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Draft

Goals

Vision: To improve the quality of life in our region, retain more of our region's young people, and attract more in the future, we need a diverse base of globally competitive and locally successful businesses.

Goals:

1. A resilient region

In the face of economic shocks and climate disasters—which create economic shocks of their own—we want a region that is rapidly resilient in the face of such challenges. This first requires that we, as a region, determine and agree upon what resilience is and determine in what areas we need to devote more resources.

- Economic shocks:
 - The greater the income gaps between the rich and the poor, the more likely the region is to lose jobs during economic shocks and the longer it will take to recover.
 - Regions with many export industries are more resilient to employment downturns.
- Climate disasters:
 - We need capacity to absorb stresses and maintain functions in the face of climate disruptions.
 - We must be able to adapt and reorganize quickly in the wake of disasters.

2. Cultivating, attracting nurturing and growing businesses

The regional economy is made up of a variety of businesses of every shape and size. It's important to continue to support the companies we have established and help them to thrive and prosper while also attracting entrepreneurs and innovators that will stimulate future growth. Tools to do this include providing effective financing, incentives, business counseling, incubators (including "co-working space", "Maker spaces" etc.), and related resources.

3. Developing, training and expanding the region's workforce at all levels

One of the most urgent needs of the area's economy is the retention and growth of the region's workforce. Workforce Development incorporates education (primary, secondary, and post-secondary), internships, re-training, up-skilling the incumbent workforce, etc., as well as addressing other mitigating factors (wages, transitioning people from public assistance to employment, and much more). It's important to recognize the challenges facing all levels of the workforce, from the lack of upper management staff to the many challenges associated with those trying to enter the labor pool.

4. Infrastructure for growth

Infrastructure is essential for business success as well as the region's ability to sustain and encourage growth. It is important to recognize the state of the existing resources within the region and the costs needed to ensure that the infrastructure in place and that is planned for is adequate to spur economic growth. There also needs to be a strategic analysis of where infrastructure (be it transportation, water and sewer or communications) currently exists and where it is most needed.

5. Grow "value" of property

It's important to nurture the value of real estate and its use from all angles. There needs to be the ability to provide adequate housing and commercial opportunities as well as preserving and growing the value of existing residential and commercial stock. It is also critical to leverage the

Goals

natural resources that exist in the region and to support the enterprises that already exist or are being developed.

6. Quality of Life and Place

The East Central Vermont Economic Development District region is a great place to live and work, and it is critical to maintain and nurture the region's quality of life characteristics. The area's demographics, as is the case with much of the Northeast, are trending older, and that is already causing issues with economic sustainability. Two key questions arise because of this: what are the challenges to attracting people to live in this area, and what amenities and social infrastructure are necessary to retain them?

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Snapshot: Economic Conditions

Regional Centers

The ECVEDD region includes forty towns and has two main employment centers in Hartford and Springfield as well as the larger Upper Valley core on the eastern edge in Lebanon/Hanover, NH, which includes Dartmouth College. Several smaller employment centers include Randolph/Bethel, Ludlow, Bradford and Windsor. There are approximately 37,750 jobs in the region¹ with a population of 82,000.

	Count	Share
Living in the EDD	37,751	100.0%
Living and Employed in the EDD	17,515	46.4%
Living in the Selection Area but Employed Outside EDD	20,236	53.6%

The Region is bisected by two interstate highways and three freight rail lines, one of which serves passenger rail. Much of the region is known as the "Precision Valley," due to its once predominant machine tool and metal working manufacturing. In the past few decades, rapid changes lead to the demise of that part of the region, causing higher property taxes, aging infrastructure, and population loss. The region continues to age with flat population growth. Many smaller towns not near the employment centers listed above lack access to services, such as public transit, job training programs, and other opportunities.

Slow to no Growth

Between 2000 and 2010, 21 of our 40 towns lost population whereas only four towns saw population decline in the previous ten year period. The region only had four towns that grew above 10% in the ten year period between 2000 and 2010 (US Census).

In 2013, Vermont's Agency of Commerce & Community Development's economist completed population projections and forecasts for 2010 to 2030, forecasting between a 2% loss to a 6% growth by 2030. Clearly, a slow to no growth trend will continue. In terms of age cohorts, Windsor County is well over the state percentage of folks over 65 at 20%, while Orange County is just slightly over at 17%.

