schools as the reality of shrinking budgets affect offerings such as art and cultural programs, and others.
  - Recognizing the economic opportunities in preserving our agricultural resources, as well as the quality of life benefits.
12. **Public Relations.** Build buy-in that tells the quality of life story and advances the NEK brand. Need marketing around the incredible career possibilities opening up in the future. Reach preschool families and make them aware of the opportunities for their children.
13. **Globalization.** Connect with international opportunities to expand educational scope and resources; meanwhile attracting businesses, capital, funding.

# Summit Follow Up & Next Action Steps

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Summit co-hosts NVDA and VCRD analyzed the 13 Action Priorities along with a cluster-analysis of brainstormed ideas from the Work Group Deliberations.

Together, they then convened key leadership from Summit Sponsors and other potential implementation partners in July to evaluate each Priority and potential action area to consider whether:

- a. Such an effort is already underway and could be strengthened or supported;
- b. There is a natural leader or organization to convene and organize for implementation of currently unaddressed priorities;
- c. There are key issues and action areas that need a fresh start, where NVDA and VCRD should convene working groups or regional dialogues to organize for implementation.

*The Actionable Priorities List below integrates the list of key priorities from the Summit with a review of work underway, some next steps, and a new area that stakeholders believe merits future work through the development of a Task Force to advance the enterprises that support the future of the NEK Working Landscape.*

## Actionable Priorities List

- a. **Housing Inventory:** Develop a housing stock inventory locally, regionally and for the NEK documenting current stock, current and project population demographics and housing needs, costs for development and retrofitting.  
**Current Action:** NVDA with support and assistance from the Agency of Commerce is doing a housing inventory in the northern tier of the NEK. Rural Edge is producing a region-wide assessment of housing needs with proposed solution; they are working with Enterprise Community Partners a nationwide group who bring resources and skills to the table to advance inventory efforts.
- b. **Town Planning Assistance:** Increase technical assistance and capacity building for towns on planning and zoning to deal with housing and development pressures connected to northern tier development. Develop skills and staff capacity to facilitate a local vision and community-based town plan.

**Current Action:** NVDA has been able to find support from both USDA RD and the VT Agency of Commerce to expand and deepen assistance to communities being impacted by northern tier development. They will be managing this with some additional staffing and will be reaching out to Select Boards, local planning commissions, and other local officials over coming months.

- c. **NEK Brand Initiative:** Develop a process to cooperatively identify, adopt and embrace an NEK brand and then cooperatively market that brand on products, services, locations, activities with all organizational partners.

**Current Action:** The NEK Travel and Tourism is working together with key partners throughout the Kingdom on a major NEK branding effort with a new brand strategy and logo developed with input from lots of meetings and public participation. They are working closely with the Newport City Renaissance Corporation and other regional partners as well as with the VT Department of Tourism & Marketing and the Agency of Commerce.

- d. **NEK Border Commission:** Develop a NEK Commission on Border Issues to set an open line of communication between the border patrol and the NEK community. Formalize a schedule of communications pro-actively on a quarterly basis. Work to establish standards of behavior, wait times, and serve as a clearinghouse to identify issues and resolve problems.

**Current Action:** U.S. Customs and Border Protection currently offers multiple avenues of citizen input into operations, including direct contact with the port director in Derby and the Vermont Area Port Director in St. Albans. Any individual or business can contact these individuals. Individual towns, such as Derby Line, participate in regularly scheduled public input meetings with CBP to discuss port infrastructure and staffing issues. In addition, businesses such as Jay Peak have regular discussions with CBP representatives. Organizations like the Newport City Renaissance Corporation regularly meet with CBP to discuss tourism and commerce. Derby and Stanstead are amongst a group of recently established Binational Port Committees along the northern border that seek municipal and public safety input. The Offices of Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders and Congressmen Welch often serve as an effective conduit for businesses, citizens or municipalities seeking information, providing input or complaining to either U.S. or Canadian border officials.

- e. **Local Product Sourcing Agreement:** Build agreements with new NEK development projects for the local sourcing of lumber and other forest materials, quarried stone, and food to support the local rural economy. Developers benefitting from public programs should demonstrate commitment to public economic benefits.

**Current Action:** The working group had confidence that Bill Stenger and the overall development team get the importance of local sourcing for building materials, wood, and ongoing connections for local foods and supplies. There was a strong sense that this is part of the 'brand' of the Kingdom and could be integrated in some of the branding work in process; it

can also be encouraged by all partners in their interactions with current and future developers. There was a strong consensus that promoting local sourcing and “buy local” in the new developments is a central message of the Summit to future developers, and a charge to all participants to continue to promote this message.

