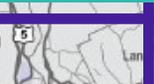




main street - randolph

**2015-2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
East Central Vermont Economic Development District**





davoll farm - randolph | ©First Light Studios

“We cannot do everything at once, but we can do something at once.”

CALVIN COOLIDGE

*Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional
Commission | Springfield Regional
Development Corporation | Southern Windsor
County Regional Planning Commission | Green
Mountain Economic Development Corporation*

Representing the 40-town region:

- Andover**
- Baltimore**
- Barnard**
- Bethel**
- Bradford**
- Braintree**
- Bridgewater**
- Brookfield**
- Cavendish**
- Chelsea**
- Chester**
- Corinth**
- Fairlee**
- Granville**
- Hancock**
- Hartford**
- Hartland**
- Ludlow**
- Newbury**
- Norwich**
- Pittsfield**
- Plymouth**
- Pomfret**
- Randolph**
- Reading**
- Rochester**
- Royalton**
- Sharon**
- Springfield**
- Stockbridge**
- Strafford**
- Thetford**
- Topsham**
- Tunbridge**
- Vershire**
- Weathersfield**
- West Fairlee**
- West Windsor**
- Windsor**
- Woodstock**

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white river junction village - hartford

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Thomas Kennedy
SWCRPC Executive Director

Loralee Morrow
TRORC Regional Planner



sugaring - chelsea | ©First Light Studios

mission

The East Central Vermont Economic Development District's mission is to access and provide resources and to facilitate support for quality decision making for the benefit of entrepreneurs, businesses, and communities in East Central Vermont.

The eligible members of the East Central Vermont Economic Development District (the District) are our 40 towns within Addison, Orange, Rutland, and Windsor Counties as well as the Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation (GMEDC), Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission (SWCRPC), Springfield Regional Development Corporation (SRDC), and Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC).

The 40 towns of East Central Vermont were designated as an Economic Development District in December 2013. This designation allows the region to gain access to Economic Development Administration (EDA) Investment Assistance through a variety of grant opportunities. Any requests for EDA funding must align with this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

The 2015-2020 CEDS was prepared for and is funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Springfield Regional Development Corporation, Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission, and Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission.

*East Central Vermont Economic Development District | 128 King Farm Rd. | Woodstock, VT 05091 | 802-457-3188 | **ECVEDD.org***

bandstand - south royalton |
©First Light Studios



Vision:

A diverse base of locally successful and globally competitive businesses that contribute to a vibrant quality of life and place for people of all ages.

summary

What is an Economic Development District (EDD)?

An Economic Development District is a federally designated organization charged with the development, maintenance, and implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Application for designation involves several steps including written support by the State of Vermont and a plan of operation as a non-profit organization. Once designated, the EDD is eligible for a 50% matching planning grant to fund the program and staff.

What is a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)?

A CEDS is a strategy-driven, locally developed road map for economic development, with the ultimate goal being a stronger, more diverse regional and resilient economy. The CEDS process provides the opportunity for individuals, organizations, local governments, educational institutions, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation about what economic development efforts would best serve the region.

While the CEDS' most critical function is to provide an economic development framework, it also serves as a required vehicle through which some federal agencies (especially the EDA) evaluate requests for grant assistance. An approved EDA CEDS is required for entities in the region to be eligible for EDA funding.

Why does East Central Vermont need a CEDS?

To achieve our vision, a shared region-wide effort is required to strengthen existing key businesses in the region while continuously searching for and capitalizing on new opportunities for growth.

The District ranges from rural working landscapes without any discernible community center to bricked Main Streets with bustling shops, parks, and civic buildings. East Central Vermont gave birth to the machine tool industry, but that type of manufacturing has severely declined. The region is part of the larger Lebanon-Claremont (NH) Micropolitan Statistical Area, and our economy reflects a healthy interdependency on New Hampshire's Sullivan and Grafton Counties.

“When it comes to the reasons 30- to 40-year-olds say they want to move to a rural area, jobs isn’t even in the top 10. Quality of life is No. 1. Others are a slower pace, lower cost of housing, and safety and security. Many of these people are creating their own jobs.”

BEN WINCHESTER, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA RURAL SOCIOLOGIST

ice harvest - brookfield
| ©First Light Studios



For a rural area, we have excellent access to transportation infrastructure (which also includes public transportation services). Passenger and freight rail, two interstate highways, and a growing high-speed internet network that connects us to the world. The region has changed drastically over the years, but physically it remains a relatively intact, special place that draws visitors from near and far.

Innovators of all types flourish in the region, from artists and artisans producing glassware, pottery,

prints, fine furniture, microbrews, maple syrup, and great cheeses to manufacturers of a wide variety of products, such as robots for bomb squads and precision plastic parts.

Like most other New England states, Vermont’s population is stagnant, the District only had four towns that grew above 10% in the ten year period between 2000 and 2010. Vermont’s Agency of Commerce and Community Development has predicted a slow to no growth scenario through 2030. Fortunately, a closer look at age

parade - randolph | ©First Light Studios





gaining 30-34 year-olds & more

cohorts, does reveal that our region is gaining residents, particularly in the 30-34 range. Since our schools are losing students at a fairly rapid rate, this is most certainly the age groups we need to attract. While we continue to support our long time Vermonters who wish to stay here, we must also put those things in place that attract more families with young children: Great town centers, affordable housing, a great place to raise children, and a place that makes families feel welcome and safe.¹

¹ Ben Winchester, University of Minnesota Extension

Through an exploration of our opportunities, challenges, and economic conditions, the CEDS Strategy and Working Committees have authored six overarching goals. The ECVEDD CEDS is designed to work towards and support:

1. A Resilient Region
2. An Innovative Business Environment
3. A Robust and Ready Workforce
4. Infrastructure for Growth
5. Growing Property Values
6. Quality of Life and Place

snapshot:

economic conditions

Regional Centers

The District 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 and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. Several smaller employment centers include Randolph/Bethel, Ludlow, Bradford and Windsor. There are approximately 37,750 jobs in the District¹ with a population of 82,000.