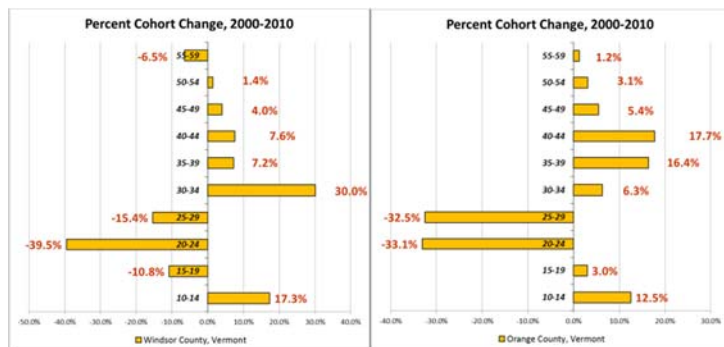
The conventional wisdom is that young people and families leave our region only return much later in life. Closer analysis of age cohorts reveals that our region is gaining residents, especially in the 30-34 age range in Windsor County (30% growth). In Orange County, the largest gains are within the 35-44 cohort with 16% to 17% growth.²

	1990 Total	2000 Total	90-00 % Change	2010 Total	00-10 % Change
LUDLOW	2,302	2,449	6.4	1,963	-19.8
HANCOCK	340	382	12.4	323	-15.4
WEST FAIRLEE	633	726	14.7	652	-10.2
POMFRET	874	979	12.0	904	-7.7
CAVENDISH	1,323	1,470	11.1	1,367	-7.0
CORINTH	1,244	1,461	17.4	1,367	-6.4
ANDOVER	373	496	33.0	467	-5.8
READING	614	707	15.1	666	-5.8
WOODSTOCK	3,212	3,232	0.6	3,048	-5.7
WINDSOR	3,714	3,756	1.1	3,553	-5.4
BRIDGEWATER	895	980	9.5	936	-4.5
HARTFORD	9,404	10,385	10.4	9,952	-4.2
NORWICH	3,093	3,544	14.6	3,414	-3.7
ROCHESTER	1,181	1,171	-0.8	1,139	-2.7
BALTIMORE	190	250	31.6	244	-2.4
TUNBRIDGE	1,154	1,309	13.4	1,284	-1.9
GRANVILLE	309	303	-1.9	298	-1.7
RANDOLPH	4,764	4,853	1.9	4,778	-1.5
BARNARD	872	958	9.9	947	-1.1
THETFORD	2,438	2,617	7.3	2,588	-1.1
CHELSEA	1,166	1,240	6.3	1,238	-0.2
FAIRLEE	883	967	9.5	977	1.0
WEATHERSFIELD	2,674	2,788	4.3	2,825	1.3
TOPSHAM	944	1,142	21.0	1,173	2.7
WEST WINDSOR	923	1,067	15.6	1,099	3.0
BETHEL	1,866	1,968	5.5	2,030	3.2
SPRINGFIELD	9,579	9,078	-5.2	9,373	-3.2
CHESTER	2,832	3,044	7.5	3,154	3.6
BRAINTREE	1,174	1,194	1.7	1,246	4.4
STRAFFORD	902	1,045	15.9	1,098	5.1
HARTLAND	2,988	3,223	7.9	3,393	5.3
BROOKFIELD	1,089	1,222	12.2	1,292	5.7
SHARON	1,211	1,411	16.5	1,502	6.4
ROYALTON	2,389	2,603	9.0	2,773	6.5
BRADFORD	2,522	2,619	3.8	2,797	6.8
STOCKBRIDGE	618	674	9.1	736	9.2
PLYMOUTH	440	555	26.1	619	11.5
NEWBURY	1,985	1,965	-1.0	2,216	12.8
VERSHIRE	560	629	12.3	730	16.1
PITTSFIELD	389	427	9.8	546	27.9

¹ 2011 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)

² U.S. Census, courtesy of University of Minnesota Extension

Snapshot: Economic Conditions



Housing and Transportation

While many towns in the ECVEDD region lost people, most towns gained new housing units, with several thousand added between 2000 and 2010. However, almost 30% of the housing stock in both Orange and Windsor County was built prior to 1939.³ Even though population growth has eased, housing continues to grow. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of housing units increased by almost 1,500 units in Orange County and nearly 2,500 in Windsor County. The increase in housing units is partly attributable to the second home market in Vermont; many towns in the ECVEDD region are impacted by this phenomenon. Additionally, while the population of the ECVEDD region is almost 82,000, the region's communities have the capacity to support over 98,000 people if one totals each town's historic population highs. Many of the smaller communities' populations peaked as far back as the 1820s.

The percentage of commuters in the ECVEDD region who travel more than 50 miles to work grew from 13% in 2000 to 21% in 2010 (US Census). The region has a reasonably symmetric commuting labor market with 34,000 residents employed in the region out of 37,000 residents available to work in the region (net outflow of roughly 3,000 people).⁴

Education

While Vermont's and the nation's high school graduation rates have been increasing to some of the highest levels seen, these statistics does not tell us what all of these students are doing after they graduate. Many go on to college but many do not. Ensuring that these non-college bound high school graduates have the tools they need to enter the workforce is critical. The Randolph Tech Center has started a neat program called the School of Tech with Vermont Technical College and GW Plastics, a local plastics manufacturer. This program exposes students to the amazing world of modern manufacturing while still in high school at a local firm.

