**Zone CEDS Public Input Sessions**

**Round 1- Wilmington, June 19th**

(JS Notes)

What do you love about Southern Vermont?

- Water sports! Paddleboarding, waterskiing, fishing, etc

- Rachel asks if anyone does whitewater – what about creating more features?

o Had a slalom in the lake at one time

- The mountains, the forest, outdoor recreation

- Curtis – aside from landscape, strategically located relative to Boston / NY / Montreal

- History

- Growing diversity

- Tremendous opportunity

- Winter sports, back country skiing (Dutch Hill)

- Food, good food, natural, restaurants, fresh

- Most towns have really good libraries connected to the world…with high speed fiber

access

- An eclectic feel

- Arts – woodworking to painting to music to blown glass – to performance

- Restoration, historic preservation – specific buildings, as well as at village sclase

- A lot of different newspapers and voices (and radio and tv) and devoted readers

- Civic engagement…encouraged most places

- Rachel – a large # of volunteers or a few doing a lot? “Very hard to get young people

involved…they are working many jobs to keep roof over their head”

- Gretchen – community, engaged with one another, a lot of compassion for one another,

when someone is in trouble ppl rally…everyone comes out. “after Irene that was just

amazing”

- Laura – there’s a resiliency in SoVermont you don’t see other places maybe because you

didn’t have to

- Rachel – perception of Southern Vt is….? “Part of MA, too close to NY, too different”

- Rachel – because other Vermont is more…”rural”

- When you don’t have a Vermont news channel it’s not good – we don’t get WCAX or

have a local channel.

- Rachel – what brought you ehre?

- Curtis – skiing. Came 40 years ago a friend invited me to Newfane. Spent 3 weeks here

and then 6 months moved here. “You move to VT and take a vow of poverty”

- Zeke – moved here for work in ski industry. Took that vow to stay, five jobs, 30 years

passed.

- Havreluks…born here!

- Meg – born here, left, but came back because I really missed it. Small town setting.

Lived on Capitol Hill…felt too hard to get involved as a plain citizen and I missed that!

Moved back had a baby joined the schoolboard and the rest is history.

- Readsboro – born, raised, 5 yrs in Burlington as a firefighter, own a business (“for the

bank”)

What is the greatest challenge facing business owners, residents?

- Risk averse to jumping into the multi-cultural marketplace. Given our demographics

there are more black and brown folks in the US and I don’t see businesses trying to tap

into outdoor enthusiasts of color to come to Vermont…as if we don’t ski, waterski, cycle.

- Over the long haul…you need to invest in marketing to multicultural marketplace. The

challenge among business owners is they don’t believe the market is there.

- Rachel – do you think messages to welcome people here are getting out there.

- Curtis – I’ve had businesses of color looking for a place to move, and I was given two

reasons why Vermont was not the best place to move to.

- Zeke – employees. Getting someone to come and want to work, put in time and effort

and do the job. Can’t pass a drug test.

- Homes and schools and work ethic.

- Gretchen - we don’t have enough ppl. 13 students will graduate from Twin Valley next

year. We need a recruitment strategy to bring people here. Also, challenge is to rent

housing and if you buy education tax makes it expensive.

- Gretchen - our business community is aging and no real succession plans. That’s a real

challenge. No one to buy these businesses if they want to sell, some are in debt.

- Readsboro – sold the family business after 48 years taxes too high, insurance,

regulations etc…my son got smart and became an electrician. 300 jobs year round at Mt

Snow goes to 7 in the winter. How do we employ them all summer, have a temp agency

that carries health insurance and workmens comp…lots of people don’t pick up a few

more workers because of the overhead. Co-op for trades. Help people stay and have

benefits, help small company that can’t handle the risk. Match summer to winter

employment, have more full time residents and fewer temp workers.

- House in Readsboro you can’t give away – long commute, no cell or broadband

- Gretchen – for residents, education. Having a diverse group your kids can play and hang

with is a challenge (education and social interaction piece go hand in hand)

- Right now you need three towns you have a baseball team, you used to have multiple

teams, now Readsboro does not have enough kids for a team

- Rachel – puts a strain on family all that travel to activities and things for kids to do

- Laura – lack of depth of opportunity, particularly employment for specialized positions

(you come for one job but will there be a next?) – creates risk

- Rachel – younger people are moving to where they want to live and then hoping to find

a job, or opportunities for advancement

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This plan will be a success if it addresses what key issue?

- Access to new markets! (Curtis)

- Population growth

- We need housing, jobs, but we need the people to come, is that first?

- Rachel – when you say housing what do you mean? Gretchen – affordability and quality

- Could restore Readsboro homes and create jobs in the process, then they would be

great for starter homes – become a bedroom community not a factory community

anymore.

- (62% in North Adams retired or on benefits)

- Adam – having heard this morning, to be successful this has to recognize that this plan

is going to be written in a time that will be different from the time when it will be

implemented…things are changing that quickly. Our economy is built on something

that existed before and has not right-sized itself, what is our data driven cold hearted

assessment and align to that reality. (we made choices about schools based on bad

data in the past)

- Curtis – dovetailing on earlier comment about how ‘we were all workaholics’ – it’s

entirely possible for us to attract people who are willing to come for QOL and work it

out once they get here, so maybe we’re getting ahead of our skis to try to solve for

housing / jobs.

- Adam – don’t target sub groups, but really EVERYONE who wants to be here.

- Create ability to start and grow business, life here as easily as one could in the past.

