



The
New
Ruralism
Initiative

The New Ruralism Initiative
Grant Report

Lessons in New Ruralism

Fall 2020





American Planning Association
Northern New England Chapter



The New Ruralism Initiative is a project of the American Planning Association Northern New England Chapter and Small Town and Rural Planning Division.

Financial support has been provided by -

The American Planning Association's:
Northern New England Chapter
Chapter Presidents Council
Divisions Council
Small Town and Rural Planning Division

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Recommended citation –

Whittaker, Jennifer, Tara Bamford, Jo Anne Carr, Peg Elmer Hough, Mark Lapping, Chad Nabity, and Lynne Seeley. 2020. 'Lessons in New Ruralism'. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Initiative. 79 pgs. Available online at:
<https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>

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What is New Ruralism?

Technology advances, economic shifts, and demographic changes are transforming rural America. Rural communities on the urban fringe are growing rapidly, faced with challenges in how to manage development. More remote rural regions are losing population, challenged by declining industry and a shrinking tax base. Some rural communities are struggling to handle a large seasonal influx of tourists, others are pleading for tourists to visit. While some places are building off an agricultural renaissance, others are attracting new residents interested in remote-working, and many are doing both. Whether communities are growing or shrinking, rural communities are dynamic, inventive, vibrant, and thriving. Capturing this energy is what New Ruralism is all about.

New Ruralism articulates that rural communities, to prosper, need a synchronized sustainability focus in three areas: economic, environmental, and social. To thrive, rural planning, policy, and grassroots efforts must embrace new methods of economic sustainability, like cooperatives and the creative economy. They must uphold environmental sustainability, both protecting the land while stewarding working landscapes. And, they must invest in social sustainability, fostering community, strengthening their safety net, and nurturing active democracy. The weaving of these ideas together contributes to strong rural communities.

Rural places nationwide embrace these ideals, welcoming the changes of the twenty-first century with renewed vigor. From transforming vacant historic churches as community centers to developing fishing cooperatives to rebirthing an heirloom grains industry, rural communities aren't holding back from nurturing the future they want to see. We believe these courageous efforts shouldn't happen in isolation. New Ruralism seeks to learn from rural communities, understand their barriers and opportunities, share their success stories, and connect thinkers and doers with each other.

The New Ruralism Initiative is delighted to share these stories of rural leadership, place-making, entrepreneurship, energy-generation, art-creation, and volunteerism that sustain the heart and soul of rural places.

The term ‘**new ruralism**’ was launched into national land use conversation by Dr. Sibella Krauss who characterized it as creating permanent agricultural preserves on the urban edge as sources of fresh food for the larger **urban region... as places for nurturing urban** connections with the land. The phrase is used in the United Kingdom to describe pastoral idylls, like farmers markets and rustic parks, inserted in the midst of cities. Planners in Northern New England suggested a counterpoint to the urban-focused emphasis of the phrase, presenting a new ruralism that describes a rural, not urban, renaissance. New Ruralism, as referenced by rural planners, refers to planning strategies which develop rural communities as places to live and prosper, rather than simply to serve the nearby urban metropolis.

History of the New Ruralism Initiative

At the 2011 annual conference of the Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association (NNECAPA), Peg Elmer, then President of the Chapter and planning professor at Vermont Law School, introduced **the term “new ruralism”** to describe the blossoming renaissance of rural planning success in the region. **Elmer’s initial** observations in Northern New England were of new ruralism-type actions which served distinctly rural communities, attracting people to live in and visit those communities beyond merely serving as a foodshed for New York City and Boston. **“We don’t just exist and thrive up here, for the benefit of the metro areas south of us,” said Peg. And, “while much of professional**

planning education is aimed at urban planning, rural planners need a framework for success too.” Two years later, after a full plenary discussion with Peg and Mark Lapping, a planning faculty and interim Provost at the University of Southern Maine, membership at the annual NNECAPA conference agreed that the idea should be pursued and voted to financially support a research project collecting case studies illustrating new ruralism.

In 2014, Tara Bamford, Planning Director at New Hampshire’s North Country Council and board member of NNECAPA, volunteered to lead the project and design a web portal on NNECAPA.org. NNECAPA provided \$10,000 in funding for the project and obtained an additional \$9,600 from the American Planning **Association’s** (APA) Chapter Presidents Council.

