

Westmore's Path Forward

Community Visit Report and Action Plan
October 2024



Produced by the Vermont Council on Rural Development

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Vermont Council on Rural Development

PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384

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

Laura Cavin Bailey, *Climate Economy Program Manager*

Lauren Brady, *Community & Policy Associate*

Margaret Gibson, *Operations Director*

Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Manager*

Kaziah Haviland, *Village Trust Initiative Director*

Jenna Koloski, *(former) Community Engagement and Policy Director*

Jessica Savage, *Director of Community Collaboration*

Denise Smith, *Executive Director*

Vision for Westmore's Future

Compiled from vision statements shared during Community Visit meetings and supported by the majority of participants at the Resource Meeting and an online survey. The statements represent some of the broad hopes that the majority of responding residents have for the long term good of the Westmore community.

Community members envision a future Westmore:

- ❖ where recreation opportunities are safe and accessible to all, including hiking, walking, biking, swimming, and boating.
- ❖ where roads are well managed and safe for pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages.
- ❖ where the community works collaboratively with regional partners to preserve the beautiful landscape of forest, homes, and lakes.
- ❖ that is proactive about zoning and development to enable desirable residential or commercial projects while maintaining the beloved rural characteristics.
- ❖ with strong partnerships with the state, other communities, and regional organizations to get important projects done.
- ❖ with a tight knit community across both seasonal and year-round residents.
- ❖ where we manage our resources so they are healthy and sustained for future generations.
- ❖ that leverages the popularity of its recreational and community assets to support local needs.
- ❖ that is welcoming and supportive of all ages, economic status, and other forms of diversity, with the attitude that as we grow, we grow together.
- ❖ with fun events, gatherings, and activities for all ages in the winter as well as summer.
- ❖ where we have multiple community gathering spaces that suit various types of community activities and are welcoming to all.
- ❖ that is a safe and fun community for kids and a great place for families to live.

I. Introduction

The iconic views of Lake Willoughby, flanked by mountains and rock cliffs, are renowned in the Town of Westmore, and well beyond its borders. While Lake Willoughby is one of Westmore’s incredible assets, and a destination for recreational activities for residents and visitors alike, it isn’t the whole story of this community. While a desire to preserve and protect the lake was a thread in most conversations in the Westmore’s Path Forward process, it was obvious that the gorgeous scenery is a backdrop for residents who want to connect with one another and create even stronger social ties. Despite being the least populated town in Orleans County, Westmore is home to many dedicated community members – over 100 year-round and seasonal residents participated in the Westmore’s Path Forward process! Throughout the process, the deep and longstanding reverence for the area and the strength of community connections were reflected by long time and recent residents, by seasonal residents and those who live in Westmore year-round, and by young and old and everyone in between. Like most towns, Westmore has its share of complex challenges: statewide leaders attending this process reflected that Westmore is a case study in the most pressing challenges they see across the state, especially in regards to recreation management.

VCRD’s Community Visit process brings community members together in a facilitated and structured process to look at challenges and take action on common goals for the future good of the town. On July 10, over 75 Community members crowded into the sanctuary and church for the first step in the process to share their ideas for the future of their community. Due to intense rains and flood warnings across the state that evening, the schedule was shortened so that those traveling – Visiting Team members and VCRD staff – could be on the road by 7pm. The community was flexible in accommodating the modified schedule, and through the forums and online surveys, shared a wealth of assets, challenges, and hopes for the future. Throughout the Westmore’s Path Forward Process, there was pride and reflection on all of the incredible assets in the community, and a desire to ensure these resources will be available into the future.

Many action ideas were identified throughout this process, and can be found in the “Opportunities” section of this report along with notes taken at the initial forums. After careful deliberation, Westmore community members voted to form task forces around two priorities:

- **Build Outdoor Spaces for Youth, Families, and Community Members**
- **Develop a Local Recreation Access Management Plan**

VCRD and its partners look forward to working with the Westmore Task Forces as they advance these projects. They are already hard at work—please support their efforts, or join them by reaching out to their chair or members (find details in the Action Plan section of this report).

The Vermont Council on Rural Development helps Vermont citizens build prosperous and resilient communities through democratic engagement, marshaling resources, and collective action. VCRD is prepared to support the efforts of Westmore as it moves forward and to provide follow-up help to the Task Forces as called upon. VCRD will also serve as an advocate for Westmore projects with appropriate agencies and organizations in Vermont. Please call on us, and on Visiting Resource Team members (listed with contact information in the back of this report), when we can be of help.

There are many people to thank for making the Westmore’s Path Forward Community Visit possible.

We would like to thank the Westmore Select Board, who invited this process, and provided funds for the town-wide mailing and the community dinner at the first meeting.

We also deeply appreciate the work and leadership of Planning Committee members who helped guide the process by identifying forum topics for discussion, developing the invitation process to start the effort, and helping with outreach at every stage: Elaine Cashin, Carol Davis, Louisa Dotoli, Donna Dzugas, Joanne Giannino, Robert (Bob) Kennedy, Robert (Bob) Leibold, Kallie Lefebvre, Ellie Majchrzak, Bill Perkins, Liz Tucker, and John and Peggy Zimmer.

Outreach is an essential component of a successful Community Visit, and many people helped make that happen. Thank you to Elaine Cashin for helping with the town-wide mailing, to Donna Dzugas for helping with signage and banners in town, and to Peggy Zimmer and the Westmore Association for distributing flyers. Thank you as well to the many other community leaders and organizations who worked together to spread the word about the event and make sure everyone in town was invited and encouraged to participate!

Coordinating the events and outreach was a team effort. Thank you to Pastor Bob Leibold, Carol Davis and the Westmore Community Church for allowing the use of their spaces for all three of the meetings.

Thank you to the Westmore Association, Ellie Majchrzak, and the local businesses who helped to put on such a successful Community Dinner of barbeque, salads and desserts; and thanks to Orion Dolan for providing the music at the first meeting. For the second and third meetings, we are grateful to Willoughby Lake Store for their wonderful pizza, and for their continued help with outreach and logistics.

We appreciate the help of the UVM Office of Engagement and UVM Center for Rural Studies for producing a briefing profile of data points about Westmore for the VCRD Community Visit Team.

VCRD calls in support from state, federal, regional, philanthropic, and non-profit leaders to participate in the Community Visit Program. We are proud of the partners we get to work with and our gratitude goes to the Visiting and Resource Team members that supported Westmore's first and last meetings. The full list of leaders, agencies, and organizations that offered their expertise can be found at the back of this report.

Getting things done is all about leadership, and we extend our gratitude to all who have participated in the process so far and those who will continue to participate moving forward. Special thanks goes to Pam Kennedy for stepping up to serve as chair of the Build Outdoor Spaces for Youth, Families, and Community Members group.

Special thanks to the funders of VCRD's Community Visit Program who made this process possible: USDA Rural Development, Northern Border Regional Commission, the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Community National Bank, Lintilhac Foundation, National Life Foundation, Vermont Community Foundation, Vermont Humanities Council, and the Windham Foundation. And thanks to Front Porch Forum for their support as an outreach sponsor for the Community Visit program.

The challenges and opportunities for Westmore are immense, and we are excited by the energy and potential of the task forces to accelerate the transition to this new era. We are excited to support and celebrate the energy from these new initiatives, and look forward to seeing the good things to come for Westmore.

II. The “Westmore’s Path Forward” Community Visit Process

VCRD’s Community Visit program is a way for towns to engage and bring together their residents, set common goals and directions in a neutral and facilitated structure, and access resources that will help them take action on those goals. **Here is a snapshot of the 5-month process:**



Planning Committee Meeting: May 22, 2024

On May 22, 2024, 13 local community members met to plan for the launch of the Westmore Community Visit process. This group came up with a name for the process – Westmore’s Path Forward – and helped to plan the kick-off. They decided on forum topics and an invitation process. Through calls, e-mails, flyers, banners, and lawn signs this team worked hard to promote the kick-off.

The Committee included: Elaine Cashin, Carol Davis, Louisa Dotoli, Donna Dzugas, Joanne Giannino, Robert (Bob) Kennedy, Robert (Bob) Lebold, Kallie Lefebvre, Ellie Majchrzak, Bill Perkins, Liz Tucker, and John and Peggy Zimmer.