¹ 2011 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)

The District is bisected by two interstate highways and three freight rail lines, one of which serves passenger rail. Much of the District 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 District, causing higher property taxes, aging infrastructure, and population loss. The District continues to age with flat population growth. Many smaller towns not near the employment centers previously mentioned, lack access to services, such as public transit, job training programs, and other opportunities.

Slow to No Growth

Between 1990-2000, only four towns lost population, yet between 2000 and 2010, 21 of our 40 towns saw their population decline. In fact, only four towns grew above 10% between 2000 and 2010.²

In 2013, Vermont’s Agency of Commerce and Community Development’s economist completed population projections and forecasts for 2010 to 2030,

² U.S. Census

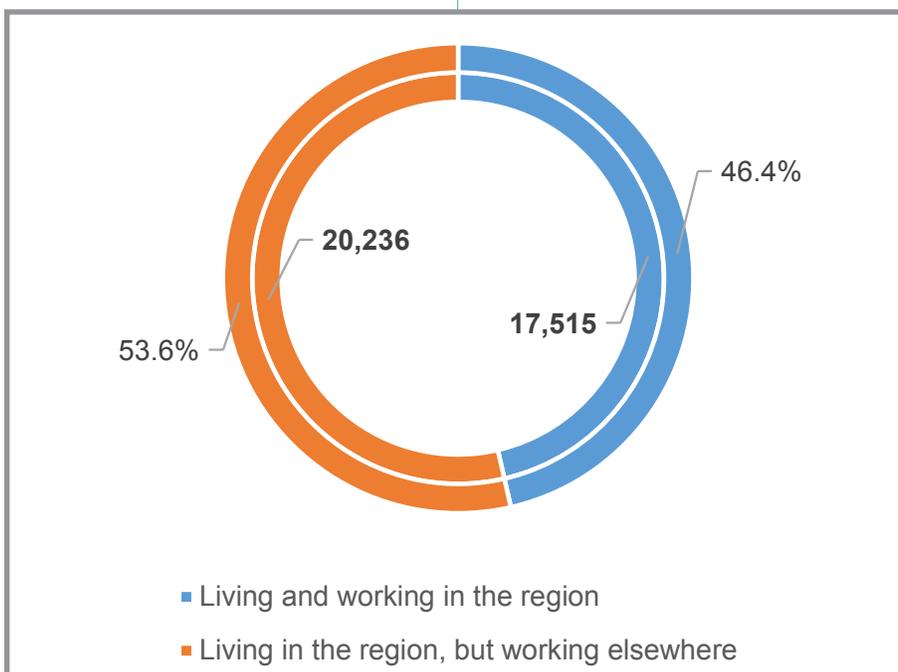


Figure 1

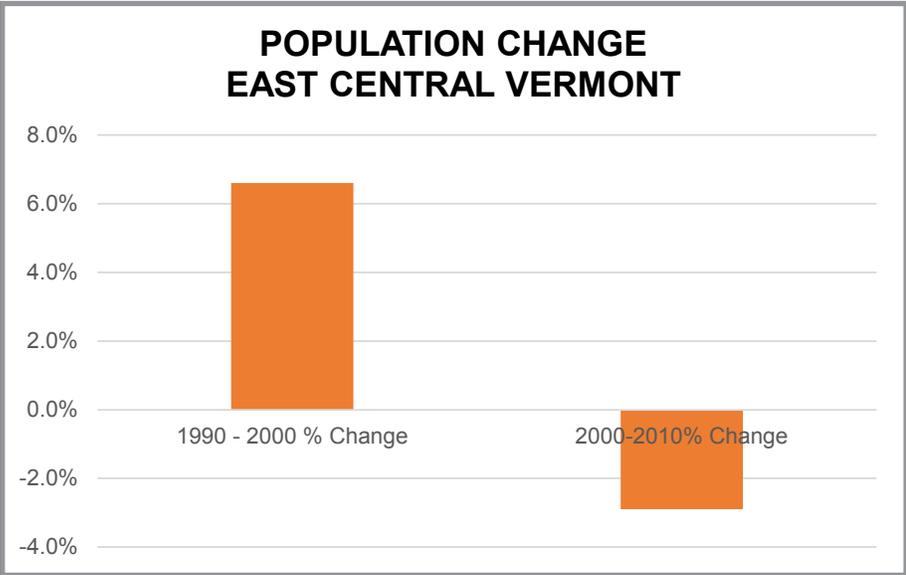


Figure 2

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 to 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.⁴

