**Zone CEDS Public Input Sessions**

**Round 1- Bennington, June 18th**

(KB Notes)

Laura - welcome and introduction

Tim and Matt, RED Group - “why are you investing your time in this effort?”

Rachel:

Introduction

CEDS overview - what is it? - important outcomes for the process - action plan for the process - what are the priorities and the work plan

Project overview - work plan overview of tasks and planning over the next 6 months

What will be the outcome? This plan will not just sit on the shelf - you should and will be using this plan. There will be specific action plans that should be taken

Questions for discussion:

* what do you love about southern Vermont?
* Community
* Arts
* Growing landscape
* History
* The roads
* Accessibility to cities and towns
* Fresh air
* Quality of life: environmentally
* Opportunities for young people
* Calm pace of life
* Outdoors and access to them
* Accessibility to other states - NH, MA and NY
* What doe other people travel to other states for: airport, train station, things to do with kids, restaurants,
* Creative sector has been embraced
* Vibrancy but not overwhelming
* Gateway to Vermont - that thing that makes you say “I want to go to Bennington, Manchester, Brattleboro”
* Untapped demand for brewery development
* There’s no reason to go to Main Street in bennington with the bypass - this has impacted businesses on Main Street dramatically
* We could do a better job of marketing businesses - need to make the region more marketable - “Bennington needs to be a destination”
* We need to market the region to the state of Vermont - making people aware of the southern Vermont region
* What is the greatest challenge facing business owners in southern Vermont? How about residents?
* Connectivity - broadband
* Childcare - quantity and quality
* Generational challenges - availability and quality of workforce - work ethic is challenging- finding people to work towards the same goal - lack of succession planning is a real danger
* Permitting process
* Wage stagnation
* Health care
* Marketing and awareness of small shops and businesses
* Lack of Cell phone service
* Negative stigma of Bennington and downtown - internal, community stigma
* Transportation - business and personal - workers to get to work
* Lack of employees and workforce
* Difficultly to find a career and make a living - can’t find a job and can’t afford to live here - mismatch of skills - the jobs that young people want are not here - we need to identify the jobs and opportunities that are here in Bennington - need to know someone to get a job, house, childcare, not publicly known
* How do we reinvent our downtowns - what is filling the store fronts
* Declining population - we are discouraging repopulation because it’s so difficult to have kids here
* Housing is extremely expensive
* This plan will be a success if it addresses what key issue?
* Repopulation
* Poverty
* Strong visionary leadership
* Education
* Transportation
* Reducing misconceptions of the region - communication
* Funding for projects
* Vision for southern Vermont and who we want to be: welcoming, diverse, vibrant, out side the box thinking, risk tolerant, build off of Vermont reputation, educating society that there are opportunities, community understanding of economic and community development, strong public support and commitment, seen as a place where you can come and people can help you realize your dream, great place to raise a family, op ed pieces in the local newspaper where we need to build a case for change, self imposed stigma for failure the plan needs to be successful and build momentum
* Money is no object - what one project would have the greatest impact on the southern Vermont economy? What is one short term thing that could have a positive impact that could start right away?
* Creating a project that would development the downtown
* Create a school for entrepreneurship
* Housing
* Green mountain forest national park
* Investing national
* Regional attraction - Redevelopment of old horse show property - concert venue
* Downtown splash plan water park
* Broadband at a really high level - fiber everywhere
* Funding for community development
* Living history attraction for the town of Bennington
* Alternative money - “southern Vermont cash”
* Large scale immigration plan that brings a thousand people to southern Vermont
* Build the best pre-k to college education system
* Built out bike path - turning it into a destination and relabel workforce transportation
* Putnam block
* Housing

Comments

* creating a communications plan around how important this process is
* Bennington is under investing in agriculture
* Communicating the good that happens in the region
* Developing an ambassador program - “southern Vermont ambassadors”

(Whiteboard notes)

What do you love about SoVermont??

 Community

 History

 Fresh air

 Opportunity for young people

 Arts (cultural assets)

 Downtown

 Quality of life (environmentally)

 Landscape

 Accessibility to cities  tri state region shopping, airports, restaurants, transport, kid friendly

 Pace of life

 Just the right size

 Accessibility of outdoors

 Gateway (potential) – untapped demand

Greatest Challenges

 Business

o Connectivity (tech)

o Childcare

o Generational challenges  qualified staff, work ethic

o Younger planning

o Permitting process

o Available employees

o Amazon prime on downtowns -\_. Reinvent?

o Getting to work --? Workforce to get to work

 Residents

o Housing

o Wage stagnation  livable wages

o Depth of opportunities

o Schools

o Infrastructure (cell)

o Marketing of resources

o Parent/family isolation

o Cost of living

 Both

o Transportation – bike paths alternative transportation

o Negative stigma

Key Issues

 Repopulation

 Strong leadership with vision with implantation

 Transportation access

 Education

 Poverty --? Generational through education

 Reducing misperceptions

 Sufficient funding to complete projects

 Visionary

 Strong public support

 Build a case for change

 Self imposed stigma

Vision

 Inclusivity

 Educated society on economic development

 Great place to raise family

 Diverse

 Vibrant

 Cut-side-box

 Risk tolerant

 Help with realizing your dream

 Realizing what we have

 Generational inclusivity

Projects Big idea

 GMF national Park

 School for entrepreneurs

 Capitalize on rich history  living history destination

 Alternative currency

 Large scale immigration plan to bring 1,000 people to VT

 Pre- k through college system (best in nation)

 Protected bike transport system (similar to Quebec)

 Putnam block

Projects Quick

 Housing

 Investing in rec center

 Pownal Track development  concert venue

 Downtown splash pad

 Connectivity – broadband – Fiber everywhere

 Celebrating successes – civic boost

 Developing civic spaces (funding needed)

Closing Remarks

 Complexity of it all and translating it to population

 Communication that we are all in this together (TEAM)

 Agriculture: generation transfer, investment

 Communicating the right image, positive story

 Ambassadors program?