This funding provided institutional support to develop a twenty-member editorial team to review potential case studies from the region, with leadership representing Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont. Lynne Seeley, Maine planning consultant, and Jo Anne Carr, New Hampshire planning director and land use professor, stepped in to assist the team in presenting initial case studies at the 2016’s NNECAPA conference. NNECAPA then supported presentations at the APA national conference in 2017 and 2018 under the **sponsorship of APA’s Small Town and Rural Planning (STaR) Division**. Both presentations drew large audiences and active discussion. The project expanded to a national rollout with

a \$5,000 grant from the APA STaR and the APA Divisions Council. With new members, a broader reach and the help of Jennifer Whittaker, a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania, the initiative now includes case studies nationwide.

Case Study Development

The New Ruralism online library sought case studies of strategies, solutions, and innovations that fit well in rural communities and places with low population density. Specific projects were selected for their locally-driven, locally-supported grassroots nature. The New Ruralism team placed an emphasis on choosing projects that were not dependent on the existence of professional town staff or sustained only by large external federal and state grants. Featured community initiatives were selected for fostering:

- Attributes of sustainability in the social, environmental, and/or economic spheres of community planning.
- Improvement in quality of life, livable wage jobs, meeting basic household needs, and/or long-term community resilience.
- Growth in the local and regional economy rather than wealth leaking outside the community
- Thriving, vibrant communities.

Recruitment

The New Ruralism team recruited potential new case studies through several nomination activities. Self-nomination announcements were sent via the American Planning Association (APA) Small Town and Rural Planning (STaR) Division Newsletter, appeals to nominate a local community were sent to each individual APA State Chapter, emails were sent to all STaR members individually, and requests were posted on social media targeting rural-focused organizations and communities. Initiatives that were nominated to be a case study were thoroughly reviewed online prior to participating in an hour-long interview with someone from the New Ruralism team. In some instances, multiple community members participated in interviews with the New Ruralism team. Interview topics included describing the challenges the project sought to overcome, discussing how the project had changed over time, defining how the community viewed success, recounting spin-off or ancillary benefits brought by the efforts, and sharing advice for future communities interested in replicating the work. Featured communities were invited to include photos from their projects as well. Completed case studies were reviewed by interviewees for approval prior to publication online.

New Ruralism Case Studies

LOCATION	PROJECT
Kodiak Island Borough, AK	Kodiak Harvest Food Coop
Skowhegan, ME	Somerset Grist Mill
Plymouth, NH	Local Foods Plymouth
Vermont	Farm to Plate
Port Clyde, ME	Fresh Catch
Frewsburg, NY	Relief Zone Community Youth Center
Port Townsend, WA	Quimper Village
Lubec, ME	Lubec Community Outreach Center
Jaffrey, NH	Monadnock at Home
Bowdoinham, ME	Successful Aging in Place
Camden, AL	Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center
Mad River Valley, VT	Mad River Valley Economic Study
Deer Isle, ME	Island Employee Cooperative
Bethlehem & Berlin, NH	Women's Entrepreneurial Network
Thetford, VT	Home Energy Action Team
Plymouth, NH	Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative
Allen, IN	NewAllen Alliance
Norwich, VT	SmartCommute Program
Grand Lake Stream, ME	Downeast Lakes Land Trust
Northfield, VT	Water Street

Selected Case Studies

Focusing on Food

Rural communities play a vital role in producing, harvesting, and processing food for the country. Unfortunately, rural communities are often not strengthened by evolving agricultural technology, centralized farm policy, or shifting processing and distribution methods.¹ Our featured communities in the Focusing on Food category are overcoming this challenge by building local food systems that support farmers, consumers, the environment, and the local economy. *Aligning with New Ruralism's values, they are supporting social, environmental, and economic cohesion, improving quality of life and income, capturing local wealth, and contributing to thriving, vibrant communities.*

In Kodiak Island Borough, Alaska, all food had to be shipped to the community by barge or flown in on a plane, making costs exorbitant. Meanwhile, Kodiak Island was exporting more fresh fish and seafood than any other port in the country with little packaged and sold locally. Previously, island residents grew their own food but local knowledge and traditions of growing have been lost over the years. To ameliorate these challenges, community members banded together and created the [Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op](#) to retain income within the community and increase local expenditures by providing a market for produce and seafood grown or caught locally. Via the co-op, local residents can sell farm products, including produce, meat, and value-added products, directly to other community members. Small family-owned fisheries are

also able to sell seafood directly to consumers. Only a few years after starting, the co-op now boasts over 500 members, and is showing that local foods are better for the community, economy, and environment. Read more about their efforts in our [case study](#) on the quest to bring local foods back to Kodiak Island.