- f. **NEK Land Ethic:** Build a written, well-articulated, land ethic for the Northeast Kingdom; a coherent, consistent and unique ethic and vision that may drive community based planning and regional and state policy for regulation and incentive, and that preserves community values, character and traditions as they relate to the working landscape.

**Current Action:** NVDA will be taking the lead in bringing NEK residents together to provide input for a regional vision that will be part of the regional planning process. Residents should contact them to provide additional input.

- g. **NEK Education Transformation:** Create a strategic education plan for the NEK, a plan for the transformation of educational services to meet the needs of students today and the world of tomorrow. One key feature of such a plan for significantly advancing experiential learning would be an intensive and extensive **internship program** to offer experiential learning to student in H. S. and to graduates, college students and adults working toward higher education or workforce readiness.

**Current Action:** This process is in place and building coordination today. The following list of partners are working to advance experiential learning and the transformation of education in the kingdom today : Lyndon State College, Community College of Vermont, Johnson State College, Sterling College, Springfield College, North Country Union High School, St. Johnsbury Academy, Lyndon Institute, Danville High School, Lake Region High School, Canaan Career Center, North Country Career and Technical Center, Lyndon Institute Technical Center, Green Mountain Technical Center, St. Johnsbury Academy Department of Career and Technical Education, River Bend Career Center; with state partners the Agencies of Education and Commerce, and the Department of Labor; and non-profit partners including: Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, Newport Renaissance Corporation, Northeast Kingdom Workforce Development Task Force, and Vermont Student Assistance Corporation.

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## New Initiative for NEK Working Lands

Summit Participants identified three Key Elements in work that should be done to advance working lands in the Northeast Kingdom. Supporting farm, forest and value-added enterprises is critically important to providing an economic foundation that keeps land in production—with all the associated benefits for views, recreation, ecological services and quality of life.

**EK Working Land Investment:** Build structures for investment in the NEK working landscape. Find and leverage access to capital, including the EB5 model, to support working lands and value-added food and forest

products development, expanding local markets for agricultural and forest products, and developing incubator spaces and infrastructure similar to the food enterprise efforts in Hardwick and Newport.

**Food Infrastructure:** Build an infrastructure to store and distribute local food products year round.

**Working Lands Designation:** Confront the danger of sprawl in the NEK by building a regional 'green space' definition—a 'working lands designation' and financial incentives to preserve this core VT heritage.

**Action:** *Together the VCRD and NVDA will convene a leadership group of NEK stakeholders to evaluate these needs, set action priorities around elements that will have the greatest impact, and work together to implement plans to support working lands enterprises for the future of the Kingdom. Please contact us if you are interested in being an active partner in this effort!*

## Summit Work Group Deliberations

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### Housing Work Group Discussion Notes

Facilitator: Bill McMaster; Scribe: Christine Friese

#### What are the key issue areas for the future in this sector?

- There is a serious lack of Senior housing
- NEK needs a good deal of energy retrofitting and access to capital to accomplish it.
- To what extent can existing real estate be recycled or retrofitted for other purposes?
- There is a need to retain historic character, but in balance with other issues of efficient use of resources and sustainability and maintenance costs.
- Gentrification issues – when/if it comes, how to handle it so that everyone wins.
- Energy sources – alternative heating options. Can wood and pellet from local sources be effectively used?
- Location – is housing available near the new jobs?
- Location – it's important to advance housing in proximity to towns and villages avoiding sprawl.
- Location – best fit for transportation, easier to provide broadband, easier for seniors to remain independent.
- Lenders tend to be very conservative, not loaning money so the low current rates don't matter.
- Will the marketplace be dynamic enough to address this in new ways? Can alternatives to current funding models be found?
- Financing mechanisms are not matching need.
- Affordable housing at all levels – not just assisted, but options.
- Affordable housing--Essex really needs it.
- Affordability... Qualified available funding those between \$9 and \$19/hour.
- Transportation infrastructure and money for towns to make towns more attractive to people moving in to the NEK.
- Transportation options between home and work.
- High-speed Broadband for education, for homebound, for home businesses.
- Quality of housing is an issue.
- Village center revitalization should be encouraged.
- Technical assistance for process of revitalizing – getting the word out on possibilities - effective communication, how to avoid redundancies among little towns?
- Diversity of housing options should be advanced.
- Federal programs are more aimed at urban and dense communities – we need a different type of programs to help rural areas with development.
- Property Taxes going up.

- Location – synergies for health, community, communication—smart growth.
- Energy costs to maintain housing.
- Accessible apartments – no funding model.
- Look at both transportation along with housing – combined costs.
- Look at demographics – size of home for all types; conversion of 2<sup>nd</sup> homes to primary residence for

- retirees – what are the effects and burdens on localities of 2<sup>nd</sup> home owners becoming year-round residents?
- Could new more efficient homes be better cost in long term than mobile homes so common in NEK?
- Could there be an EB5 program for housing loans?
- Water and waste issues – local water and town water. Higher costs for water.
- Could Irene cottages be used as a good example – salient features: small footprint, modular, energy efficient?