Step 1 ~ Kick-Off Forums and Community Dinner: July 10, 2024

Westmore’s Path Forward kicked off with brainstorming forums held at the Westmore Community Church and Westmore Fellowship Hall and a free community dinner. Over 75 participants shared assets, challenges, and ideas for action in forum topics chosen by the planning committee. Due to flood warnings that evening, we needed to combine forums so travelers could get on the road, so we merged forum topics as follows: Safety with Community Connections and Spaces; and Recreation and Natural Resources with Infrastructure: Roads, Buildings, Internet, and more. Ten visiting team members participated, learning more about Westmore and providing reflections to the community.

Visiting Team members included: Jennifer Carlo, *Executive Director*, NEK Collaborative; Ben Doyle, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont; Danielle Fitzko, *Commissioner*, VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation; Christine Hallquist, *Executive Director*, Vermont Community Broadband Board; Susannah Kerset, *Head of Member Engagement*, Front Porch Forum; and David Snedeker, *Executive Director*, Northeastern VT Development Assn

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Lauren Brady, *Community & Policy Associate*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Manager*; Jenna Koloski, *Community Engagement & Policy Director*; and Jessica Savage, *Director of Community Collaboration*.

And in case you’re wondering – yes, the drive home was treacherous for many but all made it home safely. As it turns out, shortening the meeting was a good call. Otherwise, some wouldn’t have made it home that night as roads across the northern part of the state were flooded and closed as the evening wore on.

Step 2 ~ Community Meeting: August 1, 2024

After the kick-off, VCRD staff distilled the brainstormed ideas into 17 key areas of action. Over 40 community members joined at the Westmore Fellowship Hall to narrow the list of priorities for community action. After lively dialogue and a dot-voting exercise, 2 action ideas emerged as key priorities: **Build Community Spaces for Youth, Families and Community Members** and **Develop a Local Recreation Access Management Plan**. Participants then signed up for task forces that will convene to move these priorities forward.

Step 3 ~ Resource Meeting and Task Force Launch: August 28, 2024

On August 28, 2024, over 20 community members along with facilitators, and resource team members came together to develop action plans, identify resources, and form task force groups that will work in the months ahead to implement the priorities. From here forward, all “Westmore’s Path Forward” action is focused at the task force level.

Resource Team members included: Jethro Hayman, *Chair*, Glover All Persons Park and Sensory Trail; Abigail Long, *Executive Director*, Kingdom Trails; Annie McLean, *Community & Economic Recovery Specialist*, Northeastern Vermont Development Association; Luke O’Brien, *Outdoor Recreation Specialist*, VT Dept of Forests, Parks & Recreation.

Vermont Council on Rural Development staff included: Lauren Brady, *Community & Policy Associate*; Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Manager*; and Jenna Koloski, *Community Engagement & Policy Director*.



III. Westmore's Path Forward Priorities

Determined by Westmore residents at the Westmore's Path Forward Community Meeting
June 4, 2024

Through thoughtful conversation about the future of their community, Westmore community members whittled down a list of 17 action ideas to 2 priorities that offer opportunities to enhance existing resources and strengthen the town. Residents concluded the meeting by signing up for Task Forces in the selected areas.

Westmore residents selected these priorities for future action:

► Build Outdoor Spaces for Youth, Families, and Community Members

Residents expressed a desire to bring back the merry-go-round or create new spaces that all community members can enjoy, especially kids and families. A group could form to identify locations (on public and/or private land) to build outdoor play and gathering spaces such as a playground, outdoor pavilion, small library, or other recreational spaces.

► Develop a Local Recreation Access Management Plan

In coordination with the Town and the State, develop management strategies for local recreational resources to improve access and safety. The plan could focus on parking and pedestrian challenges associated with area hiking trails, beaches, and boat launches. Strategies could include timed signups for parking and access, a hiking or beach shuttle, timed boat launch signups, rescue access, and more.



Other Key Opportunities identified by the community:

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

Improve Communication and Information Sharing

Create a coordinated system for community communications to advertise events and share town information. Ways of communicating could include creating a community newsletter, increasing Front Porch Forum presence, maintaining an events calendar, and amplifying Westmore Association news and events. Additionally, the group could improve information sharing and access by building an email list and sharing Town and community updates, especially when people are out of town during the winter months.

Address Road Safety around the Lake

A group could form to address the traffic safety challenges around Lake Willoughby during the peak summer months. The group could consider strategies such as flashing speed lights, removable speed bumps, cross walks at key locations, or other traffic calming strategies. The group could also work on pedestrian and bike safety measures such as adding bike/pedestrian lanes to roads or creating multiuse paths.

Start a Westmore Sailing Club

A sailing club could provide fun, safe, and educational opportunities for people of all ages and experiences to sail on the lake. The club could conduct fun race events as well as programming for women, youth, beginners, and people with more experience.

Harness Increased Tourism to Maintain and Improve Infrastructure

Residents expressed a concern that with so many people coming to enjoy the community, the costs of maintaining roads, parking areas, and other critical infrastructure have increased. However, the community doesn't benefit financially from the increase in visitors. A task force could work with the Town and the State to identify strategies to raise funds for additional infrastructure costs. Ways to capture revenue could include QR codes on signs at the beaches, coin drops, a local option tax, fees on short term rentals, beach use fees, or other options. The group could also explore economic opportunities at the beaches such as a coffee truck or snack bar.

Expand Community Gathering Spaces

A group could inventory existing community gathering spaces, identify the community needs for more space, and implement a plan of action. Some options include the creation of a small community coffee space, the rehabilitation of Town-owned buildings, increased use of Church spaces, or an outdoor pavilion for community events.

Develop Multiuse Trails and Paths

Improve existing or create new paths and trails in Westmore for walking and biking, and develop information and maps to share with the community. A group could work on opportunities such as bike lanes on existing roads, paved or gravel multiuse paths between busy recreational areas or businesses, an interpretive trail in the Town Forest, or other multiuse trails on public and private land.

Collaborate for the Health of the Lake

Many groups, organizations, and individuals are working to improve the health of Lake Willoughby, but residents expressed a lack of coordination and awareness of these initiatives. A group of existing leaders and other volunteers could form to coordinate and collaborate on these efforts. The group could identify and implement technical solutions, such as septic improvements or invasive species monitoring, as well as increase public awareness of programs and resources such as Lake Wise. The group could also advocate together for more State and Federal investment to support their efforts. Additionally, this group could help lead a community conversation focused on potential impacts of wake boats and strategies to manage or prevent negative impacts.

Expand Events and Entertainment

Expand and advertise local events to bring people of all ages together. A group, with representatives from existing community groups (like the Westmore Association or the Church), could collaborate to plan and lead these events and enlist volunteers to help. Residents are interested in more year-round events including music and dancing, community meals, arts events, a pancake breakfast, and more.

Improve Lake Willoughby Safety

Develop and implement strategies to improve the safety of swimming and boating on the Lake. A group could develop a swimming and boating safety protocol and create signage, maps, and handouts to share with locals and visitors. The group could also explore enforcement options such as a “boat constable,” partnerships with the State, or other ways to ensure that people follow safety guidelines.

Improve and Clean up Beaches

Coordinate with the Town and the State to spearhead the improvement and cleanup of Lake Willoughby beaches. This could include providing more trash cans, organizing volunteer clean up days, creating signage with guidelines for use or information about local businesses, and adding sand and rocks to improve the beaches.

Increase Broadband Access Across Town

A group could form to partner with NEK Broadband, the State, and other broadband service providers to improve internet access in all parts of town. This group could assess the existing internet access, educate the community about their options, advocate to the State, and support NEK Broadband's current efforts to reach more Westmore properties.



IV. Task Force Action Plans

Resource Meeting, May 14, 2024

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

► Build Outdoor Spaces for Youth, Families, and Community Members

Residents expressed a desire to bring back the merry-go-round or create new spaces that all community members can enjoy, especially kids and families. A group could form to identify locations (on public and/or private land) to build outdoor play and gathering spaces such as a playground, outdoor pavilion, small library, or other recreational spaces.

Community Chair Pam Kennedy

Facilitator Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Manager, VCRD*

Resource Team Members Jethro Hayman, Glover All Persons Park and Sensory Trail
Annie McLean, *Community and Economic Development Coordinator,*
Northeastern Vermont Development Association

Community Participants Elaine Cashin, Carol Davis, Ann Duggan, Dave Fenichel, Joanne Giannino,
and Task Force Sign-ups Rowen Gorman, Roger Hildebrandt, Pam Kennedy, Randy Knaggs, Ellie Majchrzak,
Linda Michniewicz, Christa Preston, Deborah Richards, Deb Smith, Julie Whelan,
Jen (Jennifer) Woolard, and Peggy Zimmer

Current status and overview of the issue today:

- Westmore has a number of existing assets for outdoor spaces including:
 - Pickle ball and basketball courts at North Beach
 - Sentinel Rock State Park
 - Town forest
 - Labyrinth on church property
 - State forest land in Westmore
- There is not municipally-owned land available.
- There used to be swimming lessons and summer programming through AmeriCorps in town.
- There was an old school playground.
- Westmore is full of resourceful townspeople!