On the other side of the country, on the Maine coast, a similar effort is underway to address the challenges of overfishing, low seafood prices, and heritage loss and environmental damage that comes from large-scale commercial fishing. Fishermen in Port Clyde, at the tip of the St. George Peninsula, came together to create [Port Clyde Fresh Catch](#), a community-supported fishery (CSF) model that eliminates seafood processors and allows fishermen to sell fresh traceable (i.e. traceable from sea to plate) seafood directly to residents.



Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op is developing a market for locally caught or grown seafood, meats, produce, and value-added goods.

Members of the CSF engage in environmentally-friendly fishing practices, like using fish nets that allow young fish to escape and diversifying the type of species caught, thus preserving the fisheries for future generations. By processing and selling locally, and guaranteeing environmentally-conscious fishing methods, Port Clyde Fresh Catch is retaining local wealth, investing in both the environment and local heritage, and ensuring a higher wage for fishermen. Read more about their efforts in our [case study](#) on how a small community was determined to keep their fishing industry vibrant and safe.

Further inland from Port Clyde, in Skowhegan, Maine, grain farmers in the region were, due to lack of local processing, being forced to ship their produce out of state for refining into flour and other products. Grain production is a stabilizing element in Maine agriculture, improving soil quality and contributing to the organic egg and milk industry. Yet, Maine residents **couldn't purchase locally**-grown grain until Maine Grains re-localized grain milling through purchasing and redeveloping an old jailhouse into the Somerset Grist Mill. The mill and associated flour brand have revived value-added agricultural production in the region by developing appropriate infrastructure to support the growing grain industry. Their rehabilitated building accommodates numerous new businesses while their products are sold to bakers across the state. These efforts, started by a local business partnership, have resulted in 20 new jobs in the town.



The Somerset Grist Mill is reinvigorating the local grain industry and the Skowhegan region.

The business has also served as a catalyst for renewal in downtown Skowhegan, bringing residents and tourists in to experience the renaissance in food-related businesses. Read more about all that has grown from the grist mill revival in our [case study](#).

Also in New England, Local Foods Plymouth, in Plymouth, New Hampshire, is focused on bringing high-quality, locally grown food, to consumers. The year-round, online farmers market is run by a committee of volunteers and was the brainchild of [D Acres Organic Farm and Educational Homestead](#) and the [Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative](#). Read more [here](#) about how the market place collaborates with local businesses and organizations to do food drop-offs via their innovative Farm-Desk program.

Through their acceptance of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to purchase online food, they have aligned **themselves with the town's master plan** to support a healthy population.

Locally-generated efforts to improve the food system, like Maine Grains, Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op, Local Foods Plymouth, and Port Clyde Fresh Catch can be supported by strong plans and policies designed to benefit local producers, processors, and consumers. One such **example is Vermont's statewide Farm to Plate** food system plan, which we document as a case study. This multi-faceted, state legislature-supported plan focuses on addressing the environmental aspects of food production, the profitability of production and processing, and the availability of fresh healthy food for all state residents. By taking a cross-cutting collective impact approach, the plan includes education, workforce development, technical assistance, and business planning. It has been enormously successful, and provided the early model for other regions in facilitating the growth of a healthier, more resilient food system.

People Helping People

In rural areas where services may be less readily-available and neighbors are further **apart, people are a community's most** important asset. Investing in residents, from young children to older adults, is critical to sustaining vibrant and thriving communities. Places represented in our People Helping People category are grounded in this truth. *Their efforts*

demonstrate that people-focused plans, policies, and projects have an outsized impact on small communities.

Featured for their dedication to improving the quality of life for residents, their projects reveal the power of a community working together.

In far western New York, children and teens in the small town of Frewsburg had few options for free and safe entertainment and community-bonding. To address this, in 2000, parents gathered together to create the [The Relief Zone Community Youth Center](#), a volunteer led effort to turn an unused church into a location for youth to gather for activities on weekends. Two decades later, the old church-turned-youth center has become the heart of the community for families with children, offering before and after school day care, after school tutoring, and summer day camp. In addition to providing critical support for rural families, the organization's rehabilitation and occupancy of a downtown building is a visual representation that Frewsburg is an active community with young families. We document their growth in our [case study](#) on how a volunteer-run effort has turned into a jobs-generating, family-supporting, mission-focused organization that is supported community-wide.