Making Business

"Makers" run the gamut from machinists, to scientists, to brewers, to cheesemakers, to artists, to techno-geeks and more. They are innovators who craft and reinvent a wide variety of products and methods of doing things better. Makers are taking big risks to start small businesses that are dedicated to creating and selling self-made products as well as inventing new ways to manufacture on a smaller scale. In 2014, we have surpassed our pre-recession levels of trade name registrations in the ECVEDD with almost 4,000 since 2005.⁵ That's almost one new business per 20 people.

³ U.S. Census

⁴ LEHD

⁵ Vermont Secretary of State

Snapshot: Economic Conditions

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTL
401	388	382	237	312	396	376	362	364	430	3775

Below are the top five employment sectors in the ECVEDD region from the LEHD W-2 tax data. Manufacturing is still in the top five in 2013. In the Springfield labor market area alone, it is the second largest fastest growing sector.

Sector	Count	Share
Health Care and Social Assistance	7,700	20.4%
Educational Services	6,085	16.1%
Retail Trade	4,425	11.7%
Accommodation and Food Services	3,365	8.9%
Manufacturing	3,263	8.6%

Wages and Income

- Real wages (per worker) are lower than real wages at the state level, and this gap is growing.
- The region's per-employee wage income rate is 6% to 7% lower than that of the state as a whole.
- Total wage income is significantly lagging behind that of the state, in a trend that began in the late 1990s.
- Although the region's adjusted gross income level has been higher than the state's level for some time, this disparity is due to non-wage income sources, such as dividend income from stocks and trust funds.

Working Landscape

In Orange County, agriculture continues to grow dramatically. From 2007 to 2012 (including the 2007-2009 recession), the number of farms grew by 10% from 683 to 748 with a 24% increase in the market value of products sold to \$53 million. In Windsor County, the growth was much lower with one new farm added, bringing the total to 768.⁶

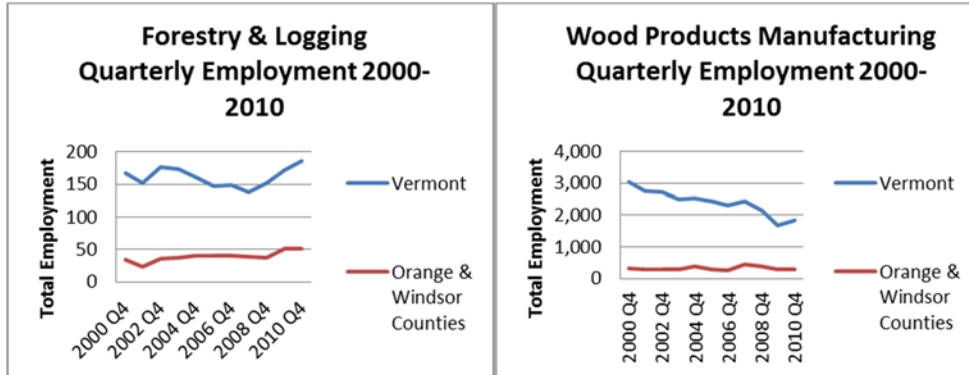
The forest products industry employs 10,555 people, has \$1.4 billion in economic output annually, and represents 8% of the state's manufacturing value.⁷ In the graphs below, one can see that employment in Orange and Windsor Counties has remained relatively steady for forestry and logging, ending with more jobs in the fourth quarter of the year 2010 than in the year 2000. While statewide employment in wood products manufacturing has fallen significantly, jobs have remained at relatively steady levels in Orange and Windsor Counties.⁸

⁶ USDA Ag Census 2007-2012

⁷ Vermont Public Radio Forest Fragmentation Report

⁸ U.S. Census, Quarterly Workforce Indicators

Snapshot: Economic Conditions



Tourism

Vermont's tourist economy continues to be strong with room, meals and alcohol tax receipts up in both Orange and Windsor counties from statistical fiscal years 2013 to 2014.

FY13 to FY14 %	Rooms	Meals	Alcohol
Vermont	4.5%	6.9%	6.9%
Orange	10.9%	3.5%	4.6%
Windsor	7.1%	7.9%	8.2%

Windsor County has the third highest number of recorded visitors of all Vermont counties with over 1.7 million visitors. Orange County, meanwhile, had 167,000 visitors. Visits to our region's only National Park in Woodstock have consistently grown as well, increasing from 29,000 in 2004 to 39,000 in 2014.