Priority Action Steps

1. Assess the current status, identify key decision-makers and processes for approving changes or expansions at key locations, including Sentinel Rock State Park, old Clerk's office, the church property, and town forest. In particular:
 - Investigate proposed drawings of a pavilion at Sentinel Rock State Park. Review any existing maps and reach out to key contacts, such as community members who helped with the current management plan.

- Engage with the Selectboard and Treasurer regarding the old Town Clerk's building.
- Follow up regarding preliminary conversations with the church.
- Contact the Westmore Association regarding plans for the town forest.
- Connect with the Develop a Plan for Recreation Management task force regarding overlaps and synergies of the two groups.

2. Work to host summer youth camps through Northwoods Stewardship Center in Westmore.

3. Create subgroups as needed to take on specific additional projects, such as grant review.

Other Potential Action Ideas:

- Run swimming and boating lessons at Lake Willoughby.
- Launch a survey on community member skills – are there swim instructors or other folks with relevant skills in town?
- Encourage the Barton and Orleans libraries to host programming in Westmore.
- Find places for picnic tables in town.
- Organize youth groups, tournaments, dancing, or other activities at the basketball courts.
- Hire a recreation director. A position could be funded by a combination of AmeriCorps, Town, or grant funding.
- Host additional activities at North Beach.
- Create a community group to provide input on Sentinel Rock State Park and other spaces.
- Research the potential for accessible trails in Westmore.
- Host additional low-key activity groups in the Fellowship Hall.
- Find solutions to liability concerns for activities. Connect with the Town regarding the current coverage through the Vermont League of Cities and Towns/PACIF.

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

These recommendations for other potential actions and resources to consider were shared by Visiting Resource Team members representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, and encompass their experience, past success and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.

Action Recommendations

Given the connections between both task force priorities, an early meeting with both groups might help clarify shared goals and areas of overlap. VCRD staff are available to support this recommendation.

A good next step may be to narrow the focus to what types of outdoor spaces are most desired by the community – a basketball court? A skatepark? An accessible trail system? This would allow the task force to be more strategic in deciding what parcel to acquire (if any) and what technical and financial resources would be needed.

Families from other towns may be interested in resources in Westmore -- so consider the community beyond just those families that reside in town.

For both residents and adjoining communities, a survey might be a good tool to gather additional information about community desires/needs for the use of outdoor spaces.

To engage community voices, develop a few proposals (location and use) and hold an open house at town hall and allow residents to "dot vote" on their favorite proposal.

Consider temporary library options: bookmobile, pop-up library, book trading/sharing events in a public space.

The task force could consider whether this goal can be achieved on existing Town-owned land, or whether they would need to acquire a new parcel. If the latter, look to identify parcels for sale in the Town, suitable parcels adjacent to existing Town-owned land, or parcels that could fit the need within the Town. Once this analysis is performed, reach out to the corresponding landowners to see if they would be willing to sell the parcel to the Town. The Town could work with a conservation partner, such as the Vermont Land Trust or the Trust for Public Land, to facilitate the transaction.

Inventory available town (or state) lands for these uses. Survey private landowners for their interest in this.

Consider a long-term lease or other legal arrangement (such as an easement) with a landowner to make this possible.

The task force could also reference the most recent draft Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), titled 'Moving Forward Together Vermont' (Move Forward Together Vermont) to gain insights and examples, on a broader scale, of how communities can develop or enhance outdoor spaces for community members: fpr.vermont.gov/sites/fpr/files/documents/MFTV_DraftVisionPriorities_Combined_FINAL.pdf

Technical Assistance / Peer Connection Recommendations

The Glover All Persons Park and Sensory Trail is an example of a recently completed local project. Jethro Hayman joined the Resource Meeting and can share additional information about their project and process. Contact him at jethro@nekinfoc.com.

Bristol has a natural playground on their town green that could be useful to visit as a model.

Jessica Savage, VCRD's Director of Community Collaboration, worked for the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation for many years and would be a great resource for strategizing and planning next steps. Contact her at jessica@vtrural.org and 802-227-2790.

Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) can provide resource connections and may be able to help with technical assistance. Contact Dave Snedeker, Executive Director and Visiting Team Member, dsnedeker@nvda.net or (802) 748-8303 and Annie McLean, Community and Economic Recovery Specialist and Resource Team member at amclean@nvda.net or (530) 721-0241 to help make connections.

Conservation organizations like the Vermont Land Trust and the Trust for Public Land would be great resources in pursuing the acquisition of a parcel for conservation purposes.

NorthWoods Stewardship Center could be a partner in a private-public partnership. This or another relevant nonprofit may be a good partner for applying for funding and/or project management.

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program provides technical assistance for grant applications. Learn more at <http://www.nps.gov/rtca> and contact Jennifer Waite at 802 457-3368 x21 or jennifer_waite@nps.gov.

The Vermont Trails and Greenways Council (trail development and maintenance) and the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association (municipal recreation) can provide resources that may help. They co-host the Vermont Conference on Recreation and Trails Symposium together every year in September.

Regional Forest, Parks and Recreation staff are available, on a limited basis, to assist local communities with planning, maintenance, and management of community forests and recreation assets.

The local Chamber of Commerce may be a partner for community development projects.

Resources and Potential Funding Sources

VCRD has some seed funding that could be used to conduct feasibility work, or kick start planning for implementation. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has a Rural Economic Development Initiative, or REDI program, which can pay for grant writers. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at mariah@vhcb.org or 802-828-1098.

VCRD and NVDA will write letters of support for grant applications. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org and Annie McLean at amclean@nvda.net.

VOREC Program was a key funding source for the Glover Park project, and offers grants with no match requirements. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants/vorec-community-grant-program>.

Vermont Community Foundation could be a funding partner. Their Spark Grant program may be particularly relevant to some of the action ideas identified. Learn more at <https://vermontcf.org/funds/spark/>. They also have a Northeast Kingdom fund, <https://vermontcf.org/funds/nek-fund/>.

The Department of Health offers Healthy Community Design grants that may be relevant.

AARP has winter place making grants and other potential funding opportunities, including their community challenge grants. Find out more here: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/community-challenge/>.

If the parcel is already owned by the town or a partner, the Recreational Trails Program could support the development of trail systems, trailheads and parking. The Recreational Trails Program provides annual funding to Vermont communities for the development and restoration of public recreational trails. Applications require a 20% match. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreational-trails-program>.

If the town identifies a parcel that is forested, the town could apply to the federal Community Forest Program to help fund the acquisition. If the parcel has a recreation-focus the town could apply to the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. To match these federal sources, the town could apply to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund supports the development of public outdoor recreation opportunities across Vermont, with a focus on creating parks and open spaces, enhancing recreation areas and facilities, and protecting wilderness areas and forests. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/land-and-water-conservation-fund>. Applications require a 50% match.

The Vermont Natural Resources Council has small grants that can help with community engagement. Find information here: <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-smart-growth/>.

The VT Dept. of Buildings & General Services Recreation Facilities grants provides matching funds for shovel ready projects. Learn more at <https://bgs.vermont.gov/commissioner/building-communities-grants>

Foundation Grants through Kingdom Trails, Snowflake Foundation (Jay Peak), and others could be an important funding source.

The idea of charging for parking at the North Beach or other town-regulated recreation locations could provide the revenue needed to offset the costs of a long-term lease.

Contact Gary Holloway at the VT Department of Housing and Community Development for examples of what other towns have done and to inquire about state funding resources including the Better Places program, which is temporarily paused, but may receive new funding. Contact Gary at gary.holloway@vermont.gov.

► Develop a Local Recreation Access Management Plan

In coordination with the Town and the State, develop management strategies for local recreational resources to improve access and safety. The plan could focus on parking and pedestrian challenges associated with area hiking trails, beaches, and boat launches. Strategies could include timed signups for parking and access, a hiking or beach shuttle, timed boat launch signups, rescue access, and more.