In downeast Maine, the Lubec Community Outreach Center fulfilled a similar role to The Relief Zone. Two of Lubec, Maine's long-running summer youth programs had been closed for several years, leaving few opportunities for children and youth to gather. In 2011, leadership and a core group

of volunteers brought the shuttered programs back to life, creating a Summer Recreation Program and After School Program that offer enriching educational opportunities and critical child care. As the programs expanded, the organization focused on identifying, developing, and implementing effective sustainable programs that were responsive to the strengths, needs, and desires of local families. Today, the organization has expanded to host a food pantry, is a site for the USDA Summer Meals Food Service Program, and now provides services for seniors and veterans. We document their growth from after-school program to full-service community center in our [case study](#).

Rural communities often do not have the right infrastructure to support people who want to age in-place. Cars are a necessity and distance can lead to isolation,



Lubec Community Outreach Center's efforts are leading to intergenerational support for residents of Lubec, Maine.



Lubec Community Outreach Center provides services for seniors and veterans as well as youth.

particularly for older adults who are no longer able to drive. Older, dated, large housing stock, with associated maintenance, **may not provide the type of housing today's** seniors want. Residents of [Quimper Village](#), in Port Townsend, Washington are demonstrating a new model of cooperative senior living that allows residents to age in place as active members of a community. This intentional self-governing community constructed within a larger town consists of easily maintained, single story housing supported by a cohousing community responsible for carrying out the work of the village. Individual homes allow for privacy while a communal kitchen, dining room, meeting space, workshop, bicycle barn, and art studio generate close-knit relationships. Our [case study](#) covers **Quimper Village's** origins from a seed to full-fledged development, highlighting



Quimper Village members designed a cooperative housing community for seniors in Port Townsend, Washington.

how cooperative financing and creativity lead to stronger social relationships and thriving communities.

For senior residents in the Monadnock region of New Hampshire who would like to stay in their homes as they age, [Monadnock at Home](#) ensures they have the tools needed to live at home successfully. This nonprofit membership organization relies primarily on volunteers to provide on-call access to transportation, assistance with maintenance and technical/electronic problems, telephone check-ins, and social and educational opportunities. Our [case study](#) shares how this people-focused organization assists seniors with the practical means and confidence to live their fullest lives within their own community.

Community members in Bowdoinham, Maine took a more government-led approach to addressing similar challenges of aging residents with lack of access to services, poor mobility options, fixed incomes, and insufficient

supports. A comprehensive town plan revealed the need to better support aging adults, leading to the creation of an [Advisory Council on Aging](#) housed within the town government. The council's significant efforts have led to the town being a part of the **World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities**. Our case study [describes](#) the actions, like establishing a tool lending library, that the Council has taken to establish Bowdoinham as a place where residents can live in community regardless of age.

Building Jobs on Our Strengths

As the national economy has shifted from manufacturing to a knowledge-based economy, the nature of jobs has changed too. In rural areas where population centers and major job hubs are further apart, employment often means traveling further to work. Livable wage jobs are harder to find as many small-town businesses are replaced by chain companies with low wages. Communities featured in our Building Jobs on Our Strengths category are proving that, *with the right ingenuity, small towns can build high-quality livable-wage jobs that anchor residents and contribute to a growth in the local economy.* While the examples in this category stand out for their focus on job creation and retention, communities in other categories, for example Maine Grains, Port Clyde Fresh Catch, The Relief Zone, and others also sustain high-quality jobs for local residents.

In Camden, Alabama, in the Black Belt region, few economic opportunities have led to high levels of unemployment and persistent poverty. Local artists had limited

prospects for making an arts-based living, and vital regional knowledge of heritage crafts, like quilting, basket weaving, and wood working was not being passed down to the next generation. The [Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center](#) is changing this narrative by generating an arts-based economy that supports income for artists, invests in art education, and preserves intergenerational knowledge of folk arts. Making their home in an abandoned downtown car dealership, growth of the Center has triggered an increase in regional tourism, with new restaurants and bed and breakfasts opening, and more businesses locating in previously-vacant properties. The center represents over 450 regional artists through gallery features and online sales. Artists can learn how to build business and marketing skills through ArtsCultivate programming, and join Teaching Artists



Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center is generating an arts-based economy while ensuring that heritage craft and folk art skills are passed to the next generation.

programs to teach the arts in local schools. Our [feature](#) of Black Belt Treasures shares how they invested in arts as a dynamic tool for community revitalization and job creation.