	Total (thousands)	% of Total
Addison	481.6	3.5%
Bennington	1,178.2	8.4%
Caledonia	284.4	2.0%
Chittenden	3,713.5	26.6%
Essex/Orleans	420.2	3.0%
Franklin/Grand Isle	487.7	3.5%
Lamoille	2,008.8	14.4%
Orange	167.2	1.2%
Rutland	1,349.5	9.7%
Washington	834.0	6.0%
Windham	1,270.3	9.1%
Windsor	1,757.1	12.6%
Vermont	13,952.3	100.0%

Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics

Poverty and Distress

Between 2010 and 2015 the number people in the EDVEDD region living on public assistance (Vermont's cash assistance programs, Reach Up and 3SquaresVT) has increased by 15%.⁹ Actual or virtual commuting across Vermont's rugged geography and minimal high-tech infrastructure can be very difficult for underserved communities, such as the elderly, young families, minorities and the disabled. Within small towns, these groups can be cut-off from the economic recovery and opportunity. These same groups are the face of the hidden poverty that pervades our region and Vermont as a whole, and they cannot be measured with standard tools like the Census 5 year American Community Survey (ACS) data. Indeed, the ACS only samples 6.5% of the statewide population over a 5 year period, which lowers to only 1.5% per year for the smallest geographies.

According to the U.S. Economic Development Administration's distress criteria, two of our towns, Hancock and Topsham, suffer from a much higher unemployment rate than the national average. The national average unemployment rate was 5.5% for February, and, for that same time, Hancock and Topsham recorded unemployment rates of 9.8% and 6.5%, respectively. Both towns also record average earnings less than 80% of the national per capita income of \$22,524. According to the USDA Fiscal Year 2015 Opportunity criteria, the region also has two persistent high poverty census tracts in Rochester and Springfield (more than 20% poverty for two census periods), two communities where median household incomes are below 60% of the Vermont median income (Fairlee and South Royalton), and two

⁹ Vermont Agency of Human Services

Snapshot: Economic Conditions

Opportunity Communities in Hancock and Wells River. Finally, an area in Springfield qualifies for the New Market Tax Credit program.¹⁰

Expensive Disasters

In the past dozen years, the state has experienced as many declared disasters as the previous 3 dozen years. Since 2000, Vermont has had more than one federally-declared disaster per year. In terms of damages since 1999, Orange County has received \$9.5 million and Windsor County has received \$47.5 million in FEMA public assistance funds to rebuild infrastructure after disasters.¹¹

Tropical Storm Irene in August of 2011 was the largest disaster the state had ever seen in generations. Despite the damage and trauma of the event, Vermont's recovery efforts now serve as a model for Colorado and other states with their community recovery, buyout, river corridor mapping and protection, and transportation rebuilding programs.

¹⁰ *The New Markets Tax Credit Program (NMTC Program) was established by Congress in 2000 to spur new or increased investments into operating businesses and real estate projects located in low-income communities. The NMTC Program attracts investment capital to low-income communities by permitting individual and corporate investors to receive a tax credit against their Federal income tax return in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial institutions called Community Development Entities (CDEs). The credit totals 39 percent of the original investment amount and is claimed over a period of seven years (five percent for each of the first three years, and six percent for each of the remaining four years). The investment in the CDE cannot be redeemed before the end of the seven-year period.*

¹¹ *Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) OpenDATA*

Opportunities & Challenges

The CEDS planning committee found it difficult to assign district-wide opportunities and challenges due to the diversity of the District. The municipalities along the Connecticut River near Hartford, Vermont, Hanover and Lebanon, New Hampshire (commonly referred to as the Upper Valley), are the region's key employment centers with the lowest unemployment levels, highest wages, good- to-excellent infrastructure, schools, and transportation system. Municipalities outside of this area are typically less economically diverse and have higher rates of unemployment and lower per capita incomes.

OPPORTUNITIES

Land Use and Natural Resources

- Working landscape and rural entrepreneurial spirit.
- Natural beauty of the region and its assets, such as the Connecticut and White Rivers attracting tourism and making the regions desirable places to live.
- Strong heritage-based tourism potential in the District.
- Designated Hartford Growth Center and numerous downtown and village designations.
- The State's only Opportunity Zone is located in the southern half of the district.
- Rural character of both the region and the state enables agriculture to succeed.
- The increase in the value-added agriculture sector is continuing to lead to growth of businesses in this sector.
- Expansion of ski resorts from single season facilities into four season resorts for recreation and amusement.

Infrastructure

- According to the Green Mountain National Forest website, the forest is located within a day's drive of more than 70 million people. The ECVEDD region is also less than a day's drive to the metro centers of Boston, New York/New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Baltimore/Washington.
- Proximity to two interstate highways with access to major cities to the south.
- The ECVEDD region is well served by three freight rail lines. These include two Vermont Railway lines (Green Mountain RR Rutland to BF line, Washington County CT River RR Newport to BF line) and the larger New England Central Railroad (NECR), which operates between the Vermont/Quebec border and the Port of New London, CT.
- The Amtrak Vermonter provides passenger service to Hartford, New York City, and beyond. It operates through the region and is upgrading their line to accommodate higher speeds and a proposed extension into Montreal.
- Excellent broadband coverage along the I-91/89 corridor and employment centers.
- Grants and loan programs allowing for the expansion of broadband and fiber optic internet to many rural communities within the District.
- Excellent water and wastewater capacity.
- An excellent airport in Springfield with the potential for increased services and development.
- Hartford Growth Center will lead to improved infrastructure and denser development.
- The Health Care System within the District provides excellent employment opportunities for various skill levels, and provides excellent health care.