Community Chair TBD

Facilitator Jenna Koloski, *Community Engagement & Policy Director*, VCRD

Resource Team Members Abby Long, *Executive Director*, Kingdom Trails Association;
Luke O'Brien, *Outdoor Recreation Specialist*, VT Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation

Community Participants and Task Force Sign-ups Carmen Anderson, Myles Danaher, Carol Davis, Mark Deck, Debby Dorsett, Donna Dzugas, Kristen Farrell, Joanne Giannino, Dave Hapke, Randy Knaggs, Laurie Lakin, Diane Lehder, Robert (Bob) Leibold, Kristen Olbys, Sarah Page, David Pasackow, Bill Perkins, Heidi Rutz, Bruce Tanner, Erik Townsend, Jen (Jennifer) Woolard, John Zimmer, and Peggy Zimmer

Current status and overview of the issue today:

- Glover ambulance does proactive observations of the beaches, trails, and boat launches. They have seen that the lots are full or overfull, mostly of many out of state plates, and that overlaps with many people being unprepared for the recreation activity, and therefore more rescues.
- People come to Westmore for the free access.
- People come from NH to moor their boats because there are no fees, regulation, or enforcement on Lake Willoughby.
- Both north and south beaches on Lake Willoughby have more parking than the beach can handle which means they get really congested.
- No enforcement of the law against parking on the roads.
- Parking for beaches spills over to the cemetery, roads, and other places.
- There are houseboats that moor in public spaces like the swimming area.
- The most popular trails are facing erosion because of the numbers of people using them.
- There is not enough parking or no parking at most of the trail heads.
- The state parks staff does a good job of putting up a "Lot full" sign. But when those lots fill up, people park in other overflow areas.
- Seeing increased boat traffic in the south cove.
- No enforcement of the "no dogs" rules on the beaches.
- No enforcement in any of the recreation areas or the parking.
- Overnight use is becoming more of an issue, particularly people mooring boats or camping in places that are not designated for that use.
- Many buoys.
- Traffic on State Highway 5A is heavy and fast. Falls to the state to curb through police and VTrans.
- Wake boats are an ongoing discussion in town; there is debate and mixed understanding of the impacts of wake boats on the lake and the community.
- Cemetery gets chained off by the church on weekends to prevent overuse of the parking by beach visitors, but that means that families who want to visit their deceased have a harder time accessing the cemetery.
- There are many recreation areas in Westmore that aren't being used because they are less visible. Questions around whether the imbalance is something to maintain or to change.

- Boat trailers get parked in unsafe places and clog traffic or parking.
- Long Pond parking gets overrun by trailers.
- The Selectboard is looking into controlling the number of moorings on Lake Willoughby; it requires a petition process.
- North Beach parking and traffic issues may be a slower process to change.

Priority Action Steps

1. Map out which state/regional/local agencies and governance are responsible for or serve which aspects of the Westmore recreation landscape, both physical areas and issue areas.
2. Conduct a capacity and planning study.
3. Seek out case studies: what have other Towns done?
4. Ask Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) to help convene the different players to build connections and work on various issues.
5. Monitor safety on the lake and work with the state to enforce safe behaviors.

Other Potential Action Ideas:

- Enact a parking permit for season. Could cost more for out of state cars than locals, could be a decal renewed annually. Might require a volunteer to monitor.
- Designate mooring areas and design a “fair” program to enforce. Potentially create a fee for non-residents to moor their boats.
- Create sign-up slots for boat launches and charge out-of-state visitors a fee.
- Try to make compliance with the rules (for parking, mooring, on the beach, etc.) easy by creating an online sign-up system. Look to other communities or state parks that have done something like this.
- Monitor numbers of people using the different recreation sites.
- Charge fees for parking, mooring etc. Find a way to pull in some revenue from visitors so that the town can benefit from the wonderful assets it has and better maintain those assets.
- Is there a way to use an app or website system to make it easy to implement fees, monitor numbers, and direct people to resources in real time? But much of town doesn’t get good cell service.
- Be sure to incorporate the health of the natural resources (trails, lakes, wildlife corridors) in the solutions-planning.
- Consider increasing the “wayfinding” and education available on signage to inform people of the map and rules of an area (trail etiquette, beach code of conduct, etc.), how to find overflow parking, where local businesses are. Include French-language on such signage. Include signage at all access points.
- Address the human capacity limitations of the Town and Westmore Association when designing staffing to monitor or manage various solutions.
- Find a balance between parking and use capacity: what can these spaces and resources actually handle?

Visiting Resource Team Recommendations

These recommendations for other potential actions and resources to consider were shared by Visiting Resource Team members representing a wide array of professionals from across the state, and encompass their experience, past success and consideration of the community's unique assets and needs.

Action Recommendations

Given the connections between both task force priorities, an early meeting with both groups might help clarify shared goals and areas of overlap. VCRD staff are available to support this recommendation.

Define the scope of what this means. Does this mean for locally managed resources only, or would it include resources managed by the state or by private entities? Would they want to go beyond town boundaries or focus only on Westmore? Once that scope is decided, it will be critical to engage partners early in the process, possibly through inclusion on the task force, update emails, one-on-one conversations, etc.

Clarify also whether this relates solely to physical infrastructural access (i.e. trails, parking, amenities) or broader societal access (i.e. socio-economic, under-represented populations, etc.).

Consult with Kingdom Trails, similar communities, or the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to understand how other communities manage public recreation.

Apply for planning funds for consultant assistance to help. VCRD may have some seed funding for this purpose.

For recreation access infrastructure, consider the varying recreation assets in the community (state lands, municipal lands, easement lands, class 4 roads/legal trails) and how access to these varied resources can be identified, prioritized, and improved.

The task force could consider designation of a paddle craft access point at the North Beach. Not sure if the use is similar to the South End use, but it is really disruptive to the flow of traffic in the new South End infrastructure.

The task force could consider getting involved in the issue of boat moorings which is going to grow on the lake. Establishing some "management guidelines" for the lake would be beneficial to the lake users. Confirm that the DEC mooring regs (Use of Public Waters Rule) make this a municipal issue.

Consult with Kingdom Trails, similar communities, or the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation to understand how other communities manage public recreation.

The group could explore creating a separate parking area and providing a shuttle for a fee.

The task force could consider a sidewalk/path along 5A and 16 to facilitate pedestrian and bike access to the village and beach. Same goes for the South End area. VTrans has many grants to support the bike/ped program. There were suggestions for the state to install one at the South End, but VTrans said it had to go through the municipality.

Consider developing a recreation committee.

Technical Assistance/Peer Connection Recommendations

Jackie Dagger from Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC). Contact jackie.dagger@vermont.gov and 802-636-7410.

Jessica Savage, VCRD's Director of Community Collaboration, worked for the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation for many years and would be a great resource for strategizing and planning next steps. Contact her at jessica@vtrural.org and 802-227-2790.

Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) can provide resource connections and may be able to help with technical assistance. Contact Dave Snedeker, Executive Director and Visiting Team Member, dsnedeker@nvda.net or (802) 748-8303, or Annie McLean, Community and Economic Recovery Specialist and Resource Team member at amclean@nvda.net or (530) 721-0241 to help make connections.

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program provides technical assistance for grant applications. Learn more at <http://www.nps.gov/rtca> and contact Jennifer Waite at 802 457-3368 x21 or jennifer_waite@nps.gov.

UVM Institute for Rural Partnerships could be a partner. Contact Michele Karode at michele.karode@uvm.edu. The Sustainable Entrepreneurship MBA (SEMBA) program may also be a resource through students who are working on capstone projects.

Kingdom Trails is an invaluable partner who has done this type of work before. Contact Abby Long at abby@kingdomtrails.org.

Glover, Craftsbury, Newport, and Brighton could be collaborators to address recreation on the regional scale.

NorthWoods Stewardship Center could be a partner in a private-public partnership. This or another relevant nonprofit may be a good partner for applying for funding and/or project management.

Northern Forest Center does a variety of outdoor recreation and land conservation work on a regional scale and may be a partner. Learn more at <https://northernforest.org/>

SE Group is a Vermont-based planning firm that helped Burke and Kingdom Trails with their capacity and planning study. Learn more at <https://segroup.com/>

CRO Planning is another firm with Vermont connections that does local work. Learn more at <https://croplanning.com/> and contact Drew Pollak-Bruce at Drew@CROplanning.com and 303-859-2370.

The Catamount Trails Association (CTA), Green Mountain Club (GMC) and Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) could be partners to support grant writing, etc.

Resources and Potential Funding Sources

Northern Vermont Development Agency (NVDA) will be a key partner for convening, funding sources and more. Contact Dave Snedeker, Executive Director and Visiting Team member, at dsnedeker@nvda.net or (802) 748-8303 and Annie McLean, Community and Economic Recovery Specialist, and Resource Team member, at amclean@nvda.net or (530) 721-0241.