### **What should be done in this area to preserve the character of the Kingdom and prepare for the future?**

- Bring back the railroad for local, community transit.
- A good inventory of towns to determine which to concentrate efforts on.
- What does it take to make the less-desirable towns more desirable – some discussion here between focusing only on towns and villages already more desirable vs. helping less desirable towns improve.
- Find a balance between historic preservation and future viability, making towns sustainable, not just retaining the old where impractical.
- Match the land and uses – look at the traditional patterns of village and farmsteads with seniors outside village. Cultural issues arise between traditional independence and need for effective land use and housing options.
- Look at home sharing.
- Look at zoning - how to bring back the community through planning in balance with Vermont mindset of independence. Allow development around village centers, leaving outer land free for agriculture, recreation, etc. Clustering is more energy efficient, practical for seniors, easier to provide transit...
- Find incentives for clustered development.
- Need for grocery stores or general stores to vitalize town/village centers.
- Having recreation space around cluster housing of interest to families.
- Increase in bike paths...
- What are the expectations of those newcomers in regard to recreation opportunities, broadband, education choices?

## **Tourism Work Group Discussion Notes**

Facilitator: Karen Geraghty; Scribe: Patricia Menduni

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### **What are the key issue areas for the future in this sector?**

- Marketing our (NEK) unique character, cultural resources
- Preserve the NEK character, traditions and landscape – I.D. brand characteristics
- Border – efficient, welcoming crossings
- *The above reflect the group's choice of three key areas. The following are some of the other comments and concerns raised:*
  - Access to available, good employees necessary for growth
  - Access to knowledgeable employees, i.e., familiar with the area
  - Increased traffic on local roads
  - When will we know when development is enough?
  - Don't want to change the character of the NEK
  - Technology infrastructure needs development – need consistent access to WiFi, cell phone, etc.
  - How to get large cell phone carriers interested in serving the NEK
  - Preserve the landscape – make use of natural resources (e.g., snow, trails)
  - Need to better market & utilize the activities that exist already (e.g. library as communication resource; the NEK Travel & Tourism, others )
  - Access to support for cultural programs with multiple missions
  - Growing and enhancing current businesses to utilize existing resources
  - More beds needed – more visitor options
  - Wind towers have an impact

- Effective border interactions – no harassment
- Welcome Center for incoming border crossers

- Lake Memphremagog issues

### **What should be done in this area to preserve the character of the Kingdom and prepare for the future?**

- Identify our assets – know what the brand characteristics are and never lose sight of them
- Identify risk points (the things we don't want)
- Know the tipping point (how many beds do we need? How many is too many?)
- Promote the use of the land as currently enjoyed (hiking, biking, swimming, etc.)
- Acknowledge the ridgelines issue.

### **What specific actions should be undertaken at the county and local level?**

- Cooperative marketing of a universal NEK brand
- Identify, adopt and embrace a brand
- Market internally – publicize the work of the NEK Travel & Tourism org.
- Maintain an open line of communication with border patrol to actively focus and manage the relationship
- Formalize the schedule of interaction to communicate proactively (e.g., quarterly meetings between border and community leaders)
- Establish a standard of behavior and wait times (border)
- Establish a clearinghouse to identify issues and problems (border)

## **Working Landscape Work Group Discussion Notes**

Facilitator: Charlie Browne; Scribe: Paul Costello

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### **What are the key issues for the future in this sector? (30 minutes)**

- Creating the future working landscape can be a shared success.
- In Jay, we used to have a 360 degree view...its changing...trees are now obscuring it. We are losing viewscapes everywhere as trees come in.
- In the NEK we are the last bastion of lots of trees in the northern US—lots of oxygen, lots of animals. We have a unique forest...and that is so valuable for tourism.
- There are ways to plan for a sustainable forest for birds, animals and all of us. Ecological services are essential to a vision for sustainability.
- We've high-graded much of our forest and have lower quality logs than in the past...we have fine soils but have overcut. We need to plan and grow for better long term results from this tremendous resource.
- Fragmentation is an issue. How do we reach coherent forest management planning?
- Conservation easements and Current Use taxation have been instrumental, but not enough.
- Right now, with this new northern development, we could lose to sprawl...we need to define a green space...a working lands designation and financial incentives to preserve this core VT heritage.
- I grew up on Cape Cod and have seen what happens...we have some control but not totally...we need to support working farms and forestry. That preserves the land and the culture, together.
- I would like to see us build an infrastructure to store and distribute local food products year round.
- The forest industry has declined in employment. Lots of trees, but how do we ratchet up the benefits, not just by cutting and shipping more out, but increasing the value added here in our communities.
- There's tremendous development in food economy...we're not seeing the same around forest products yet...we could develop it as an economic driver.
- How are we going to protect existing farms, forestry operations, and small woodlots? How to encourage people not to sell in the development fervor that may be on the horizon?
- Fragmentation—spaghetti slots...breakdown of property to pieces...how can we get this young generation incented to use local working land...how to make the deal.
- The Vermont Land Link database can help people connect so landowners can find folks who want to farm, and potential farmers can connect to landowners.
- The VT Land Trust can also help with these matches.