On Deer Isle, Maine, a local business owner of multiple vital retail locations, including a grocery store, pharmacy, hardware store, and general store, was ready to retire and sell the businesses. Residents feared an out-of-town purchaser would consolidate or close the stores they relied on, and cut jobs for local residents. Rather than risk a sale to an off-island owner, the owner came together alongside employees at the stores to develop the [Island Employee Cooperative](#). **Today, they form Maine's** largest cooperative with forty-five employees owning shares in the business.



This transition kept vibrant community gathering places on the island open while generating living wage jobs that better distribute local wealth. The Island Employee Cooperative captured wealth within their community leading to long-term economic resilience. Read our [case study](#) for details on how they successfully transitioned privately-owned businesses to worker-owned cooperatives.

In the 1980's, women in rural American had few opportunities for employment outside of minimum wage jobs. The [Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network](#) (WREN), based in Bethlehem, New Hampshire wanted to change this by opening the doors to

entrepreneurship for rural women. In the decades since their start in 1984, WREN has not just developed over 1,850 new women-owned businesses but contributed to regional economic growth in New Hampshire through farmers markets, incubator space, maker-space, art galleries, public-access technology, and more. Their membership-driven organization provides resources for business start-ups, offers educational opportunities for new entrepreneurs, and vital technical assistance throughout the process. [Read](#) about how they are providing economic opportunities for members while strengthening the economic and social fabric of northern New Hampshire.



The Island Employee Cooperative on Maine's Deer Isle is keeping community centers alive while providing living wage jobs for island residents.

Economic growth generated through the arts and culture, employee cooperatives, and networks of entrepreneurs needs the support of creative, community-specific, asset-driven planning. One such example of using planning and economic development research to drive a resilient local economy is the [Mad River Valley Economic Study](#) in Vermont. [Read](#) about how the Mad River Valley Planning District used unique community engagement strategies, resourceful methods for accessing data, and asset-based strategy to draft a vision for the Mad River Valley that imagined an economically prosperous and realistic future.

Energy of Volunteers

Volunteers are at the very heart of many communities, providing services, supporting others, and investing in the future. In all of our case studies, volunteers are vital to keeping projects moving. Our Energy of Volunteers case studies highlight how two New England communities are using the energy of volunteers to help residents reduce energy costs and save money.

New England winters drive heating costs up substantially for rural families. In Thetford, Vermont, volunteers recognized the high costs of poor home weatherization and the burden that lost **energy placed on the state's climate change** goals. Two organizations, [Sustainable Energy Resource Group](#) and [Vital Communities](#), partnered to brand a Home Energy Action Team (HEAT) of volunteers dedicated to helping community

residents weatherize their homes. Through a massive door-knocking effort, marketing campaign, and one-to-one conversations HEAT volunteers helped Thetford residents reduce energy costs, save money, and live more comfortably. [Read](#) about how they trained and deployed more than fifty volunteers community-wide.

Volunteers with New Hampshire's **Plymouth** Area Renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI) are harnessing the sun to help members of their community reduce and produce energy. The Energy Raisers program, mirroring barn raisers of the past, brings together volunteers to install solar thermal renewable energy in residential homes. By working together to tackle labor and installation, solar energy becomes more affordable for many residents. [Read](#) more about how Energy Raisers are based in attitudes of paying it forward and grassroots leadership. By saving money and reducing energy consumption, these energy volunteers are working towards tangible goals that benefit the local economy and the environment.

Other Rural Initiatives

With fewer community services than urban centers, rural communities know how to be creative and innovative. Communities in this group are engaged in a wide variety of original, inventive, or boundary-crossing efforts. One such example is the regional planning efforts happening in Allen County, Indiana. In a region projected to grow substantially in the coming decade, seven rural communities in the county



Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative created the Energy Raisers Program to make solar energy more affordable and available to local residents.

wanted to ensure their towns are part of the economic and population growth. The [NewAllen Alliance](#), a group of volunteers, formed the East Allen Rural Revival to invest in rural quality of place projects that attract businesses and industry while retaining local residents and improving their quality of life. By coordinating community and economic development efforts across seven towns, and linking them to efforts in nearby Fort Wayne, the NewAllen Alliance is ensuring rural communities have their place at the table. [Read](#) about how they developed the NewAllen Strategic Investment Plan, brought \$17 million in implementation support, and united a region around improved quality of life.