USDA Rural Business Development Grants (RBDG) were a key funding source for the Burke capacity study. Learn more at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/rural-business-development-grants>. There may be additional support to help complete the application. Contact NVDA, VCRD, or REDI Program (more info below) regarding potential grant support.

VCRD has some seed funding that could be used to conduct feasibility work, or kick start planning for implementation. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org or 802-222-6896.

Vermont Community Foundation could be a funding partner. They have a Spark Grant for smaller actions, as well as a Northeast Kingdom Fund. Learn more at <https://vermontcf.org/funds/spark/> and <https://vermontcf.org/funds/nek-fund/>.

Better Connections is a collaborative grant program from the Agency of Commerce and Community Development that could be a great fit for planning. Learn more at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/planning/projects-programs/better-connections> and Gary Holloway gary.holloway@vermont.gov and 802-585-0061.

VCRD and NVDA will write letters of support for grant applications. Contact Alyssa Johnson at alyssa@vtrural.org and Annie McLean at amclean@nvda.net.

The Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development has a variety of funding sources, including a municipal planning grant. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/town-future> and <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>.

The Vermont Community Development Program offers planning grants. There are more complex than municipal planning grants, but also offer higher award amounts. Learn more at <https://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>

The Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Grant Program offers a variety of grants, and does not have match requirements. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreation/recreation-grants/vorec-community-grant-program>.

VTrans has a bike and pedestrian grant program that can fund scoping [planning], as well as design and construction. They also have a variety of design resources. Learn more at <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped> and <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/highway/local-projects/bike-ped/resources>.

Northern Borders Regional Commission has a variety of funding programs that could support projects or planning. Learn more at <https://www.nbrc.gov/>.

The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) has a Rural Economic Development Initiative, or REDI program, which can pay for grant writers that may be especially helpful for the larger USDA, NBRC and other grants above. Learn more at <https://vhcb.org/redi> and contact Mariah Noth at mariah@vhcb.org or 802-828-1098.

Lake Champlain Basin Program may be a resource for technical assistance. Learn more at <https://www.lcbp.org/>.

VT Fish and Wildlife administers the Watershed Grants program. These grants can be used for enhancing recreational use and enjoyment among other eligible activities. Contact Will Eldridge at 802-585-4499 or William.eldridge@vermont.gov. <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/get-involved/apply-for-a-grant/watershed-grant>

The Vermont Natural Resources Council has small grants that can help with community engagement. Find information here: <https://vnrc.org/small-grants-for-smart-growth/>.

The Recreational Trails Program provides annual funding to Vermont communities for the development and restoration of public recreational trails. Applications require a 20% match. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/recreational-trails-program>.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund supports the development of public outdoor recreation opportunities across Vermont, with a focus on creating parks and open spaces, enhancing recreation areas and facilities, and protecting wilderness areas and forests. Learn more at <https://fpr.vermont.gov/land-and-water-conservation-fund>. Applications require a 50% match.

V. Westmore's Path Forward Forum Notes

Compiled from focus group discussions held with over 75 Westmore community members and the VCRD Visiting Team on July 10, 2024 and through a paper and online survey

Although the prioritization work of the Westmore's Path Forward Community Visit Program requires a town to decide what is most important as it moves forward with Task Forces, nothing is lost in the process from the long list of concerns and ideas expressed in early community focus sessions. Many interesting and diverse thoughts are represented here, and are presented as a reminder of issues explored, and a possible foundation for future projects.

Safety / Community Connections

Visiting Team: Jessica Savage (FACILITATOR), Margaret Gibson (SCRIBE), Jen Carlo, Ben Doyle, Dave Snedeker

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Volunteer fire department is there for us.
- Glover Ambulance comes when called and competent.
- Farmer's Market: fun people, good food.
- Westmore Association brings community together through activities and builds community through a few events.
- Stores – Willoughby Lake Store and the other one in town, greeted in friendly manner. You feel like you belong and are part of the community, helps to feel safe.
- Store is strong asset as heart of community.
- Current effort to conserve what is normal use on the lake and keep a handle on invasive species and aspects of safety on the lake and its historic place. Lot of people interested in keeping the water clean.
- Still have town meeting – we like to connect with each other.
- Westmore Association has evolved into a positive force by hosting events in the community with balance between summer and year-round residents.
- Church community space is a place to host gatherings whether or not part of the church.
- Beautiful lake, mountains, kayaking, canoeing. Water is clean. Dream come true, place in paradise.
- Neighbors are assets.
- Welcoming community; when became full time resident, made effort to become part of the community and being welcomed into Westmore happened quickly. That makes it special, a sense of community, willingness to meet new people in town.

What are the Challenges?

- Isolated so don't always have the services.
- Mostly old people in these meetings is an issue. Younger people want to come to Westmore, but why aren't they here. Engaging younger community members is a challenge.
- Speeding on 5A is dangerous. People ignore the 35 MPH speed limit sign. Kids can't cross the road without adult supervision.
- People walking on road with kids, dogs, very scary. Someone will be killed. Have to do something about the speed. In winter 600 residents, 1,000 in summer.
- Drawn here because of access to hiking. But walkability and bikability of village in town is limited. Structural parts of community are spread out – beach, store far apart so need to get in cars to get around.
- Don't see anyone being pulled over for speeding. State police come through when they want, no contract with them. We have 400 hour/year contract with Orleans County Sheriff. Don't commit to schedule because of their staffing.
- Don't know who to call for enforcement of traffic laws and weird stuff with the boats. And don't know what difference it would make if we called anyway.
- There are other roads in town beside 5A that the sheriffs don't do anything with. Sheriff comes to selectboard mtg every year.
- In winter things are different. So many opportunities in summer for events, but harder in winter. Church can't keep fellowship Hall open due to financial constraints.
- Swimmer safety considerations with wake boats. Have a petition, but need to discuss as a community. No enforcement, and no way to get in touch with people who can help. Need a way to document what's happening and how to stop it. Hard to overcome a 3-foot wake boat wave. Don't want it to become drag-racing center of wake boats.
- Pontoon boats load in water that's 5 feet deep, then they party with kids swimming. Need protection for swimmers on the beach with boats coming in. Boats are supposed to stay 200 feet away when people in water. State owns the lake, town owns the land at the beach.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Make it a slow zone around the lake, residents that put slow down signs on their property helps.
- Speed tables up 3 to 3 ½ inches work great. Shown to produce 28% change in speeds above 85%. Longer and flatter and allow traffic to continue at reasonable speed.
- Bring young people into Westmore Association.
- There are buoys on North Beach for protection to swimmers, but boats are mooring there. Should do something about that. Put instructions out that show guidelines. Create maps showing where boats can be and not be.
- Find more public space in winter for play groups, yoga, etc. Can use Emerson Room in the Church. The town clerk is

working on making the Town Hall available as a community gathering space.

- At south end, sometimes camping late at night turns into problems. Good to have patrol at those hours, or have the gate shut. Tends to be people that stay many days or underage that are drinking and creating problems. Increase presence and patrol at night.
- Calm traffic by putting up flashing light that says what your speed is. Solar powered, fairly cheap solution. Works with plows, are effective. \$7K each.
- Need to calm traffic for a long stretch. Places with island with flowers in the middle, break up the stretch other ways.
- Widen 5A from North Beach to the Store.
- Link spaces in town – like the beach and store which are far apart – with a bike lane or bike path to create more of that feeling of connection and so people don't have to get into cars to go between them.
- Pedestrian crossing that indicate VT state law says you have to stop when people cross. Not everyone knows it's a state law in cross walks.
- Boat constable.
- Lifeguard at the beach.
- Fines go back into the town.
- Public awareness around maintaining water quality, impacts of climate change, flooding events, drainage issues of chemicals going into the watershed.
- Monitoring of water quality of E. coli.
- Milfoil pickers do fabulous job, but wish they could do more. State lowered funds for that last year. State could give us more money. Boats are churning from boat launch and

spreading it to campgrounds. Find out why they decreased and petition for more.