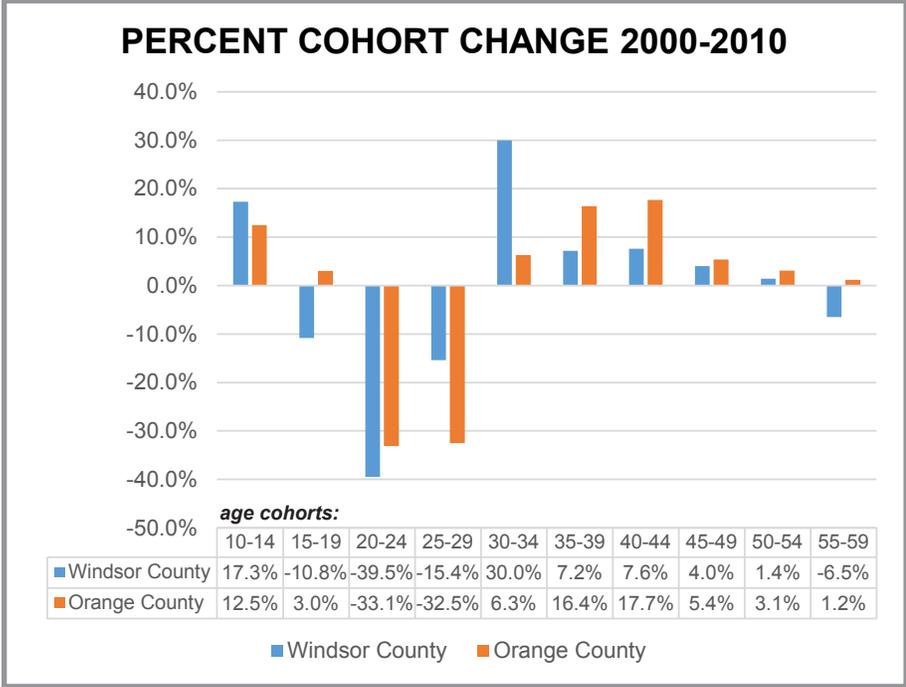


Figure 3

Housing

Even though population growth has eased, housing units do continue to grow, but not at the rate needed.

As of October 2013, according to the Vermont Housing and Finance Agency, the District was 4,400 units shy of needed housing for low-income residents.⁵ Moderate-income households are often priced out of the market in many locations. Even in those locations where people might be able to afford a decent, energy-efficient house, very little, if any, inventory exists. Almost 30% of the housing stock in both Orange and Windsor County was built prior to 1939.⁶

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,³ Windsor

³ Cohorts are groups of people who are around the same age (e.g., a birth cohort is a group of people who were born in a specified calendar period.)

While many towns in the District

⁴ U.S. Census, courtesy of University of Minnesota Extension
⁵ Housing Needs in East Central Vermont
⁶ U.S. Census

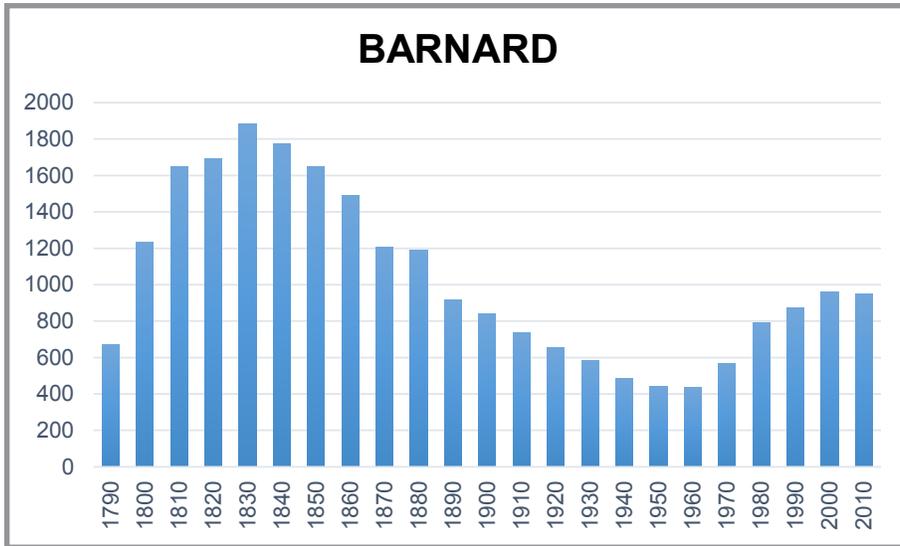


Figure 4

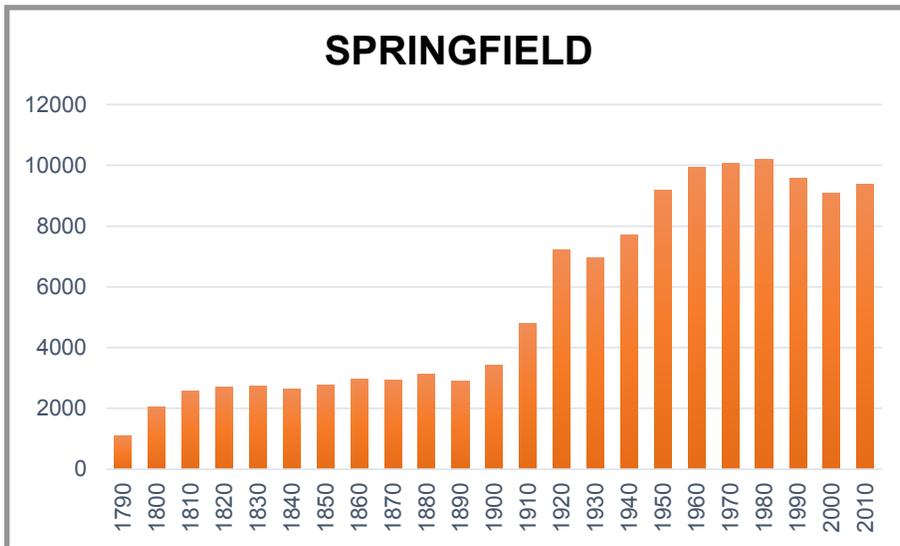


Figure 5

lost people, most towns gained new housing units. 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 and many towns in the District are impacted by this phenomenon.