- Change is happening fast in the NEK: We need to follow the money...keep the working landscape economically viable...Hardwick are creating jobs that allow the land to be stronger, open, productive for the future.
- We need to strengthen the economic value.
- Climate change is going to affect trees and agricultural production. The Kingdom may want to say what climate change means for us.
- The new VT Working Lands Enterprise Board is a key point for access to capital to drive sectors forward.
- There's a great disparity here—We are talking about \$600 Million for Northern Tier vs. less than \$1M this year for working lands investment which is even more important.
- What is scary is the disconnect between the land ethic of people here, and the bad land ethic of some of the people who will be coming here.
- The education of newcomers to local land ethic important.
- There's a new Northeast Kingdom Fund at the VT Community Foundation—a group of funders working together to move projects forward...new grant-making here.
- Capital is one thing; then there's the need for markets...large projects like those being developed through EB5 in the NEK should be committed to source lumber and food locally. New development should build on local forest and agricultural economies. If developers receive state benefits they should demonstrate commitment.
- There is really poor market access in this area. Loggers would love to be better stewards but need better markets and have a tough time selling—so it's critical to get local and with slower, smaller and better stewards!
- Culture of the working lands in our region is also important. Our arts are about the land...it's all integrated. Place, local place, local arts are essential together in quality of life...the creative economy is a natural partner with the working landscape.

### **What should be done in this area to preserve the character of the Kingdom and prepare for the future?**

- We could build a written, articulated, land ethic for the NEK.
- Make the right thing easy and the bad thing difficult through regulation and investment.
- This is a tremendous opportunity to talk about what we value. Planners haven't had to worry about this level of development impact in the past....development is coming late and we can be prepared. Conservation easements are one tool.
- More understanding of planning is needed--with less restrictive zoning in some cases, but using tools more wisely.
- Incent landowners...make it easy for them to keep land in production.
- Make forest industry viable, creative, provide biomass and support innovation.
- Northwoods Center has a forest stewardship model and demonstrates a land ethic—let's walk new landowners through this as part of their education.
- There's an opportunity for goats on the land—browsers...they can be a food and land management resource, keeping land open. Finishing farms as value-added development area to beef up the industry.
- We need support services for distribution and we need large animal vets. Can we entice some young vets here and develop other support services for working lands enterprises?
- Municipality does zoning. Newport went through a powerful process from vision to plan. We could look at the potential for a region-wide plan and regulatory platform. Vision first then community based plan.
- Use all devices and means available to support the working landscape.
- We need processing facilities here.
- Development is an opportunity to leverage the working landscape...town by town and regionally...we need to use EB5 to develop value-added industries to support the Working Landscape.
- Cooperatives could be developed between small farms.
- Both the land ethic and community ethic needs to happen in the schools to counter the “me first” attitude.
- Saving land and managing it well is the best kind of social security.
- We all benefit from the work of those who work on the land—there's a social contract there.
- Use local wood!
- Plan the connection for the Creative Economy and WL.
- With the coming growth we should consider developing a waste inventory of new businesses...we can't count on the land to absorb waste...we need to compost and take care of it.
- Make this dialogue and development accessible to lower income people.
- Here's an idea: Build a forest products incubator space. Take Hardwick model from food incubator kitchen and take it to forestry cluster. We supply some hardware and set up for the development of lots of new and young forest products businesses.

# Education Work Group Discussion Notes

Facilitator: Joe Bertolino; Scribe: Margaret McCoy

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## What are the key issues for the future in this sector?