- Look at the publicity that the $10000 remote worker thing garnered. (Curtis we made

sure it was on the national brotherhood of skiiers web site but it was not part of a

strategy…not directed at the market)

- Jen – it still has to be a little less hard because it’s genuinely harder now to be here than

30 years ago in terms of cost of living, how hard it is to run a business here,

- Readsboro – how do we reward people for investing in themselves, in their home

etc…you get health insurance because you are working not because you are out of work,

property taxes go down if you fix it up not up…

- Broadband and cell

- Rachel – what does success look like from this plan? More people, increasing wages,

decreasing average age, increased diversity,

- What about diversification of industry base? Not being held hostage to weather

conditions?

- Cooper – can process shine light on things where it’s going better than we thought?

We might expose that narrative to a broader public like Manufacturing

- Zeke – and Vermont name, brand, snowshoes and beer and maple syrups…success

stories

- Meg – very interesting difference between what people thought was huge and what is

huge.

- Rachel - rising stars like manufacturing plastics, food, precision.

Money is no object – what one project would have the greatest impact on economy?

- BIG PROJECT / ONE QUICK WIN TO BUY MOMENTUM

- Coop idea

- Curtis – how many people were not born in Vermont? How many visited at the same

time and had an experience that exceeded their expectations, decided to move here?

The idea here is if we want to attract more people here and people of color we have to

think on larger scale! Need to bring 10s and 100s of thousands here to visit to have an

experience that exceeds their expectations! Work the numbers! Promote the Vermont

African American Heritage Trail…Hildene, Daisy Turner &amp; Grafton, WWII museum in

Pownall, folks on the way to Buffalo Soldier in Colchester. Build marketing strategies

around those. Start with National Assn of Black or Hispanic journalists.

- (some conversation about immigration)

- What if National Forest shifted to a National Park? With a diversified land that is

welcome to be used by everyone. (Natl forest owns 41% of Readsboro)

- Adam – Virtuous cycle. Build a workforce system that is successful, guides kids to

participate in the economy meaningfully as well as adults retraining…all of that exists in

the region and everyone knows where they can enter it and how it works. In Windham

County 400 graduated, half go to college, the rest…let’s skill them up.

- Workmens comp – keeping people from getting summer apprenticeship, starting career,

- “But without broadband…”

- Marketing Campaign (quick not big)

- 50 childcare slots in each town

- 50 housing units in each town

- Do a match program like the $10k remote worker thing but for housing for workers

- Gut and restore the old houses that could sell for $100k (new, clean, energy efficient)

- Curtis – where should I invest my money in Vermont? Adam – there are a lot of social

investments available, but also a lot of social enterprise funds including startup funding

up through industry fund. Opportunity Zones…

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General:

Curtis - There are 2000 black motorcycle clubs in the US and they are mostly beer drinkers.

How do we do that? “Intentionally”

Laura – identified in the last Windham CEDS was a need for capacity to develop, put together

big financing packages etc, just augmented with CDFI announcement at BDCC

Readsboro – erasing the line that that some of us are caught between (there are “three zones”)

so we can work together instead of being over the line and unable to access a service or

program

Laura – 4 minute detour: what’s different or same or special from last meeting?

Adam – SIT meeting this morning was so oriented to adjacent counties…

Jonathan – feel more optimism and positivity here! People talked about how their kids love the

towns they live in etc. Manchester positive.

Rachel – Bill talked about systematic, comprehensive immigration to Vermont has to happen.

Curtis – if you can’t target who’s already here, and ignore US people of color in favor of ‘the

exotic’.

Cooper – referring to PR population in Holyoke, people already there.

Zeke Goldberg

Laura

Jonathan

Curtis

Meg

Readsboro Selectboard member

Gretchen

Ashley

Olga (Commons &amp; WKVT)

Rachel

Sarah

Adam

(Whiteboard Notes)

What do you love about So Vermont?

 Watersports

 Water access/recreational/resource

 Natural terrain

 Finding/outdoor rec opportunities

 Strategically located near metro areas

 History

 Growing diversity

 Opportunity

 Duten hill development

 Food – access, local, quality

 Access to library = resources/world

 Eclectic

 Arts – all varieties

 Restoration: Latchis, BF, Stone church

 Village fabric – preservation, local, authentic

 Lots of different publications/news sources = devoted readership

 Civic engagement (but few doing a lot)

 Community compassion, engaged

 Resiliency

 Ability to get involved quickly

Greatest Challenges

 Business

o Do not see multicultural market

o Retaining willing employees

o Lack of applicants, work ethic

o Lack of students in school system

o Seasonality

o Aging owners

o No succession planning

o Taxes, policy, regulations

 Residents

o Housing  taxes

o Educational/social interaction  Small population less diversity

o Community activities

o Lack of depth of opportunity

o Opportunity for advancement

 Both

o Small area challenge

o Risk adverse to jumping into multicultural market place

o Perception that Southern Vermont = MA, not really VT

o Temp agency - Co-op for trades to piece together full time jobs

Key Issues

 Access to new markets

 Population growth

 Housing creation  new build, fit up/renovations

 Planes in a time of changes  understands five years out is not the same as five years ago

 Attracts a cohort dedicated to living here --? Draws: local food/beverage, safety, schools

 Galvanizers fomentation of strategy to attract new markets/residents

 Making it less hard to do things in the local economy

 Instill cultural values of hard work, dedication, pride in ownership of home and town

 Broadband and cellular connectivity

 Success = more people, increase $, increase diversity, decrease median age

Projects BIG Idea

 Coordinated efforts to bring thousands of POC VA VT AF AM heritage to visit and consider

moving

 Building year doing employment from Mount Snows base and infill workforce

 Integrated workforce  flexible training for full age ranges and occupations

 Radial reorientation to engage future workforce and not protect past workforce

 Distributed childcare network PILOT

Projects Quick

 Marketing campaign

 Match program w/ employers similar to $ remote worker

 CDFI

 Erasing county lines