Vermont historically is among the states with the lowest vacancy rates in the nation.⁷ Due to the second home market; however, even where the vacancy rates may appear higher (e.g., Windsor County), this is often due to the second home market and these units are often not available for purchase or for rent.

While the population of the District 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. Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate how many smaller towns like Barnard have not reached their historic population high from the mid-1800s, while larger towns like Springfield have reached their high, but may and may be losing population.

Transportation

The District is considered “developed rural”⁸ and the primary mode of transportation is the car. The predominant land use pattern consists of a few regional job and service centers surrounded by homes scattered across the

⁷ Vacancy rates refer to the percentage of units that are vacant and available to rent or buy. The lower the vacancy rate, the lower the available housing.

⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration



countryside. Bike paths, bus transit, and other transportation options are limited, though some commuter transit routes do exist.

More than three-quarters of commuters in the region drive to work alone, while just 10% carpool. Almost 8% of the region telecommutes, which is greater than the percentage of commuters walking, biking, or using public transportation combined (at 5%).⁹

The percentage of commuters in the District who travel more than 50 miles to work grew from 13% in 2000 to 21% in 2010.¹⁰ 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).¹¹

Education

While Vermont's and the nation's high school graduation rates have been increasing to some of the highest levels seen, these statistics do 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 Technical Career 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 advanced manufacturing while still in high school at a local firm.

⁹ U.S. Census

¹⁰ U.S. Census

¹¹ LEHD

In 2014, we have surpassed our pre-recession levels of trade name registrations in the ECVEDD with over 3,500 since 2005. That's almost one new business per 20 people.

farmer's market - bethel
| ©First Light Studios



Making Business

“Makers” run the gamut from machinists, to scientists, to brewers, to cheese-makers, 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 over 3,500 since 2005.¹² That's

12 Vermont Secretary of State

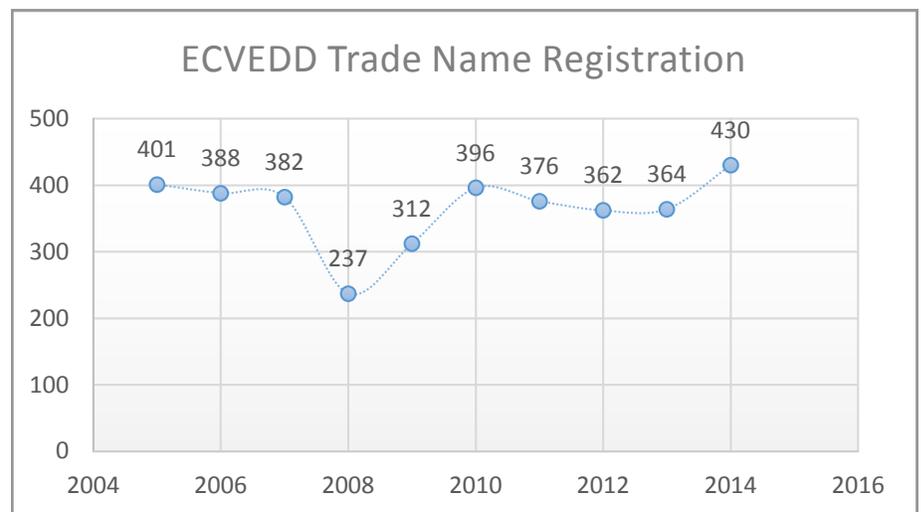


Figure 6



rochat farm - chelsea | ©First Light Studios



terry hendee | springfield
LOVEJOY Tools, Inc.



Rachel Eggum | Woodstock
Ottawaquechee Health Center

almost one new business per 20 people.

Manufacturing is still in the top five employment sectors in the Region in 2013. In the Springfield labor market area alone, it is the second largest fastest growing sector.¹³

¹³ LEHD

Wages¹⁴

(Percent change from 2009-2014)
Covered Average Wages¹⁵ dropped faster in the State than in the District (10.9%). Total Covered Employment

¹⁴ Vermont Labor Market Information, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

¹⁵ Covered Wages and Covered Employment refers to employees and their wages in businesses required to furnish unemployment insurance coverage.