- Let people know they can call the town clerk for answers to questions, or for leads to resources.
- PPF online bulletin board is fantastic way to learn what's happening in community. Make sure people know about that.
- Email distribution list of the town to get minutes and to get notices of events.
- Getting the phone call inviting to come to this meeting was really nice. Made the connection and brought us here.
- Community, neighbors, sense of connection, belonging is important. Engage with church as part of that.
- Come to coffee hour after church to meet people.
- Food and drinks are great way to bring people together. Food trucks could be popup venues where there's a lot of traffic. Coffee truck could serve as gathering point.
- South beach parking lots full last weekend. Widen 5A from South Beach to upper parking lot so people have a place to walk other than in the road.
- Other events: pancake breakfast, paint and sip, felting event, dinner and meeting of Assn, plein-air in August with artists, luncheon. Pam is an asset, inviting people to get involved in those things. Facebook page, posters around town. Join Westmore Association for \$25 and then get the info. – their website has the information all summer.
- If had the space like Town Clerk's office, wondering if people would use it in the winter time. Could survey people to see if they wanted youth activities, incubator for coffee shop idea, etc.
- Beautiful community cemetery, but summer traffic. Install a black wrought iron gate so people can walk but not cars.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- Challenges are not uncommon. Traffic, policing, emergency services, water quality. There are solutions.
- Struck by concerns about speeding and policing. Respect the village sign a reminder of civic responsibility. Small things can go a long way. WCC established community hubs. Can learn lessons from other communities in terms of creating a community hub, there is expertise in the Kingdom.
- Most beautiful town, have chance to protect it for future generations. Social capital is the way to do that. Building that capital is so important and that happens at gathering places. Don't underestimate the power of community stores. Events are important. Be intentional about the events. What is the event that would appeal to the 25 year old to make them feel like they are part of Westmore? This community is a gem.

Recreation & Natural Resources / Infrastructure: Roads, Buildings, Internet, and more

Visiting Team: Jenna Koloski (FACILITATOR), Alyssa Johnson (SCRIBE), Jen Carlo, Danielle Fitzko, Christine Hallquist

What are the Assets in this Area?

- Two free public beaches.
- Many hiking trails.
- Trail network is unbelievable – hiking, xc skiing, walking.
- "This little lake."
- Natural resources are the foundation of our conversation – water, air, natural resources.
- More than one body of water in the town – several – Long Pond, Bald Hill Pond, Brown Pond, Job's Pond.
- Health ponds, trail systems, pond, forests trail systems.
- Mt. Pisgah, and Mt. Hor.
- Westmore Town Forest – trails with a beaver rock.
- Rock on top of the mountain.
- Two working farms in the community.
- Road crew does a great job.
- Church and Fellowship hall as a centerpiece of the community.
- Town store up and running – has come and gone, but really nice to have.
- Greeter program to check Boats coming to the lake – Town and Westmore Association both contribute to help keep the lake green.
- Protected land that will stay accessible and undeveloped – state and private landowners, Town forest.
- Wheeler Mtn was just purchased by the state of Vermont to add to the State forest.

- Westmore Association has a scholarship program for local students.
- Freedom from personal watercraft.
- Viewsheds from the high hills – very unspoiled.
- Expertise of the people in the room – what people bring in terms of expertise.
- Northern Forest Stewardship Center – create trails and have expertise.
- Number of residents and summer people who volunteer their time and expertise.

- Farmer’s Market every Monday going gangbusters – brand new, but came back.
- Westmore Association.
- Green Mountain Club NEK chapter and trail adopters throughout the season and really dedicated state folks – has been challenges and been around.
- Glover ambulance for North end – and they’re pretty fast.
- Fishing is a big asset- summer and winter, and on multiple bodies of water.

What are the Challenges?

- Beautiful church and a lot of people in town, but not a lot of people come to church – would love to see more people supporting the church and the activities of the church and activities they put on with the Westmore Association – come join and learn and share – church is a small group at this point.
- I’d like to be able to walk on 5A without being mowed down – speed limit, shoulder? Not walkable.
- Town is not walkable.
- Stroller, and amount of time almost hit.
- Increased traffic at the lake, at the beaches, on the trails – don’t have the income generated from it to put back into the resources – GMC, Northwoods and others are putting a band-aid on, but not preserving the resources for the future.
- A lot of state land and state forest and public land – people are misusing the land for illegal dumping, trails that shouldn’t be there, other disappointments.
- More cars than we can manage – bust weekends, not enough parking, so not safe for walking.
- Not a lot of enforcement of rules and regulations.
- Sherriff sits in the same place often. Far away from them.
- Fire Chief lives in Mass –.
- Trails used so much there is mud and erosion issues.
- YES, internet is a challenge here Slow, and a lot of people don’t have access.
- Effort to bring in NEK Broadband and Comcast on the other side of the Lake.
- Rules from the state level like wake boats – Willoughby.
- Some motor boats to ski. A lot of canoeists and sailboard people and so bringing in a new thing that is totally different can be disruptive/challenging.
- Misconception that wake boats are new – there are some that have been operated here for more than 25 years.
- Big noise issue in town with racing vehicles and motorcycles.
- Water quality of the lake has been great, but want it to stay great, and takes some attention to do that and think about it for the future.
- Heavy tax town on gold town – restricts what we can do with municipal towns. Increased traffic on roads, will have to be built out at some point, and small tax base.
- Used to play at the Town clerk’s office – basketball hoop and other things. Used to be camps, Ms. Frenchwood organized them – community space and infrastructure for kids doesn’t exist. Even with younger families moving to town.
- In the last 15 years or so, Westmore was more of a hidden gem. In the last 15, and 5-10 years, tourism increased a lot.

- Good for business owners, but challenge for folks to live here to enjoy the resources in the same way they used to.
- Increase in folks buying properties just to rent it – quality of life on some rural roads has changed.
 - More subdivisions because of the cost of land – changing the density of the town.
 - People can’t afford to live here.
 - Young people can’t afford to move here, for taxes, plus broadband challenges.
 - Summer resident – live in Central NY state – taxes here are higher than residential home in New York State.
 - More residents coming in and more porta potties up and down the lake shore – sooner or later are going to need a sewage system.
 - Porta potties at North Beach.
 - Working with ARPA funds – not eligible for funding because of status as a “gold town” even though residents are suffering – median income is below the state, poverty level is 1/6.
 - Back when Act 69 happened, high proportion of part time residents decided they had to contribute more to the education fund, and that formula hasn’t change.
 - Westmore doesn’t have a school.
 - The Town owns very little property – the community hall is owned by the church – has to go through someone in the church who shall remain nameless.
 - Bar/restaurant and used to have a lovely inn, but marginal right now.
 - Used to be a gathering site in the South End – dance hall – but has gone dark.
 - Additional cars and people coming in- concerned about wildlife – less evidence of moose and bears.
 - Plans for wildlife corridors in town plan – residents communicating about areas that they would leave undeveloped. Some protected land geared toward wildlife corridors in town plan.
 - Influx at south beach without a benefit to the community – normally there is a benefit to the community, but not a lot of businesses here- used to be tow stores and more residents – not seeing evidence of folks in the town.
 - Big influx of folks is for 3 months of the year – which is why the town doesn’t support two stores of more restaurants.
 - Erik at White Caps – also have a public store – May 15 to Oct 15.
 - Business from folks using the beaches – at North end go to transfer for station, or people who like to bike the like.

Opportunities: What Should Be Done / What Action Can Be Taken by the Community?