Opportunities & Challenges

- There are many opportunities for either technical training at the high school level and at the post-high school level with excellent educational institutions: Dartmouth College, Community College of Vermont, Vermont Technical College and the University of Vermont.

Support for Economic Development and Investment

- Strong partnerships between Regional Planning Commissions and Regional Development Corporations.
- Existing regional economic development support system that interfaces well with businesses.
- Several State incentive programs: Vermont Employment Growth Incentives, Vermont Training Program, Vermont Economic Development Authority.
- Vermont's scale allows for good collaboration between federal, state and local municipal officials with developers.
- Vermont's scale allows for collaboration between state and locally elected officials and development groups in providing professional training resources.
- The ECVEDD has had large investments in middle mile fiber infrastructure by Sovernet, ECFiber and VTel as well as investments by the larger providers, such as Fairpoint and Comcast. ECFiber and VTel are in the process of making large last mile investments to their customers.
- Substantial commercial and industrial space in the Windsor/Springfield area of the District that is available for lease and/or purchase.

Workforce

- Strong working relationships between Housing Trusts, towns and Regional Planning Commissions.
- Access to Dartmouth College and Dartmouth Regional Technical Center promotes spin off businesses locating in the District.
- Strong relationship between RDC's/regional tech centers/high schools/ workforce investment boards.
- Hartford's Growth Center designation will enable the development of more housing.
- Lower cost of middle income/workforce housing in the southern half of region.
- Potential to expand transit and the ground/passenger transportation industry cluster.
- Expansion of existing healthcare sector, including services for veterans, is available in the region.
- Access to Federal Qualified Health Centers in Springfield, Wells Rivers and Randolph.

CHALLENGES

Infrastructure

- Aging infrastructure (roads and bridges) in many communities and the lack of financial capacity to maintain and upgrade the existing infrastructure.
- Truck access to industrial parks through downtown areas creates potential traffic conflicts.
- Lack of widespread commercial aviation services in the region.
- Lack of broadband in rural areas.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Potential uncertainty about future energy costs.
- Limited transit services in rural areas.
- Limited broadband services in rural areas.

Work Force

- Real wages in the District are lower than real wages at the state level.
- Wage growth in key sectors of the District is growing more slowly than the similar sectors in other areas of Vermont and in abutting areas of New Hampshire.
- Limited selection of entry-level professional jobs that pay sustainable wages and an overabundance of low-wage, low-skill jobs.
- Out migration of adults between 19-34 with post high school education levels means fewer trainable young employees that are available to the businesses that offer internships and other employment opportunities.
- Lack of human capital in the southern half of the District, particularly for middle/upper-level positions, which could hurt the District's competitiveness.
- Declining population growth and an aging District workforce will have adverse impact on the labor force.
- Dependency on the New Hampshire side of the Upper Valley for job creation.
- Lack of a statewide workforce development strategy.
- Link between economic development, human services, and education is weak.

Land and Natural Resources

- Lack of incentives to encourage participation in the State's Downtown Program.
- Conventional agriculture is struggling to survive, especially dairy farming.
- Reconciling land use regulations with business development needs.
- Forest fragmentation will have an adverse impact on the wood products industry.

Support for Economic Development and Investment

- Lack of political consensus at the State level for economic development and its incentive program.
- Changing tax structure and incentive programs in New York and New Hampshire and their effect on Vermont's competitiveness.
- Difficulty in growing the retail base due to competition from New Hampshire, which has no sales or income tax.
- A general lack of investment, venture and mezzanine financing for growing new businesses or assisting companies with long-term growth needs.

Work Force Housing

- Permitting process can make the development of additional workforce housing difficult to build.
- Disproportionate share of subsidized housing in towns with sewer and water.
- Inadequate housing for professionals in certain areas of the District.
- Vacancy rate for apartments is very low.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Housing stock in some areas of the District is substandard due to lack of insulation and energy efficient windows, etc.

Draft

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

GOAL 1: A Resilient Region

Strategy 1.1: Develop a region-wide understanding of what resilience is and what we can do to make our region more resilient.

Action 1: Assess the region's resilience via available tools.

Tasks:

1. Research what tools are available and decide which to use.
2. Measure resilience (via data and public outreach).
3. Create a region-wide report card.
4. Develop action plan to improve.

Deliverable(s): Resilience report card & action plan.

Action 2: Inventory resilience efforts and organizations already in place and how each fits within the overall resilience effort.

Tasks:

1. Conduct inventory.
2. Gather and facilitate community input to develop consensus on what a resilient region "looks like" and to determine recovery issues (e.g., surveys, public meetings, etc.).
3. Identify gaps.
4. Research ways and make recommendations to fill those gaps.

Deliverable(s): Recommendations report

Action 3: Create an up-to-date list of key vulnerabilities along with an action plan to address them.