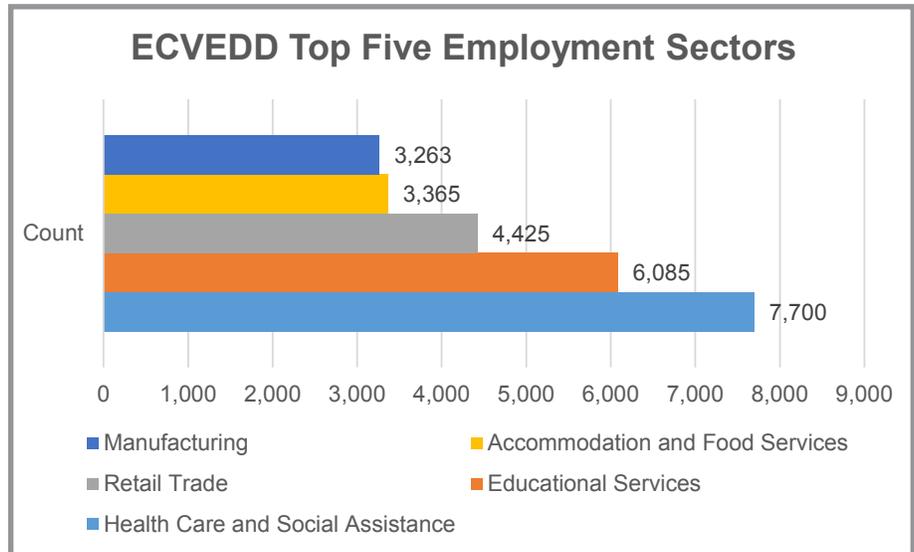


Figure 7

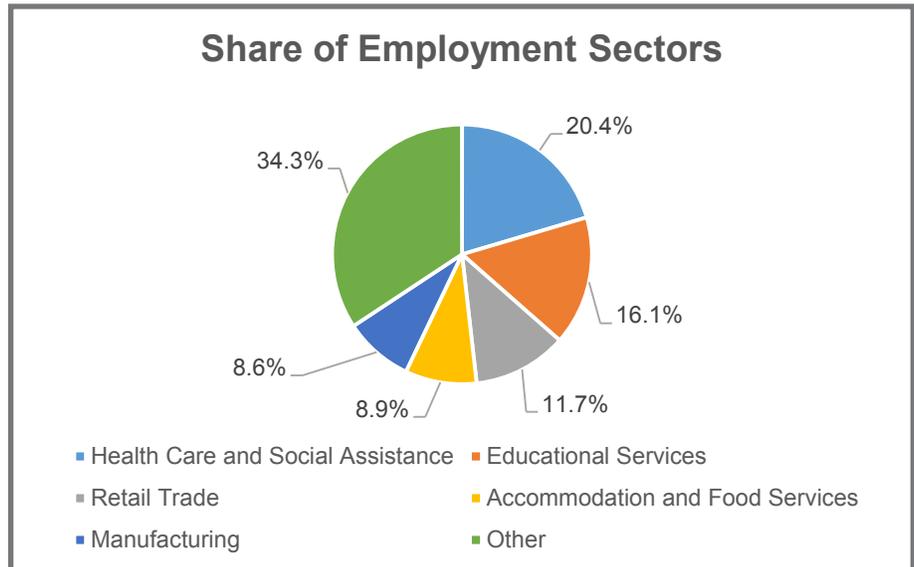
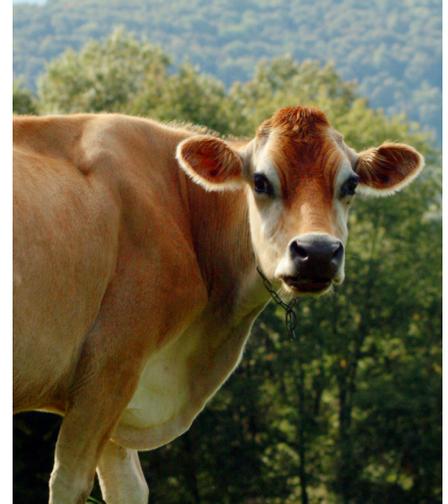


Figure 8

Growth was much higher in the State than in the District, and loss of Establishments¹⁶ was lower in the State than in the District.

- **Covered Average Wages:**
 - 11.5% Windsor County
 - 11.8% Orange County
 - 10.9% Vermont
- **Total Covered Employment:**
 - 0.3% Windsor County
 - 1.3% Orange County
 - 4.1% Vermont
- **Establishments:**
 - -1.5% Windsor County
 - -2.9% Orange County
 - -1.1% Vermont

whalen farm - tunbridge
| ©First Light Studios



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 768.¹⁷

¹⁷ USDA Ag Census 2007-2012

Working Landscapes

In Orange County, agriculture continues to grow dramatically.

¹⁶ An establishment is an economic unit, such as a farm, factory, or store, which produces goods or provides services at a single physical worksite and engaged, predominantly, in one type of economic activity.