- Start a sailing club.
- With the amount of cars at the North and south beaches, could collect fees from out of town and out of state.
- Westmore residents can be a little bit less – so has to be for all people – requirements on weather and fees.
- North beach town, south beach state.
- Trying to make a trail across private property and widen 5A, but early stages.
- Possibility of having – traffic issues from boat launch. Get a time for a boat launch. In Colorado, you have a time and limits the cars in the overflow parking lot >> like a tee time, could be 5-7 am fishing before work. Could have that for trails and parking areas.
- Wake boat – see some more conversations about it – there’s a group that has their mind made up and no other conversations about it, and it’s a big bad monster, and many people don’t know what it is and what the impact is – very few right now.
- Folks who have concerns about wake boats and fun, it’s about the ballast.
- Sewer system would be great on 5A to pick up cabins on 5A probably discharging onto the lake.
- Great to have a place where little kids play on at the park across the street.
- Parking and congestion – doing an electric taxi or shuttle to a location.
- Place where you can leave your dog because of the no dog on the beach policy.
- Path might be happening – a community that did traffic calming – making the shoulder a little wider by creating condensed grades. An inexpensive way.
- Slow down around town signs – some now, but town wide campaign, or maybe town support for funding.
- Coin drops a couple of times a year – you can’t go around 5A to get from here to here – for infrastructure.
- Remind people with a sign about the fine for littering – North Beach public trash cans used to exist, and a lot of trash behind the porta potties.
- Trash – exit waters collect a lot of trash on the North end of the beach, and there’s a lot of wildlife there – bougie boards, docks etc. – we care about natural resources, don’t want to pollute your neighbors.
- Small community building across the street that isn’t being used – looking at it and toying with it being a Zoom meeting center.
- Town office has guest Wi-Fi – almost always someone using Wi-Fi.
- Wi-Fi updates:
 - Currently looking at hub in West Glover and Barton and West side of Westmore and have funding to do that through VCBB.
 - West side of the lake – Reconnect grant, will come to the far side of the lake, hope to be building that next year (into 2026).
 - Comcast/Xfinity building fiber on one side of the lake.
- Cud are community driven organizations – 55 towns that got together to start this – always volunteers – have reps from Westmore that do a lot of work, but have a plan to have universal access across the NEK.
- By the end of 2026, every address in Westmore should be covered.
- 229 million dollar requires addressing underground – “I’m in the tbd section”.
- Not planning to put cables under the lake.
- Most overhead, underground is more expensive.
- Having a location for folks to gather – get the merry go round back.
- Number of people have large tracts of land here, and would be happy to share land if they want to if there was an organized way to do it – go to different landowner spaces for variety.
- Outdoor pavilion and spaces outside.
- Sentinel Rock State Park – was plans for a pavilion in that park, but it was a state funding issue.
- “Bruce is in charge” – Lake watershed action plan that has been in work for 2.5 years. Long list of things to do along river quality – spring Phosphorus trend is slightly upward – working on that.
 - Westmore Association with Memphremagog Association, and Orleans County NRC.
 - Westmore Association has to stir the pot and encourage folks to buy in – some are on private property.
 - Lake Wise – free service that is primarily educational impervious surfaces, shoreland, septic system and landscaping – if you pass the checklist, hearty slap on the back and award. No dinged if there are issues – would like to see it improved. Half a dozen awarded so far, three times that assessed. If we can get 30 properties to win the award, then we become a gold lake. Need more people to volunteer – helps the status with the state.
- Seymour push for Lake Wise – face to face conversations in Morgan.
- Communication – a lot of people that live out of state and aren’t here all the time – things can be communicated more easily for more communication.
- Create a resident sticker for the beach. It would give great access to communicating with someone because would give cellphone, winter address – could generate info for communication – some small neighborhood communication is happening already. Could be a fee for stickers and give enormous local information – someone on Facebook doesn’t see it. There is a Westmore Facebook group.
- We could solve a lot of problems if we could generate more income and find a way to have folks participate by buying a sticker.
- Westmore Association stickers on boats and cars.
- Westmore Association has a newsletter – include Westmore Association, church, community activities, local businesses – Jen can subscribe you.
- Town clerk is limited in how much you can send out. Posters, but only if you’re really looking. Burke has a great page – but need someone to manage.

- Capacity with a committee for communication – have committees, but are currently only one person.
- Front Porch Forum has several towns in one.
- Open up the old dance halls.
- Lake Willoughby Watershed Action Plan – number of very important projects that came out of that. Gigantic issue with townspeople agreeing with issues – North Beach project

taking entirely off the table. Education and a committee and people who are interested are crucial.

- Dark sky preservation – light pollution. Not as dark as we used to be as measured via the Bortle Scale. Cookie challenge and more activities about it – how to reverse light pollution and medical effects.

Reflections of the Community Visit Team

- I love that you said friends – such a treat to be here with you all tonight. It's clear that you love your community, care about it, and know that it's a real gem. People now know that it's a real gem- other people have fallen in love. People who are here for a little bit and managing that influx. Recreation team and state foresters – 4 staff for the entire NEK. Trails are being used, and loved. Want to keep public access free- but more parking. Erosion from worn can lead to water issues, wider, not as climate resilient – as a state, we are dealing with the same issues. Have heard some real ideas here and opportunities to learn from each other when dealing with the same issue. Some funding opportunities you may not be aware of LWCF – haven't done it in a long time, but will have in the fall. For 2 million dollars – for community playground or space (it builds program). Recreation Trail Program – for Town Stewardship trails – County forester – Matt Langless – helps out with Town Forests. Wildlife – some resources at fish and wildlife to talk to towns. Love the gold lake vs. gold town –

- love that you're accessing it already. Traffic calming – Dani's background in Urban Forestry – using trees and bump outs to slow people down. Better Connections to care about things – work with the community to get people to walk or bike.
- Welcome the opportunity to talk with folks – struggling managing the South Lake, and be able to do enough enforcement. Brought in a roving ranger for the past years – from resource to people management to protect the resource – need money to manage people.
- I raised my family on the Green River Reservoir – cleaning up campsites every spring. When a state park, rules were established and changed the whole dynamic. Local action you are talking about – utility infrastructure – education. The majority of folks who use your natural resources do want to protect them. A lot of the challenges are just because people didn't know. Organizing as a Town locally to make this happen with education. Capitalizing on your local energy to protect valuable local resources is going to make that happen.

Additional Action Ideas

Here are the ideas residents contributed through a paper and online form

- Dump a few tons of river rocks and sand at the south beach of Lake Willoughby.
- Extended or more frequent hours at the transfer station
- Pave more roads!!
- I'd like to see: (1) a section on the town website where people can post activities (e.g. mushroom foraging on Saturday at the Eagle Point Trail; pub quiz at The Gap on Wednesday; etc); (2) pave Hinton Hill Road and Coles Road; (3) put a few tons of sand on the Lake Willoughby South Beaches (both the clothed and clothing optional sections).
- I'd like to see the mooring area at the south beach have some oversight. I think they should be town moorings available by a transparent lottery system rather than first come, first served. One year I put one in and someone just stole it. Who does that??? The answer is people fighting for limited resources where there are no rules. We need some oversight for equal access. These folks can use public access too.
- The trailhead to Wheeler Mountain moved quite a ways down the road several years ago perhaps after new owners came in. The new parking area is great but it adds a significant distance to the trail making it available to fewer people. I saw in the news that the state purchased land there recently. Does this change this problem?
- Trash receptacles at the town beach or a way to dispose of liter that is picked up on the beach would be nice. I pick up trash and take it home then have to pay \$0.25 a pound to throw it out at the transfer station.
- Sailing Club: racing, sunfish, and other. Social lessons (for kids too). WoW - women on the water.
- Short term (Airbnb) rental regulations, permit process, charge rental owner annual fee (per each rental on property), funds to go to town for roads, lake maintenance. Keep beaches free! NEK is poorest region in VT. NEK families (Westmore & beyond) should be able to use beach for free. You can get \$ from tourists via vacation rental owner paying permit fee because they can just increase rates, and/or work with local stores/state to get tourist \$ from sales, fishing license fee, etc.
- Community Newsletter. Grant writing help.
- Stop publicizing Willoughby until / unless capacity (lodging, parking, dining) increase.
- Protect the lake - Encourage waterfront owners to do Lake Wise program. Town clerk has addresses for them and it wouldn't cost much to mail each of them info about the program.
- I would guess few of them know of it and if made aware, many would participate.
- Ban wake boats to protect shoreline and keep lake safe for recreational use. A petition is in the works, I know, but just re-emphasizing the importance.