- High School physical capacity issues: The East has had some closures and challenges with low enrollment. The Western schools have had high enrollment: one building, for example, was built for 90 not the 118 it currently has. Need to look at what the building was built for. We also need intellectual capacity and adaptation of the facility for new learning labs and new uses.
- In terms of education, remember that museums, historical societies, and libraries contribute to education in our communities. Libraries with early literacy and reading. NEK libraries are surveying their capacity for digital literacy training.
- Look at how parents are seeing the value of education moving forward. i.e., it took educating the families in a Harlem school for them to realize a better educational tool was out there. Once they educated people in the community it became a popular choice.
- 93% graduation rate K-12, but only a small percentage move on to higher education.
- We need affordable college for our kids. H.S. can partner with the state college system to get kids college credit for things they have done and to give them a leg up with a half year of college when they leave high school. Early college/dual enrollment is a good direction.
- The first year of college is huge factor in kids' success. Cultural adaptive ability is important; kids from small schools are not prepared for large institutions. How to get them culturally adapted as well as academically ready?
- Technology skills are needed. Lots of kids don't have computers at home. Ag is more technology-based these days. Lots of folks don't understand that their kids need a digital device.
- We need to match education to relevance of job opportunities.
- Historically, we've moved from an agrarian state where kids that wanted to would drop out to work on the farm. Now those kids can opt to go to the career center. We don't have good data about what job skills businesses in the area require. We need to work with industry and businesses to know what skills the schools need to incorporate into their curriculum so kids can stay in the area.
- The ongoing relationship between businesses and higher education is critical. About 20% of Sterling students come from VT, but 40% of their alumni live in VT. Increasing opportunities for them to stay in the NEK. Higher education needs to reply to the needs of business. The integration of work into undergraduate experiences gives us info.
- Who knows what technologies will be needed in 5 years? 21st century skills aren't just about technology. People have to be adaptable so students need skills in creative problem solving and adaptability, critical thinking, and creativity. Liberal Arts and leadership skills. The technology is the tool but these tools will change.
- Change in how we get and use info is not over yet. A revolution is happening in our classrooms.
- Identify service learning partnerships and give incentives to businesses to make the investment in the student.
- Area of opportunity for colleges in the NEK for globalization and attracting students from all over the world. The EB5 program links the area to the world.
- Small schools are hard to maintain as economically viable. People who want to stay in the area can look at the small schools as an obstacle. Utilize the resources in the community, the opportunities for apprenticeships, for example. Using small schools as a way to bring in community resources, especially arts programs that are being cut, community can fill in the gaps. For example, a summer Shakespeare Camp inspires kids so ready to learn in the fall.
- Having greater diversity could be an issue related to cultural adaptability—the new development could bring unexpected benefits in diversity. Directly serving international families, increase in people from China that only speak that language. How do we welcome and guide them?
- We're next door to Quebec but don't teach French in our schools anymore.
- Opening a vision for parents and kids that their future could be very different from what their parents have. Needs to start early for them to think about the range of what can be true for their lives.
- Space for learning collaboration is needed. Have tendency to teach skills but the way people are

collaborating in the workforce is changing in a good way. Could use that model in education that we are “learning how to learn” from each other in an environment that isn’t so top down. Look at models like a co-working space, or a Fab Lab model (fabrication lab model).

- From the for-profit point of view, education options have to be functional ahead of the development or we’re going to lose the opportunity.
- Look at creating new models: MOOC’s (massive open online courses). Pushes content out at a pace where consumers are ready to acquire it. Need marketing

around the incredible career possibilities opening up in the future.

- Workforce readiness is the next step -- not always just seeing that College is the next step. Co-working spaces downtown may be part of the new infrastructure.
- What is education pre-K through 16 and beyond in workforce readiness. The educational system has a responsibility to the community to provide the skills needed out there whether a student goes to college or not.
- The relationship between institutions in terms of collaboration can be challenging.

### **What should be done in this area to preserve the character of the future?**

- We need to rethink the 4-year box of high school. Allow students to move forward at their pace or to help them stick around so they are ready for the workforce.
- We should creating an intensive and extensive internship program working with partners throughout the community either locally or more broadly in the state. Depending on level of readiness of the students this may lead to post-secondary education or straight to the workforce. Offer experiential opportunities within HS.
- We should come together to create the kind of strategic plan around specific needs in the NEK about our goals and objectives collectively. We all struggle with our accreditors or outside agencies. We can come up with a new model but need a new plan to convince other stakeholders that it’s a good idea.
- Need to talk with our communities. Everyone here at this Summit is a stakeholder with particular interests. The general community doesn’t know anything about the challenges and issues, so we need to get community buy-in.
- Have to find a way to reach the preschool families and make them aware of the opportunities for their children.
- Links of birth to 5 with brain development and how it’s connected to poverty. First 5 years are critical. Lots of fed money behind need to capture that.
- We can have best plan in the world but if our ultimate goal is for students to stay here, we need to identify what the opportunities here are.
- We need to define specific jobs and numbers coming to the area that allow for sufficient planning.
- Not every student in the NEK wants to works for Jay Peak.
- We need 20 or 30 big companies to come to the NEK. If we want educated people here, we have to want to keep them here.
- We need to identify the places in the NEK now where young people can acquire skills now and translate them into a \$50K job. Could be a virtual or corporate setting as part of professional development. Having a strategy to turn workers into entrepreneurs is one key.
- We frame it a lot as someone coming in to create a job, but we can also make a job; people can learn to create a job for themselves. It’s the fastest growing labor stat - the independent workforce.
- Economic opportunities in preserving our food, agriculture. The NEK is at a point of transition and important not to lose what’s attractive.
- Important to look at subtle things that make VT attractive to young people. Revitalized music or art scene. Having those community-based attractions that bring people in and allow them to make their own jobs—that’s the creative economy.
- Quality of life matters. Value of community, landscape, quality of life issues could be an attractor.
- Getting people together, including families, is critical so that a few important things get done. Identify what the top 3 are in the next five years. The example of a program in Boston that brought parents into the school to learn digital devices. Those parents are now coming to the school for events because they have a connection to the school.
- Talk about this as a boomerang. Our lives are enriched by imports of young families into our state.
- Help people adapt to different cultures.
- Getting data from industries for job skills needed and create new models. Bringing the workforce into educational program.
- New model for getting capital for people who are creating their own jobs. Crowd-sourcing has changed that. It’s a model with Kick-starter for example.
- In a K-12 setting have more fake career days where students can see how careers connect with them and get inspired.