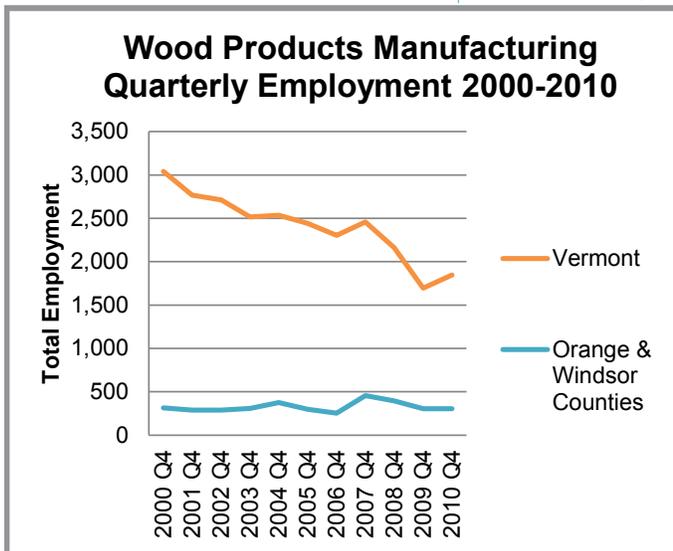


Figure 9

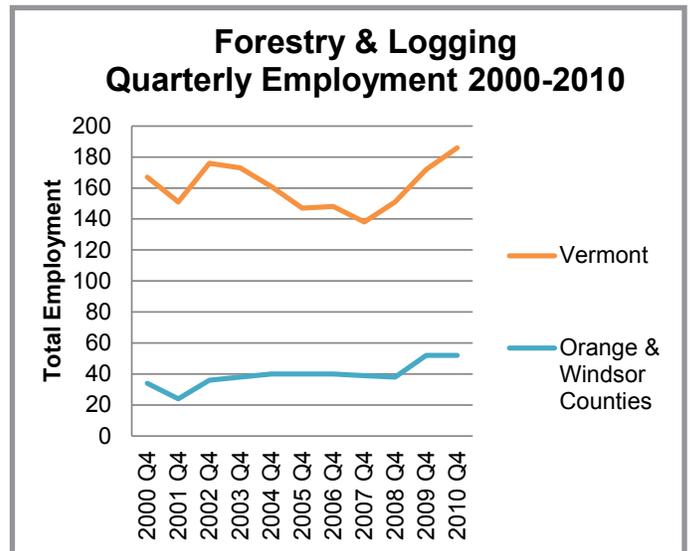


Figure 10

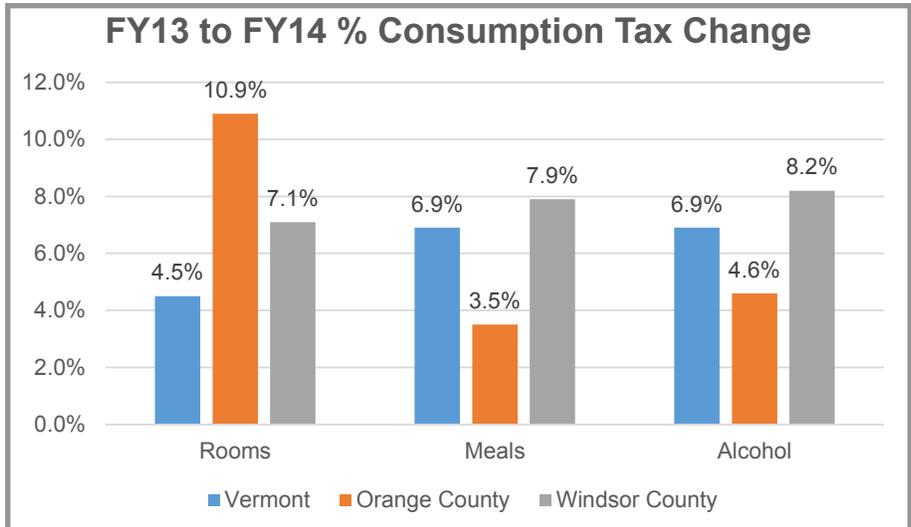


Figure 11

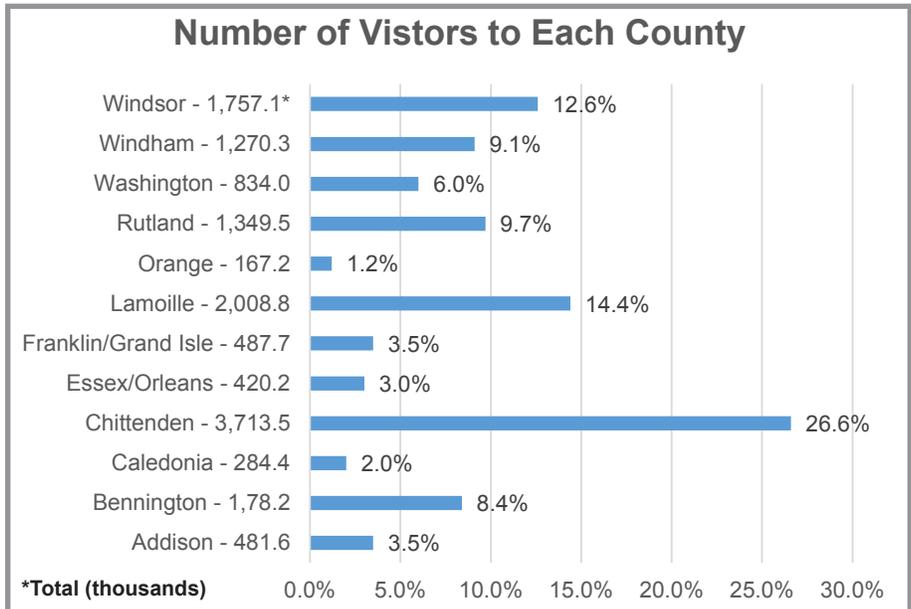


Figure 12

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.¹⁸ In the figures 9 and 10, 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

¹⁸ Vermont Public Radio Forest Fragmentation Report



relatively steady levels in Orange and Windsor Counties.¹⁹

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 (figures 11).

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 (figure 12). 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.

Poverty and Distress

Between 2010 and 2015 the number of people in the District living on public assistance (Vermont's cash assistance programs, Reach Up and 3SquaresVT) has increased by 15%.²⁰ 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.

¹⁹ U.S. Census, *Quarterly Workforce Indicators*

²⁰ Vermont Agency of Human Services

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 American Community Survey (ACS) 5 year 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 District 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 "Opportunity Communities" also

In the past dozen years, the state has experienced as many declared disasters as the previous three dozen years.



ketchum farm - stockbridge

exist in Hancock and Wells River.

Finally, an area in Springfield qualifies for the New Market Tax Credit program.²¹

Expensive Disasters

In the past dozen years, the state has experienced as many declared disasters as the previous three dozen years. Since 2000, Vermont has had more than one federally-declared disaster per year. In terms of damages since 1999,

²¹ *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).*

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.²²

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.

