Notes from the CEDS Regional Meeting

Rutland, October 23, 2013

1. The context: What are the major trends that are having an impact on VT? Describe the impact of global and national market, economic, social and economic trends? What are some of the local demographic, job, business, education and other trends that we need to be aware of?

- Advantage of value of "small." We can act much more quickly that others and deliver success. Capitalize on existing clusters of enterprise.

- Aging population

- Banking industry - holding on to the money

- Bring resources here to enable fast growth opportunity with high quality teams of experts and local resources.

- Build a world access business portal that enable high quality of life for residents while bring opportunity to our doorstep. Expand tech connectivity, market connections, high value business services and training/education. Maintaining the Vermont Brand to attract tourism business (ski resorts, leaf peepers)

- Clash of cultures of rural Vermont and urban aspirations

- Declining school population causes out-of-state home buyers to decline to purchaser or build new homes reducing tax revenue/driving construction trades elsewhere for work as well

- Decreasing discretionary income

- Economic inequality in a have- and have-not society

- Empty nesters losing key skills and workforce as population ages

- Face to face and real communities may be threatened by virtual communities

- Farm to table and alternative energy are growing national trends and two sectors that Vermont has grown in past 5 years

- Growing health consciousness

- Growing income gap/shrinking middle class

- Increasing drugs and related crime
• Influence of technology on communications
• Lack of community involvement with improving Vermont made products.
• Lack of new housing in Rutland County.
• Lack of senior housing and services
• Lack of transitional housing/rental housing for people moving to the state.
• Locavore movement
• More collaboration on the Farm to Table concept especially in light of the GMO...to improve the rising costs of health insurance.
• Negative trends: High drug addiction with increased criminal activity. Nationally - debt and reduction of services
• Organic / farm to table food
• Political polarization
• Positive - Farm to table...more people are concerned about the food they are consuming. Vermont is in front of the trend in this area.
• Positive - getting away from war efforts is bringing home a workforce that has skills in areas that are in demand.
• Positive - more participation between education and industry. Businesses are working with educational facilities to train and recruit workforce.
• Positive trends - fuel economy is creating a sense of responsibility for consumption
• Proliferation of renewable energy;
• Push on tourism.
• Reasonable energy prices drive regional skiers to stay local
• Resurgence to expand manufacturing here in the US
• Speed and volume of communication and the build out of the infrastructure that demands Connectivity is demanded not just by business but by society
• Technology: Less funding in technology -local no employment opportunities
• The extremely high taxes in the county and especially in the city . .of which most is allocated to education. . R these dollars really being used to educate our kids or just high salaries for administrators

Themes: food: natural home grow, no GMO, by local, farm to table; continuing tech advance and access across different platforms, drug addiction and crime, alternative energy: people are using and demanding it more; housing: lack of affordable housing also enough for people who would move here to work; nobody carries cash...paid on their cell phones...tech and communications
Aging population: empty nesters and elderly increasingly the pop; smallness and connectedness of small state, local enterprise and the ability to access people; large number of Asians at Killington; nationally, diversity is a huge trend, but not in VT; no difference in diversity by a campground owner; cultural adaptation necessary for those from other countries; climate change

2. Dynamic SWOT: What are we doing well in Vermont that contributes to our economic, ecological and/or social resilience we want to KEEP? What is an obstacle or barrier to our success that we might ABANDON? What new activities or revised activities are we drawn to INVENT/REINVENT?

KEEP:

- Ability to maintain social connection from the traditional Vermont community incorporating new technologies.
- Authentic practice what we preach
- Billboards away
- Broadband and telecommunication access
- Carries to deliver a quality experience, a quality product
- Clean and pure Vermont Brand
- Continue expansion and development of the local airport
- Enthusiasm for rail development both commercial and pleasure
- Expanding train airport and other transport options
- Farming. Put more money and time into brining young farmers to the state.
- Focus on long term sustainability.
- Local food but reinvent ways for local restaurants to utilize it
- Preserve the landscape and pastoral experience
- Renewable energy in order to decrease need for foreign fuels.
- Renewable energy/solar
- Support for farmers, VT Branding, support for Arts
- Support local vendors aka Barnard General Store

ABANDON:

- Cumbersome permitting process for business investors
- Drugs and welfare
- Good old boy network
• Lack of cell and internet, i.e., lack thereof in most rural areas
• Micro managing the school systems by having too much admin
• Short term reactive business practice.
• The thought that we are a manufacturing state!
• Town structure and go with county but keep sense of community keep expanding tech education

INVENT:
• Improved public transportation system including increased train and air access for out-of-staters
• Job opportunities

REINVENT:
• Act 250
• Capital gains tax structure for real estate and land sale to 3 year holding period (not 7 years)
• Connecting the cities and towns by interactive sharing to improve enough of "this is my sandbox u can't play in it"
• Cultural diversity can be created by bringing events and activities to the area to promote it
• Education funding system which is stifling growth of tourism towns
• How towns and regional organizations collaborate
• Improve farm to table/buy local
• Maintain and enhance the economic viability of agriculture. Continue to support small farms support while allowing effective expansion to allow competitive profitable modern farms.
• Transportation systems in order to get people from one end to the other.
• VT’s image that we are slow and earthy...

Themes: Keep: transport, support for farmers, communication and internet improvement, natural landscape, social cultural milieu, VT brand, slow, love thy neighbor, sense of community Abandon: the thought that we’re a manufacturing state...not everyone agrees with this; parochial community ties and failure to collaborate; Reinvent: capital gains laws; reinvent our negative attitude about the place we live (more positivity); reinvent the VT tax structure so that we are competitive with NH; Act 250; reinvent the idea that everything about VT is Burlington and Essex; education funding system; economic viability of ag.; cultural diversity
3. What unique capabilities, resources, skills, approaches etc. does Your Region have that could be replicated/applied elsewhere in VT? What might Your Region learn/apply from other parts of VT that would make a big difference to your future?