Tasks:

1. Compile key vulnerabilities.
2. Research ways to mitigate.
3. Develop mitigation action plan.

Deliverable(s): Mitigation action plan

Strategy 1.2: Define identified entities' role on the resilience continuum based on regional capacity (i.e., what does the entity do and when should a concerned party make contact).

Action 1: Develop and distribute graphic continuum.

Tasks:

1. Once entities are identified (via previous actions), create graphic representation of entities, what they do, and when and how someone would contact them.

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

Deliverable(s): Infographic

Strategy 1.3: Promote the importance of business emergency planning that supports continuity of operations.

Action 1: Develop outreach programs.

Tasks:

1. Develop and offer workshop training that takes business owners step-by-step through continuity of operations planning.

Deliverable(s): Continuity of operations program/workshop.

Strategy 1.4: Ensure resilience entities meet on an ongoing basis to ensure existing and potential challenges are being addressed.

Action 1: Coordinate regular networking event(s) that include resilience entities as well as members of the public.

Tasks:

1. Find out if local resilience/disaster organizations are interested in an ongoing network.
2. Plan who will host first event and consider who will host ongoing events.
3. Determine how frequent the function will occur.
4. Plan agenda.
5. Host first event and make plans for next event.

Deliverable(s): Event

Strategy 1.5: Support the concept of a "super-region" across New England to maintain and support the growth of advanced manufacturing (AM).

Action 1: Advocate for the creation of a multi-state consortium that strengthens New England's economy as a whole.

Tasks:

1. Continually provide data to political leaders in an effort to help them understand the importance of Advanced Manufacturing (AM) to Vermont's future.
2. Support efforts to convene and align stakeholders and focus them on a unified agenda for growth.

Deliverable(s): Regularly produced updates & participation in ongoing discussions.

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

Action 2: In an effort to become a National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI) hub, support state efforts to establish an Advanced Manufacturing Institute in New England.

Tasks:

1. Support cross-state meetings and discussions.
2. Create and disseminate briefing packets for manufacturers to use to educate local leaders and educators.
3. Aggregate inventory of cross-sector partnerships and analyze gaps.
4. Volunteer to serve as coordinator for a NNMI working group.

Deliverable(s): As requested/as needed.

GOAL 2: Cultivate, attract, nurture, and grow business.

Strategy 2.1: Build upon existing capacity, for cultivating existing businesses, supporting new entrepreneurial ventures, and attracting new businesses.

Action 1: Conduct employer interviews to determine regional needs to attract, support, and expand businesses.

Tasks:

1. Identify businesses/sectors to survey.
2. Design survey (i.e., questions, language, and length).
3. Conduct survey.
4. Analyze results.
5. Identify common threads and barriers/opportunities.

Deliverable(s): Opportunities & barriers report

Action 2: Strengthen recognition of the economic impact of and support for the “creative economy.”

Tasks:

1. Conduct study of creative cluster(s) (e.g., products, services, and quantity).
2. Analyze results and determine economic impact and potential opportunities.
3. Create action plan that specifically supports creative entrepreneurs.

Deliverable(s): Economic impact report & action plan

Action 3: Provide technical support (e.g., permitting assistance) and identify funding sources for businesses wishing to stay or relocate within region.

Tasks:

1. Make businesses aware of available technical assistance (via public outreach, workshops).

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

2. Make businesses aware (via public outreach, workshops) of available funding sources.
 - a. Conduct public outreach and workshops.

Deliverable(s): Public workshops & technical assistance program

Strategy 2.2: Encourage the development of start-up incubator/shared work spaces.

Action 1: Conduct regional outreach to determine market needs and lack of existing resources.

Tasks:

1. Determine who will conduct public outreach.
2. Conduct outreach in different parts of region with different audiences.
3. Analyze results and determine potential gaps/opportunities.
4. Work with regional partners on feasibility of projects based on demonstrated needs.

Deliverable(s): Gaps and opportunities report & project list

Strategy 2.3: Research capital availability and develop additional mezzanine financing options/investors.

Action 1: Create inventory of existing financing options available within region.

Tasks:

1. Develop common inventory spreadsheet.
2. Conduct inventory.
3. Identify gaps.
4. Develop methods/avenues of filling the gaps.

Deliverable(s): Inventory report

Strategy 2.4: Advocate for the business communities' concerns as they relate to the regulatory policies and procedures of local and state government.

Action 1: Review regulatory areas of concern in the business community. (e.g., determine ways to alleviate concerns, both perceived and real; clear up perceived issues and in the case of real concerns, suggest revisions to regulations that may address concerns).

Tasks:

1. Meet with developers to determine areas of concern.
2. Review regulations to determine those that may hinder business.
3. Provide model language that supports state and regional goals while allowing businesses the opportunities needed to thrive.
4. Provide assistance to towns incorporate model language into their town plans and zoning bylaws.