²² *Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) OpenDATA*

opportunities and challenges



The CEDS working committee found it difficult in some instances 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 District'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 District and its assets, such as the Connecticut and White Rivers attracting tourism and making the Districts desirable places to live.
- Strong heritage-based tourism potential in the District.



the great hall - springfield

- Designated Hartford Growth Center¹ and numerous downtown and village designations.
- The State's only Opportunity Zone² is located in the southern half of the district.
- Rural character of both the District 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.

¹ Growth Center designation recognizes municipalities that demonstrate a capacity to plan and invest in vital, walkable, mixed-use centers.

² A Designated Opportunity Zone is an area designated by one or more communities in their municipal plans and designated by one or more regional commissions in their regional plans to accommodate a significant share of growth anticipated by a community over a twenty-year period that has or seeks to achieve a particular set of values as outlined by the State.

- 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 District 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 District is well served by three freight rail lines. These include two Vermont Railway lines (Green Mountain RR

route 66 paving - randolph | ©First Light Studios





one main street - randolph | ©First Light Studios

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 District 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 state 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.
- 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.
- State incentive programs: Vermont Employment Growth



derek deline | springfield
LOVEJOY Tools, Inc.

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.

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

Technology Center, a technology incubator.

- Strong relationship between regional development corporation, regional technical centers, high schools, and 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 the District.
- Potential to expand transit and the ground/passenger transportation industry cluster.
- Expansion of existing healthcare sector, including services for veterans, is available in the District.
- Access to Federal Qualified Health Centers in Springfield, Wells Rivers and Randolph.
- Traditional manufacturing in the region has transitioned to advanced manufacturing: small-batching, highly precise components, customization and complex designs and Vermont is positioned to capitalize on this evolution.³

³ *Advanced to Advantageous: The Case for New England's Manufacturing Revolution.*: The New

New England's [advanced manufacturing] cluster springs from a rich history dating back to its role as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in America; the heyday of the shipbuilding years and textile mills may have waned, but the highly-skilled, advanced manufacturing networks that evolved from it are poised to have a dramatic impact on the economy in New England.

ADVANCED TO ADVANTAGEOUS:
THE CASE FOR NEW ENGLAND'S
MANUFACTURING REVOLUTION

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 District.
- 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 over-abundance 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 workforce will have adverse impact on the labor force.
- Dependency on the New Hampshire side of the Upper Valley for jobs.
- Lack of a statewide workforce development strategy.
- Link between economic development, human services,

England Council

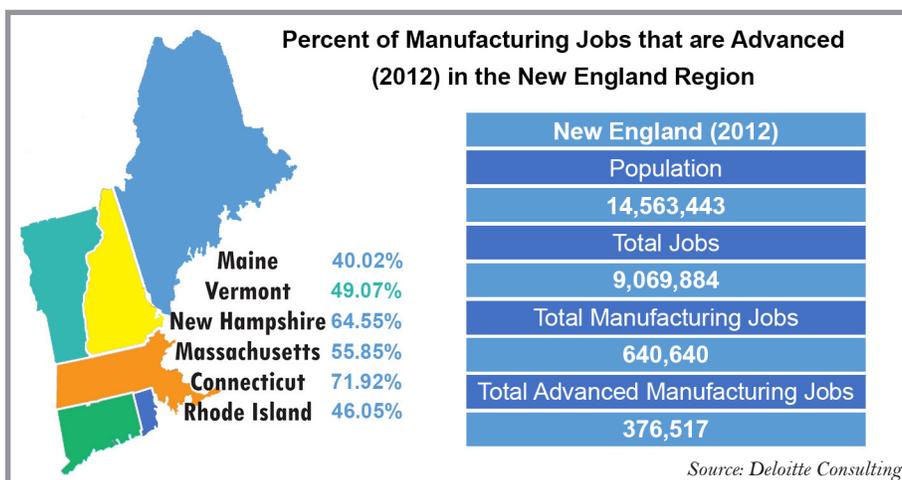


Figure 13



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.

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 programs.
- Changing tax structure and incentive programs in New York and New Hampshire

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.
- Housing stock in some areas of the District is substandard due to lack of insulation and energy efficient windows, etc.
- In some towns, people actively work against workforce housing, perhaps, due to the misunderstandings commonly associated with "affordable" housing.

goals

All our goals, strategies, and actions are designed to build and support a more robust and resilient region. With that said, we also felt the need to have a separate and distinct goal to guide us in strengthening our overall resiliency.



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:
 - o The greater the income gaps between the rich and the poor, the more likely the District is to lose jobs during economic shocks and the longer it will take to recover.
 - o Regions with many export industries are more resilient to employment downturns.

- Climate disasters:
 - o We need capacity to absorb stresses and maintain functions in the face of climate disruptions.
 - o We must be able to adapt and reorganize quickly in the wake of disasters.

2. An Innovative Business Environment

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. A Robust and Ready Workforce

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 is in place and that it is planned to adequately 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 Property Values

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 natural resources and our working landscapes and to support the enterprises that already exist or are being developed.

6. Quality of Life and Place

The District is a great place to live and work, and it is critical to maintain and nurture our quality of life. The area’s demographics, 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?

action plan

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 using 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 and action plan

Action 2: Build leadership capacity.

Tasks:

1. Inventory and understand the purpose of leadership programs currently offered in the district.
2. Identify gaps (if any) in programs offered as it relates to building a resilient region.
3. Develop action plan to improve.