## NEK Today and Tomorrow Summit Conference

### Participant List

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Deborah	Alfond	deborah@vhcb.org	<i>Intern</i>	Vermont Farm Viability Program
Merten	Bangemann-Johnson	mertenbj@ruraledge.org		RuralEdge
Tin (Justin)	Barton-Caplin	tin.bartoncaplin@gmail.com	<i>Barton Village Resident</i>	
Sue	Bates	lyndcfdp@nekcavt.org	<i>Center Manager, Lyndonville Head Start</i>	Northeast Kingdom Community Action
Mary	Berlejung	mbberlejung@gmail.com	<i>Manager</i>	Groton Growers Farmers' Market
Joe	Bertolino	president@lyndonstate.edu	<i>President</i>	Lyndon State College
Bill	Bevans	bbevans@coachworksfarm.com	<i>Board VP</i>	Northwoods Stewardship Center
Judy	Bevans	jbevans@sterlingcollege.edu	<i>Director of Advancement/Go v't Relations</i>	Sterling College
Jennifer	Black	jenblackvt@gmail.com	<i>Fit &amp; Healthy Coordinator</i>	NEKLS/NCRC/Newport Planning Commission
Charlie	Browne	cbrowne@fairbanksmuseum.org	<i>Executive Director</i>	Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium
Louis	Bushey	louis.bushey@state.vt.us	<i>Stewardship Forest for NEK</i>	Vermont Dept of Forests, Parks and Recreation
Leigh	Butler	wickedgoodfarm@gmail.com	<i>Asst. to the Executive Director</i>	The Art House
Christopher	Campbell	ccampbell@telecomvt.org	<i>Executive Director</i>	Vermont Telecommunications Authority
Sarah	Carpenter	scarpenter@vhfa.org	<i>Executive Director</i>	Vermont Housing Finance Agency
Neil	Chaske	ncwhiteeagle40@gmail.com	<i>CEO owner/founder</i>	White Eagle Oyate, Inc
Claudia	Clark	cclark@fairpoint.net	<i>Owner</i>	Far View Tree Farm
Natalie	Clark	nclark@ukarch.com	<i>Intern</i>	UK Architects
Peter	Clark	pwclark@farviewtreefarm.com	<i>Owner</i>	Far View Tree Farm
Minty	Conant	mintyconant@gmail.com	<i>Board Member</i>	Catamount Arts/AKC Consulting
Joel	Cope	joeltcope@comcast.net	<i>Admin. Asst.</i>	Town of Brighton
Paul	Costello	vcrd@sover.net	<i>Executive Director</i>	Vermont Council on Rural Development
Ann	Creaven	acreaven43@gmail.com		
Jim	Davis	jim@highfieldscomposting.org	<i>Executive Director</i>	Highfields Center for Composting
Susan	Davis	sagatha9@hotmail.com	<i>Editor/Journalist</i>	Newport Daily Express
Matthew	Derr	mderr@sterlingcollege.edu	<i>President</i>	Sterling College
Louisa	Dotoli	dotolilaw@aol.com	<i>Chair</i>	Westmore Planning Commission