- Keep beaches free to use. Lots of people in neighboring towns visit the beaches. This is the poorest region in VT and it's hard enough for families to find things to do for free. The beaches should be free for all to enjoy.
- Benefitting from increased tourism - If you want money from tourism, concentrate on the growing number of Airbnb/short term rentals. Those are businesses and they should contribute to the town costs, road maintenance, lake/beach maintenance since they are adding to those costs by renting to visitors. Come up with short term rental regulations as other towns have, create registry of STR's and require all SRT owners (current and future) to pay an annual fee to the town. I suggest \$100 per year per each rental unit on their property(s). It won't really cost them much if they simply raise their nightly rates by a small amount. For example - if they rent out for 100 days per year and add \$1 - \$2 to the nightly rate, that covers the town annual fee plus extra for Airbnb/VRBO fees/commissions.
- There should also be some kind of approval process and yearly inspection process for these rentals to ensure they are up to code with smoke detectors, sanitation, composting, recycling, trash removal, existence of a land line for emergencies (many visitors might not have cell service here) etc. They should have to follow the same rules as other lodging types, inns, etc. There should also be some kind of limit as to how many STR's can be on a road, depending on road size, number of other homes on the road, etc. Even ONE Airbnb on a small dirt road can drastically reduce the quality of life for residents on that road. Often the STR owner lives out of state or simply does not care about added noise, road traffic, safety - they just want to make money and have no concern for neighbors. Property owners who currently have STR's or want to do STR should have to apply for a special permit and there should be an approval process that includes opinions of abutting neighbors. Same as if someone wanted to open a business. STR's are a business.
- Park across from the church - It doesn't get used much. Work with church to add a playground or have events there - music, outdoor movie, food trucks, etc.
- Communication - ask town clerk to include a note with tax bills asking property owners to provide an email address for important town updates or add a note encouraging sign up to Westmore Association newsletter. Add Westmore Association e-news sign up link to town website.
- Ski areas across the US have a skier's responsibility code posted at most ski areas- bike paths post bike path rules - how about developing protocol for conduct on the beaches, safe driving and boating practices etc. and posting on the public beaches and boat launch.
- I think it would send a positive message to visitors that Westmore is a caring and United community!
- Crosswalks across from the store and the north and south beaches with so age the says cross walk and requires by state law that motorists stop for pedestrians. Two such crosswalk postings are in Irasburg between the store and village green!"
- We definitely need high speed internet.
- I heard that some folks were concerned about Airbnb's and VRBOs. My cottage was sitting empty except for the couple weeks I can come up for the summer. Renting it is adding to the income of the community. I have a property manager, a house cleaner, a plumber, and an electrician. I have upgraded my appliances using local vendors.
- The folks who rent the house go to the Willoughby Lake Store, rent kayaks from White Caps, go to The Gap restaurant and grocery shop in Barton. All of this is bringing money into the community. The house is not year-round and so couldn't be housing.
- Willoughby has always been tourist driven. I hope that the town has foresight enough to understand the positive impact of that.
- Explore a local option tax on short term rentals; sales; meals; rooms; alcohol. Encourage the Selectboard to make decisions on ARPA fund projects suggested by residents like a new interpretive trail in the Westmore Town Forest. Establish a "mutual aid" group.
- Having other opportunities to be outside on the land beside the existing lake and hiking. Restore the farm for multi-use trails, public access. It's near the lake, with views of and can be seen from the lake and many parts of town, so it's a good spot for gathering and a sensitive spot for development. Maybe a group or the Town would purchase the 16 acres, or one of the subdivisions, form a 501(c)3, and create the multi-use year-round trails or other opportunities for community use. She wants to talk to Commissioner Fitzko about this idea.
- Trash cans at the town beach. The town is paying someone to clean the beach regularly so why not make their job a little easier by providing trash cans. It might keep visitors from piling all of their trash in the woods near the porta johns or leaving it in the parking lot
- Traffic congestion at south beach. With the construction of additional parking areas parking was to be eliminated along the road and no parking signs were put up by the state but people continue to park along VT-5A even right by the no parking signs. What is needed is enforcement for the no parking areas. Since the state is responsible for the south end I would expect either the state police or the state park and forest rangers would be issuing tickets to discourage the illegal parking. It would also be helpful if the number of people that are accessing the south beach is controlled as is done at the Crystal Lake State Park to reduce the environmental impact that has occurred with overcrowding.
- Collect fees for users of Westmore beaches and parks. Charge residents \$1 for annual pass
- Pedestrian & bike connectivity between public spaces (town beach, church & town offices, store). I oppose widening the road to achieve this: in my experience wider road lead to faster traffic and a less pedestrian friendly feel/reality
- Valuing open space & local farms/agriculture as a vital community resource and asset for resiliency; proactively supporting them and protecting them from development
- Increasing local produce and fresh vegetables available at the store year round
- Informative signs posted at town beach with QR code or other easy avenue to donate to support maintenance as alternative to requiring a fee for use/parking

- Encourage / endorse food trucks and local vendors at town beach parking lot to increase local economic opportunities
- Bring artists to the community through artist residency programs
- Create spaces for families with young children to connect: small library, playground, story hour, etc.
- BROADBAND for the ENTIRE Westmore Community! Not just the heavily populated areas that the for-profit companies are willing to cover.
- North Beach Priority Access to Westmore Residents who are paying for the upkeep and care of the north Beach. North beach is abused and taken for granted by day visitors from other areas. They do not respect our beach and what we offer. Other local towns charge non-residents for their beach use beach.



VI. Westmore's Path Forward Community Visit Participants

Carmen Anderson	Debby Dorsett	Laurie Lakin	Wally Rogers
Lee Anderson	Louisa Dotoli	Ray Lanier	Heidi Rutz
MaryLou Arundell	Vince Dotoli	RoseMarie Lanier	Anna Siegal
Dave Bailey	Ann Duggan	Kallie Lefebvre	Katherine Sims
Ken Bailey	Donna Dzugas	Diane Lehder	Deb Smith
Danielle Bassignani	Chris Eby	Robert (Bob) Leibold	Grant Smith
Andy Berley	Kristen Farrell	Margaret M. Healy	Jim Smith
Eric Bogie	Dave Fenichel	Ellie Majchrzak	Shane Switser
Douglas Borden	Greg Gallagher	Laura Malieswski	Bruce Tanner
David Bradshaw	Midge Gallagher	MarySue McCarthy	Erik Townsend
Charles Brady	Joanne Giannino	Martha McDaniel	Liz Tucker
Kelly Brinkerhoff	Margaret Goldman	Linda Michniewicz	Rosalie Uht
Anne Brooks	Rowen Gorman	Jason Midthun	Debbie VanDemark
Jerry Burke	Abbie Gowdy-Chase	Bruce Moffat	Penny VanRipen
Maree Bushey	Mary Hamilton	Pam Moffat	Julie Whelan
Elaine Cashin	Dave Hapke	Ethan Niederer	Kevin White
Chuck Conner	Adam Heuslein	Kristen Olbys	Henry Willis
Katie Cousins	Roger Hildebrandt	Charlie Page	Jen (Jennifer) Woolard
jim cubeta	Deborah Hooker	Sarah Page	Greg Wright
Kate Cubeta	Allen Julian	David Pasackow	Polly Yerkes
Chelsea Cummings	Carol Julian	Holly Pasackow	Andrew Zebrowski
Russell Curtis	Pam Kennedy	Debra Pelletier-Fenichel	John Zimmer
Myles Danaher	Robert (Bob) Kennedy	Bill Perkins	Peggy Zimmer
Carol Davis	Randy Knaggs	Stephen Plume	and many more...
Mark Deck	Cindy Kriebel	Christa Preston	
Mimi Deck Rutledge	Eric Krieg	Dan Preston	
Beverly Decker	Michele Kukla	Brynn Raupagh	
Connor Dolan	Michelle Lafemere	Deborah Richards	

VII. Visiting Resource Team Members

Lauren Brady, *Community and Policy Associate*, VT Council on Rural Development,
lauren@vtrural.org

Jennifer Carlo, *Executive Director*, NEK Collaborative
jennifer@nekcollaborative.org

Ben Doyle, *President*, Preservation Trust of Vermont,
802-658-6647,
ben@ptvermont.org

Danielle Fitzko, *Commissioner*, VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation, 802-598-9992
Danielle.Fitzko@vermont.gov

Margaret Gibson, *Operations Director*, VT Council on Rural Development, 802-223-6091
margaret@vtrural.org,

Christine Hallquist, *Executive Director*, Vermont Community Broadband Board,
christine.hallquist@vermont.gov

Jethro Hayman, *Chair*, Glover All Persons Park and Sensory Trail,
jethro@nekinfo.com

Alyssa Johnson, *Community Visit Program Manager*, VT Council on Rural Development, 802-222-6896,
alyssa@vtrural.org

Susannah Kerset, *Head of Member Engagement*, Front Porch Forum,
susannah@frontporchforum.com

Jenna Koloski, *former Community Engagement and Policy Director*, VT Council on Rural Development

Abigail Long, *Executive Director*, Kingdom Trails, 802-626-0737,
abby@kingdomtrails.org

Annie McLean, *Community & Economic Recovery Specialist*, Northeastern Vermont Development Association, 530-721-0241, amclean@nvda.net

Luke O'Brien, *Outdoor Recreation Specialist*, VT Dept of Forests, Parks & Recreation,
luke.obrien@vermont.gov

Jessica Savage, *Director of Community Collaboration*, VT Council on Rural Development, 802-227-2790, jessica@vtrural.org

Denise Smith, *Executive Director*, VT Council on Rural Development,
denise@vtrural.org

David Snedeker, *Executive Director*, Northeastern VT Development Assn, 802-748-8303 x303, dsnedeker@nvda.net





Beautiful Lake Willoughby



**Vermont Council on
Rural Development**

PO Box 1384, Montpelier, VT 05601-1384
802-223-6091 | info@vtrural.org

<http://vtrural.org>

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