Deliverable(s): Report and action plan

Action 3: Inventory resilience efforts and organizations (e.g., non-profits, state programs, etc.) 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): Report



GOAL 1: A Resilient Region (*continued*)

Action 4: 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 plan with actions

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.

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: Gather resilience entities 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



GOAL 1: A Resilient Region *(continued)*

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 and participation in ongoing discussions.

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: An Innovative Business Environment

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 and analyze results.
4. Identify common threads and barriers/opportunities.

Deliverable(s): Opportunities and barriers report

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



GOAL 2: An Innovative Business Environment (continued)

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

Deliverable(s): Public workshops and 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 and 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 and identify gaps.
3. Develop methods/avenues of filling the gaps.

Deliverable(s): Inventory report

Strategy 2.4: Advocate for the business community's 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



GOAL 2: An Innovative Business Environment (continued)

revisions to regulations or statutes 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. Offer solutions that support state and regional goals while allowing businesses the opportunities needed to thrive.
4. Provide assistance to towns on their town plans and implementing regulations.

Deliverable(s): Areas of concern summary and technical assistance

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.)
3. Educate business owners on compliance efforts.

Deliverable(s): Recommendations for state, local leaders, and businesses

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 employer 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 and technical assistance

Action 2: Based on information collected in the employer opportunities and barriers report,* 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 and networking event(s)

* The “employers opportunities and barriers report” is the deliverable for Goal 2, Strategy 2.1, Action 1.

GOAL 3: A Robust and Ready Workforce

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

Action 1: Conduct an in-depth, District-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 and disseminate results.

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 and action plan

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

Tasks:

1. Based on workforce study, 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 District, 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 District.

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



GOAL 3: A Robust and Workforce (continued)

Action 2: Promote career awareness among students and educators.

Tasks:

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

Deliverable(s): Inventory and 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 and network

Strategy 3.4: Strengthen utilization of District'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 and new program recommendations

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 and 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. 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, and 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 and funding opportunities

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 and Project List

GOAL 5: Grow Property Values

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: Location, number, and type of housing units needed and in what desired cost range(s).

Deliverable(s): Report

Action 2: 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 build additional units.

Deliverable(s): Housing plan

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 and 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.

Deliverable(s): Inventory database, resource and technical assistance directory, and 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. Develop a map of the region, showing municipal infrastructure, transportation options and broadband connectivity.
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



GOAL 5: Grow Property Values *(continued)*

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, behavioral, dental and vision).
2. Identify current and trend utilization rates of services.
3. Help promote quality of (and access to) existing services to increase utilization and community health.

Deliverable(s): Report

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 and report

more



GOAL 6: Quality of Life and Place *(continued)*

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 and 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

performance measures

Measures	Source
1. Number of Jobs Created/Retained After Implementation of the CEDS ¹	
a. Total Employment in Initial Year Employed 16yrs and over	ACS ²
b. Total Employment in Subsequent Years Employed 16 yrs and over	ACS
c. Number of Jobs Retained as a Result of Select State and Local Investments.....	RDC ³
2. Number and Types of Public Sector Investments Undertaken in the Region	
a. EDA Sponsored Investments	RDC
b. Significant State and Local Investments.....	RDC
3. Private Sector Investment in the Region After Implementation of the CEDS	RDC
4. Action Plan accomplishments.....	# completed actions.
 Goals Indicators	
1. A Resilient Region	
a. ERAF ⁴ progress	town/VT
b. #orgs/people engaged	meeting attendance
2. An Innovative Business Environment	
a. Trade name registrations	town/VT
b. Number of businesses engaged	RDC

¹ Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

² American Community Survey

³ Regional Development Corporations

⁴ Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund

- c. Commercial square footage in regionRDC
- 3. A Robust Workforce
 - a. Companies receiving training assistance.....RDC
 - b. Enrollment in adult education programs local
- 4. Infrastructure for growth
 - a. Regional infrastructure investments.....RDC
- 5. Grow Property Value
 - a. Grand list of EDD regiontown/VT
 - b. Participants in affordable housing project local
 - c. House Purchase Pricetown/VT
- 6. Quality of Life and Place
 - a. Per Capita Incometown/ACS
 - b. % below poverty leveltown/ACS
 - c. Unemployment rate.....town/ACS

strategic projects

Each of our the goals and strategies (page 24) include action plans and set deliverables from those action plans. Through this planning process, we determined the most relevant projects (or deliverables) that would positively impact the region as a whole based on the opportunities and challenges identified.

The ECVEDD partners have already met and determined which projects we hope to pursue in the coming fiscal year.



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Population

Town	2010
Andover	467
Baltimore	244
Barnard	947
Bethel	2,030
Bradford	2,797
Braintree	1,246
Bridgewater	936
Brookfield	1,292
Cavendish	1,367
Chelsea	1,238
Chester	3,154
Corinth	1,367
Fairlee	977
Granville	298
Hancock	323
Hartford	9,952
Hartland	3,393
Ludlow	1,963
Newbury	2,216
Norwich	3,414
Pittsfield	546
Plymouth	619
Pomfret	904
Randolph	4,778
Reading	666
Rochester	1,139
Royalton	2,773
Sharon	1,502
Springfield	9,373
Stockbridge	736
Stratford	1,098
Thetford	2,588
Topsham	1,173
Tunbridge	1,284
Vershire	730
Weathersfield	2,825
West Fairlee	652
West Windsor	1,099
Windsor	3,553
Woodstock	3,048
TOTAL	80,707

Source: U.S. Census - 2010