Vincent	Dotoli	1dotolilaw@aol.com	<i>Moderator</i>	Town of Westmore
Virginia	Elliott	vgelliott@myfairpoint.net		
Nancy	Engels	neengels@comcast.net	<i>Board President</i>	NorthWoods Stewardship Center
Michelle	Fay	michellebfay@gmail.com	<i>Representative, Caledonia-3</i>	VT House of Representatives
Monty	Fischer	monty@hardwickagriculture.org	<i>Development Director</i>	Center for an Agricultural Economy
Jonny	Flood	jflookjj@gmail.com	<i>Co-Director</i>	Get Thee to the Funnery
Claudio	Fort			North Country Hospital
Taylor	Foster	tef412@gmail.com		
Caroline	Frampton	cframpton.whiteeagleoyate@gmail.com	<i>COO</i>	White Eagle Oyate, Inc
Jody	Fried	jfried@catamountarts.org	<i>Executive Director</i>	Catamount Film and Arts
Christine	Friese	christine.friese@state.vt.us	<i>Assistant State Librarian</i>	State of Vermont - Department of Libraries
Christopher	Fucci	chris@fucciassociates.com	<i>President/Principal Broker/Director</i>	Chris Fucci Associates, LTD./FarVision
Karen	Geraghty	karen.geraghty@uvm.edu	<i>Rural Community Development Initiative</i>	University of Vermont Extension
Margaret	Gibson McCoy	info@vtrural.org	<i>Office and Communications</i>	VT Council on Rural Development
William	Goodenough	wgoodeno@bowdoin.edu		Vermont Agency of Commerce
Peter	Gould	gould@sover.net	<i>Founder/Director</i>	GET THEE TO THE FUNNERY SHAKESPEARE CAMPS
Joseph	Gresser	joseph@bartonchronicle.com	<i>reporter</i>	the Chronicle
Lars	Hasselblad Torres	lars.torres@state.vt.us	<i>Director</i>	Office of the Creative Economy
Allie	Hastings	allie@parkerpie.com	<i>Business Manager</i>	Parker Pie Co. & Parker Pie Wings
Roger	Hawk	rhawk@betterfuturealliance.com	<i>Partner</i>	Better Future Alliance
Lorna	Higgs	lhiggs@nvda.net	<i>Project Manager</i>	Northeastern Vermont Development Association
Nancy	Hill	nancydhill@gmail.com	<i>Member</i>	Greensboro Land Trust
Robert	Ide	robert.ide@state.vt.us	<i>Commissioner</i>	Vermont DMV
Blair	Johnson	chef.johnson@gmail.com		
Cindy	Karasinski	ckarasinski@hotmail.com	<i>Library Director</i>	Lyndon Area Chamber of Commerce and CPL
Chris	Kennedy	ckennedy@betterfuturealliance.com	<i>Principal</i>	Better Future Alliance
Heidi	Krantz	hkrantz@vtsbdc.org	<i>Business Counselor</i>	VT Small Business Development Center/Center for Ag
Ann	Lawless	alawless@vtlink.net		
Eleanor	Leger	leger@edenicecider.com		Eden Ice Cider Company, Inc.
Colleen	Leonard	colleen.leonard@state.vt.us	<i>Working Lands Policy Administrator</i>	Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
Lucy	Lerliche	lucy.lerliche@state.vt.us	<i>Deputy Secretary</i>	Agency of Commerce and Community Development
Peggy	Loux	peggyloux@hotmail.com	<i>Jay Select Board</i>	Town Of Jay