Deliverable(s): Zoning inventory, model language, technical assistance

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

Action 2: Simplify regulatory compliance.

Tasks:

1. Identify those processes that create undue burden on small business owners.
2. Advocate for the streamlining of application and licensing processes (e.g., one-stop shops, simplifying reporting procedures.)

Deliverable(s): Recommendation for state and local leaders

Strategy 2.5: Connect businesses or work to create a stronger local supply chain to reduce importation of goods and services, as well as strengthening buying powers of smaller businesses.

Action 1: Determine what is being imported, and what may be able to be created "closer to home."

Tasks:

1. Utilize information from Goal 2 Strategy 2.1, Action 1 survey to determine areas of import.
2. Identify those items that are being made within region (or nearby) or might be able to be made within the region.
3. Create database available to the public.
4. Facilitate and assist development of businesses that may fill gaps.

Deliverable(s): Database & technical assistance

Action 2: Based on information collected in Goal 2; Strategy 2.1; Action 1 Survey, create a database that reflects similar businesses.

Tasks:

1. Research the feasibility of a collective co-op of like-minded businesses (to increase buying power, to compete together, etc.)
2. Create regularly scheduled peer-to-peer networking events for entrepreneurs (including industry specific- groups)

Deliverable(s): Database & networking event(s)

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

GOAL 3: Develop, train, and expand the region's workforce at all levels.

Strategy 3.1: Gain a better understanding of region-wide workforce issues.

Action 1: Conduct an in-depth, region-wide workforce study, building upon existing and previous reports.

Tasks:

1. Review existing reports to determine what information is needed.
2. Design study that gathers additional needed data.
3. Conduct Study.

Deliverable(s): Workforce report

Strategy 3.2: Encourage the growth of adult education offerings, based on determination of needs.

Action 1: Create an inventory of existing programs and identify gaps.

Tasks:

1. Inventory current adult education programs.
2. Identify gaps.
3. Create action plan to fill gaps.

Deliverable(s): Inventory & action plan

Action 2: Create cross-sector partnerships which may share resources to develop needed skills.

Tasks:

1. From workforce research in Goal 3; Strategy 3.1; Action 1, identify industries who may have interest in developing training programs for a shared workforce.
2. Develop action plan for needed programs.

Deliverable(s): Action plan

Strategy 3.3: Increase career awareness and skills of students of all ages as well as educators.

Action 1: Support and cultivate collaborative and creative problem solving programs in our primary and secondary educational institutions.

Tasks:

1. Inventory types of programs currently being offered in our schools that lend themselves to creative problem solving.
2. Research programs in use around region, state, and country.
3. Identify programs and best practices that would support regional industries that are not currently available.
4. Create an action plan to develop those programs in our region.

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

Deliverable(s): Inventory, best practices, & action plan

Action 2: Promote career awareness among students and educators.

Tasks:

1. Identify and inventory existing programs in region.
2. Review results and identify gaps.
3. Work with area partners (WIBS, CTE) to develop and support an action plan.

Deliverable(s): Inventory & action plan

Action 3: Work with schools and employers to rebrand manufacturing as a cool, well-paying career path.

Tasks:

1. Develop marketing campaign utilizing students to create a positive advanced manufacturing brand that appeals to their peers.
2. Connect students, families, educators, and companies to expose them to each other and to the possibilities advanced manufacturing offers.

Deliverable(s): Marketing campaign & network

Strategy 3.4: Strengthen utilization of region's workforce development and training capacity.

Action 1: Research existing training providers, programs and industry support organizations.

Tasks:

1. Inventory current workforce programs.
2. Analyze effectiveness and utilization of existing resources.
3. Collate and distribute information to key partners to promote awareness of existing resources.
4. Identify possible gaps/opportunities for creation of new programs.

Deliverable(s): Inventory & new program recommendations

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

Strategy 3.5: Improve recruitment and retention of area workforce.

Action 1: Meet with area human resources departments to determine challenges/needs.

Tasks:

1. Identify key area employers.
2. Conduct interviews with human resources staff of employers.
3. Collate data from interviews and identify common areas of concern.
4. Create an action plan to address challenges for attracting and retaining employees.

Deliverable(s): Report & action plan

GOAL 4: Infrastructure for growth.

Strategy 4.1: Promote infill and redevelopment to enhance the region's existing commercial inventory (e.g., downtowns, industrial parks, empty buildings) as a first priority for business development.

Action 1: Create a comprehensive picture of the existing status of infrastructure, including age and capacity, in those areas.

Tasks:

1. Identify and prioritize areas (buildings and vacant land) for near-term development where water, sewer, power, internet, and roadways have capacity.
2. Identify planned project status.
3. Review and recommend revisions to zoning bylaws and other land-use guidelines to ensure they actively support vitality in region.
4. Provide technical support (e.g., permitting, parking, promotion, and expansion planning) and identify funding sources for businesses wishing to stay in, expand or relocate within region.