**EXPORT:**

- Ability to focus all resources on difficult problems.
- Awareness of the rich history and culture born of Rutland: present in our housing, physical structures
- Farmers markets
- Full engagement of business, government, nonprofit and sectors through collaborative teams (e.g. WIB, Rutland business partnership, REDC, RRPC)
- Manufacturing
- Resilience of the people
- Rutland farmers market
- Sense of true partnership and collaboration.
- Stafford tech center training and job placement

**IMPORT:**

- Affordable housing and rental communities
- Air service expansion
- Apprenticeships and ways to learn new skills needed for changing work needs
- Arts and culture
- Buyers for our fabulous affordable housing stock
- Champlain College BYOB (bring your own business) program and incubator programs for tech and other small business
- Communal living-working-recreating space in abandoned commercial property
- Entertainment and cultural (arts) opportunities.
- Entrepreneurs and startups and support networks for new and growing businesses
- Foreign Trade Zone activities
- Improved shopping and retail
- Jobs to take advantage of extensive established infrastructure and historic manufacturing base
- Lake Champlain
• Manufacturing
• More bike and pedestrian paths
• More vibrant downtown
• Quaint Vermont village
• Quality jobs
• Rail support services
• Real broadband and connectivity
• Ski village
• Tech programs for high level skills: robotics course replaced by hair dressing class
• Technology based companies who require limited infrastructure investment and are often swayed by choices relating to lifestyle
• The Burlington airport
• The idea of downtown Burlington
• Work ethic for underemployed

4. Projects: What is a project to start today in VT so the state, its businesses, government and community are resilient in the face of change (climate, social, economic, etc)? 3-5 word snazzy title, 25 word rich description. Think about services, systems, roles, methods, governance, funding, etc.

1. Employment Success: Evaluate the culture in which you were raised and how it formed your belief system which has led you to the choices you make and then teach ways to alter that belief system to a more positive end.
2. Rutland Tech Valley: An Area that is concentrated in good & services at the edge of technology i.e., hovercraft, VERY low cost fabricated off the grid housing, etc. Federal energy funding, housing included in wages, shopping and agricultural surrounding the Valley to support the projects.
3. Up RICH aka /Vermont towns: . . .To implement a system that is fair and equitable on a COUNTY level which will impact housing, tax structure, jobs, wages, education, affordable housing, ie: unify and strengthen each county.
4. It Takes A Village: . . .This program brings together families, government, community programs that put the power back on parents to raise their children into stable, tax-paying citizens, and supports ways to keep the family together.
5. Education funding reform: the current system has placed huge tax burdens on tourism towns which have dramatically limited capital reinvestment and marketing for businesses, which are the drivers of one of the economic pillars of the state - tourism. A recent study commissioned by the legislature showed that while per Pupil spending has increased 1505 over the last 15
6. **STEM Education opportunities.** Do hands on learning.

7. **Need to Brand our Region uniquely** from other areas of Vermont (Central Vermont). Lovely, peaceful community, educated and internally accessible. How do we capitalize on this. Health and wellness is the theme. (Wellness...why did we choose VT? Independence and urban atmosphere while preserving rural experience and values.)

8. **Increase Vermont State Tourism:** promotion to keep pace with our competitors (NH, ME, CO, UT, CA) who are outspending VT by 4-50x. Strategy to keep pace with competitors.

9. **Destination VT:** Create a grant program to support improve tourism infrastructure, add additional amenities, and enhance offerings - thereby improving the visitor experience and viability of VT destinations.

10. **Vermont=Health:** A Vision for the Future. Create incentives for high-risk populations to participate in those activities that will facilitate a healthy lifestyle. "Spa-Vermont"...state-wide in multiple locations. (e.g. demonstrate healthy behaviors in exchange for food stamps; people need places to come for rehab who have had joint operations, etc. Health destination idea. Positive feedback loops to reward healthy behavior.)

11. **Center Rutland Gateway:** program (W/S, Business incentives and main street capital investment funds). Rail services development with a vision to the future use of Rutland as Vermont's central rail hub. (Systemic, future oriented funding decisions. Building on existing infrastructure. We have huge access to people needing nurture..."coming back to the Green". Very important aspect of our brand. "The new life")

5. **Thinking about our projects: what one change to the system (how we do things in VT) might make all the difference?**

   - Change 2-year election cycle which doesn't give politicians enough time to make change without worrying about elections. Have state adopt a longer term vision and then be willing to stay with it. No consistency of vision. People want to put a stamp on their own things.

   - Considerable frustration about over planning and lack of action. Change has to come from the bottom up without waiting for the government. We have to begin to live it. The RSVP program has done a really good job. Also, bone builders program, which is populated by seniors who are helping seniors to be healthy.

   - How can we bring new people to the table to get different results?

   - Project to help people start their own projects. How might we support that?

   - There are a lot of ongoing activities and projects that touch on what we've talked about. How do we understand what's already going on so we collaborate and don't recreate the wheel.

   - We need to align the stated goals and objectives that come out of this process at the state and local level. This will be the rubric by which $$ will be allocated. How might we actually deliver on
these good intentions? The CEDS needs to be integrated with regional plans, regions driving the boat.

- Whatever ideas we bring in should be affordable for the people who live in VT. There is a huge indigenous pop who cannot afford VT.
- Why are we looking to government for solutions?