*Chair*

Jim	Lovinsky	jim@lovinsky.net	<i>Executive Director</i>	Lamoille Housing Partnership
Deborah	Mackay	dmackay@communitynationalbank.com	<i>OFFICE SUPERVISOR</i>	COMMUNITY NATIONAL BANK
Alexandra	MacLean	alex@jaypeakresort.com	<i>EB-5 Project Manager</i>	Jay Peak Resort
Mark	Maghini	mark_maghini@fws.gov	<i>Chair</i>	Burke Conservation Commission
Mike	Mahannah	mikemahannah.whiteeagleoyate@gmail.com	<i>General manager</i>	White Eagle Oyate, Inc
John	Mandeville	jtmandeville@yahoo.com	<i>Executive Director</i>	Lamoille Economic Development Corporation
Michael	Marcotte	mmarcotte@leg.state.vt.us	<i>Representative from Coventry</i>	Vermont Legislature
Steven	Mason	steve@kingdomcommons.com	<i>VP</i>	NEKTI Consulting
Dave	Mayette	dcmayette@gmail.com		DCM Enterprises
Kate	McCarthy	kmccarthy@vnrc.org	<i>Sustainable Communities Program Director</i>	Vermont Natural Resources Council
John	McClaughry	john@ethanallen.org	<i>VP</i>	Ethan Allen institute
Tim	McGuire	tmcguire@skiburke.com		Burke Mountain Ski area
Jim	McKimm	macartscenter@gmail.com	<i>Creative Director</i>	MAC Center for the Arts
Kiki	McShane	kiki@fucciassociates.com	<i>VP Business Development</i>	Fucci Associates
Cavan	Meese	cavanmeese@gmail.com		
Patricia	Menduni	pat.menduni@mail.house.gov	<i>Community Liaison</i>	U.S. Representative Peter Welch
Andre	Messner		<i>Principal</i>	Lake Region High School
Kristina	Michelsen	kristina.michelsen@gmail.com	<i>Attorney / Legislator</i>	Law Office of Kristina I. Michelsen, PLLC
Linda	Michniewicz	lmic@nekcavt.org	<i>Head Start Program Director</i>	NEKCA
Lawrence	Miller	lawrence.miller@state.vt.us	<i>Secretary</i>	Agency of Commerce & Community Development
Paul	Monette	plmonette@gmail.com	<i>Mayor</i>	City of Newport
Diane	Morgan	dmorgan260@pshift.com		Craftsbury Conservation Commission
Ross	Morgan	rossmorgan@pshift.com	<i>Consulting Forester</i>	
Andrew	Mosedale	andy@moseis.com	<i>cto</i>	Mosedale Integrated Solutions
Jenny	Nelson	jenny_nelson@sanders.senate.gov	<i>Agriculture Policy Advisor/ Rural Development</i>	US Senator Bernie Sanders
Hilary	Niles	hniles@vtdigger.org	<i>Business and Data Reporter</i>	VTDigger.org
Karen	O'Donnell	odfarm@gmail.com	<i>Executive Director</i>	JPACC
Jay	Ouellette	jayouellette@hotmail.com	<i>Caretaker / Manager</i>	Pine Crest Motel & Cabins
Joe	Patrissi	jpatrissi@nekcavt.org	<i>ED</i>	NEKCA
Steve	Patterson	spatterson@nvda.net	<i>Executive Director</i>	Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Jen	Peterson	jpeterson@vermontcf.org	<i>Vice President for Program and Grants</i>	Vermont Community Foundation
Jessica	Philippe	jessica.philippe@gmail.com	<i>Soil Scientist/GIS specialist</i>	Newport City Resident
Martha	Reid	martha.reid@state.vt.us	<i>State Librarian</i>	VT Department of Libraries
Shirley	Richardson	shirley@vermontchevon.com	<i>Partner/Chair, Board of Trustees at the Pope Libra</i>	Vermont Chevon, LLC & Pope Memorial Library
Robin	Rothman	robin.rothman@yahoo.com		
Nancy	Rumery	haskellkids@yahoo.com	<i>Library Director</i>	Haskell Free Library
Michelle	Rutman	michellerutman@redstringconnection.com	<i>CEO</i>	Red String Connection
Pat	Sagui	pats@gaw.com		
Nikita	Salmon	nikita.ravenridge@gmail.com	<i>Owner</i>	Raven Ridge Tree Service
Patricia M	Sears	patricia.sears@discovernewportvt.com	<i>Executive Director</i>	Newport City Renaissance Corporation
Amy	Shollenberger			Action Circles
Jason	Sicard	jason@jpsicard.com	<i>President</i>	J P Sicard Inc.
Paul	Sicard		<i>Selectman</i>	Town of Barton
Katherine	Sims			Green Mountain Farm to School
Robin	Smith			Orleans County Record
Dave	Snedeker	dsnedeker@nvda.net	<i>Deputy Director</i>	Northeastern VT Development Association
Grant	Spates			Spates Construction / Derby Selectman
Ellen	Stanley	estanley@passumpsicbank.com	<i>Commercial Banking, VP</i>	Passumpsic Savings Bank
Rupert	Stanley	rupertstanley1@gmail.com	<i>District Manager New England - Managing Director</i>	CBO Financial - ConstantContactPros.com
Beverly And Steve	Starbala	sgstarbala@wildblue.net		
Bill	Stenger		<i>Jay Peak Ski Resort</i>	President
Roy	Steuwe	roysteuwe49@aol.com	<i>ECP MtSS Co-ordinator</i>	North Country Supervisory Union
Robert	Stowell	robert.stowell@lyndonstate.edu	<i>Manufacturing Industry Specialist</i>	Lyndon State College
Jack	Sumberg	jsumberggloverselectboard@comcast.net	<i>Selectman</i>	Town of Glover
Gaye	Symington	gsymington@vermontcf.org	<i>Executive Director</i>	The High Meadows Fund
Caro	Thompson	cthompson@telecomvt.org	<i>Broadband Outreach Coord.</i>	Vermont Telecommunications Authority
Sandy	Thorpe	sandy.thorpe@gmail.com	<i>Transit Coordinator</i>	Rural Community Transportation, Inc
Mike	Welch	mwelch@ncic.org	<i>Economic Development</i>	Northern Community Investment Corp (NCIC)
Joe	Wevurski	jwevurski@yahoo.com		
Steve	Wright	salmo@vtlink.net	<i>N.A.</i>	
Georgia	Zaveson	gzaveson@nchsi.org	<i>Medical Librarian</i>	North Country Hospital

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Tracy

Zschau

tracy@vlt.org

*Northeast  
Kingdom Director*

Vermont Land Trust

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