Deliverable(s): Priority list, project status list, land-use/zoning change recommendations, & technical support outreach

Strategy 4.2: Support municipal efforts to improve/add/remove/update infrastructure.

Action 1: Inventory and analyze existing and planned infrastructure projects/needs throughout the region's communities.

Tasks:

1. Offer capital budget training to municipalities.
2. Explore common areas and opportunities for cooperative agreements and financing.
3. Seek funding for needed infrastructure.

Deliverable(s): Capital budget training, report & funding opportunities

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

Strategy 4.3: Inventory infrastructure needs that support property values.

Action 1: Map existing regional infrastructure and property transfers.

Tasks:

1. Develop a map of the region, showing municipal infrastructure, transportation options and broadband connectivity.
2. Create a map showing property values and sales over the past 5 years.
3. Overlay maps to determine infrastructure gaps in key areas of region, develop projects to address.

Deliverable(s): Map

GOAL 5: Grow value of property

Strategy 5.1: Encourage development and revitalization of housing in the region.

Action 1: Determine the appropriate mix of housing types and identify gaps.

Tasks:

1. Consult with housing authorities and utilize current housing inventories to identify gaps in housing.

Deliverable(s): Report

Action 1: Support development of needed housing types.

Tasks:

1. Ensure political leaders are aware of specific housing needs.
2. Draft a housing program that would allow developers to bypass Act 250 proceedings if certain criteria are met.

Deliverable(s): Act 250 housing plan draft

Strategy 5.2: Support efforts to grow and expand resources for "working lands" businesses.

Action 1: Inventory existing "working lands" businesses in region.

Tasks:

1. Working with Agency of Commerce & Community Development and other stakeholders, create a master database of existing working lands businesses.
2. Create a master directory of existing resources and technical assistance.
3. Identify gaps and help develop programs to assist what is currently in place as well as better promote existing resources.

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

Deliverable(s): Inventory database, resource and technical assistance directory, & gaps and solutions report and action plan

Strategy 5.3: Gain understanding of challenges to identification of and development of commercial property.

Action 1: Determine existing commercial property market status, relative to Vermont and adjoining New Hampshire.

Tasks:

1. Survey key developers and commercial property owners.
2. Research recent construction projects and property sales to collate current activity.
3. Obtain information on current square foot rates and other cost factors impacting the ability to develop commercial property.

Deliverable(s): Report

Strategy 5.4: Encourage the growth of grand list property values for all towns in the region.

Action 1: Analyze current grand list composition in each town, including historic trends.

Tasks:

1. Design common spreadsheet with information expected to be collected for each town.
2. Complete research into grand lists of the 40 towns.
3. Examine data for areas of strengths/weaknesses and identify opportunities for growth of grand lists.

Deliverable(s): Report

GOAL 6: Quality of Life and Place

Strategy 6.1: Identify the availability and access to primary aspects of health care for all populations.

Action 1: Determine current utilization of existing resources.

Tasks:

1. Working with Federally Qualified Health Centers' and other stakeholders, inventory existing area health resources (including primary care, ob/gyn, emergency services, dental and vision).
2. Identify current and trend utilizations rates of services.
3. Help promote quality of (and access to) existing services to increase utilization and community health.

Deliverable(s): Report

Goals, Strategies, & Actions

Strategy 6.2: Develop a “great place to live and work” initiative to retain and attract area residents.

Action 1: Identify qualities that people are looking for in the region.

Tasks:

1. Create a series of focus groups, made up of diverse demographics, in different areas of the region.
2. Develop questions for focus group meetings, including aspects that are considered important to their choice of location and the state of existing resources (e.g. available educational resources, retail, landscape, cost of living).
3. Select participants for focus groups.
4. Collate information from meetings and prepare report.
5. Analyze results of focus group meetings.

Deliverable(s): Survey questions & report

Strategy 6.3: Increase access to public transportation, bicycle/pedestrian paths, and recreational opportunities.

Action 1: Expand transit, bicycle/pedestrian, and recreational opportunities.

Tasks:

1. Inventory and analyze existing commuter and in-town services, along with public transit, sidewalks, and bike routes, to determine where expansion can take place to better connect employees and employers as well as recreational opportunities.
2. Conduct public outreach.
3. Identify issue/needs.
4. Design a long-term plan to provide adequate facilities.
5. Seek funding.

Deliverable(s): Map & long term plan

Strategy 6.4: Support and promote diversified attractions that strengthen and expand tourism and recreational opportunities.

Action 1: Identify existing attractions and historic sales/ticket sales.

Tasks:

1. Develop a list of major tourist attractions and key hospitality/tourist businesses.
2. Create survey to use in gathering data on attendance/visitation as well as other opportunities for regional cultural and recreational attractions/activities.
3. Survey businesses to determine historic trends and customer experiences.
4. Using survey results, create a plan to explore feasibility of assisting the development of new opportunities as well as how to better assist utilization.

Deliverable(s): Attraction list, survey, plan