[Northfield, Vermont](#) is also demonstrating the need for proactive and collaborative planning. When Tropical Storm Irene hit the community, the Water Street historic neighborhood, situated squarely on a floodplain, experienced significant flood damage. Many homeowners worked with the town project manager on the decision to utilize the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for property acquisitions to turn the area back into a natural floodplain. With the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board providing matching funds for property owners, many decided that replacing housing with a park would be a safer option for the whole town. This community effort is demonstrating that, despite historic settlement patterns along rivers, the right planning tools can contribute to environmentally sustainable development.

King Arthur Flour, a company in Norwich, Vermont, is using their position as a large regional employer to help employees decrease the environmental effects of their commute. They consulted with **the region's** Smart Commute Program to identify barriers to commuter fuel use reduction and discover appropriate incentives that appeal to their employees. The [program](#) has resulted in a daily carpool incentive, preferential carpool parking, an improved bus shelter, electric vehicle charging station, and employee bike-share program. Implementation proved to be a resounding success; within just one year of implementation, employee carpooling rates increased by 23%.

Residents of Grand Lake Stream, Maine, are also doing their part to steward the environment. Located in a region known for outdoor recreation with exceptional lakes, streams, and rivers, many residents rely on the outdoors for their livelihoods. In the early 2000s, residents realized that just petitioning for land protection and smart **development decisions wouldn't be enough** to protect their land and lakes. They formed the [Downeast Lakes Land Trust](#) to ensure community growth is accommodated in balance with conservation. The trust has protected more than 370,000 acres of forests, wildlife habitats, watersheds and lakeshores. Read our [case study](#) about how they are tackling large-scale conservation projects through their partnership with New England Forestry Fund.

Reflections and Lessons Learned

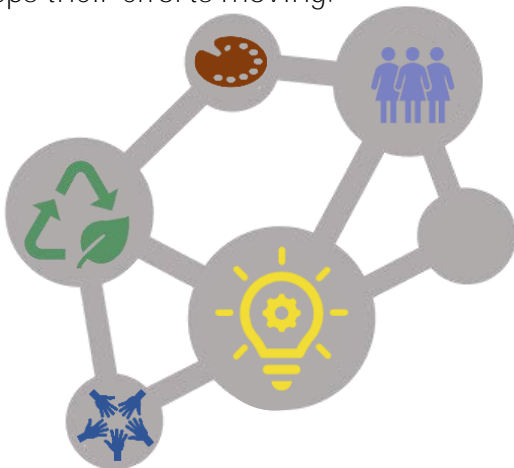
We hope these stories of dynamic rural communities creating their own futures help others generate fresh ideas, develop newfound motivation, and catch the excitement in the rural America of today and tomorrow. As a team, we observed and were inspired by the dedication of community members to respond to local needs. We came to see some key ingredients to successful local initiatives. The community efforts demonstrated just the right blend of leadership, volunteerism and empowerment. And in turn, these qualities appear to foster self-sufficiency by finding the right balance of the co-operative spirit that enables ingenuity, creativity and entrepreneurship to thrive.

We asked communities from Maine to Alaska to reflect on their process so we could share what they learned with others interested in pursuing similar projects or initiatives. The stories offer several lessons-in-common across the diversity of projects and geographies. The guidance they share below offers inspiration for embracing the **“new ruralism energy” to create sustainable, dynamic, inventive, vibrant and thriving communities.**

Build Strong Relationships

Interviewees from nearly every community we spoke with repeated that successful projects were founded by *building strong, community-wide, diverse partnerships that facilitated collaboration, not competition.*

For example, Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center shared that their success in using the arts as economic development is facilitated by their commitment to supporting all artists and arts-based organizations in the region. They also partner with numerous non-arts entities including local governments, businesses, and educational institutions to lift a region of thriving communities beyond just Camden, Alabama. Similarly, the Relief Zone Community Youth Center reflects on their two-decades of community collaboration as vital to their longevity. They have become an integral part of the **community by uniting all of the town's** churches, regardless of denomination, on the commitment to supporting the **community's youth. By partnering with local** government and the school district, successes become shared successes. And, when emergencies arise – like the COVID-19 pandemic – institutions already have experience collaborating and problem solving together. Members of **Thetford's** Home Energy Action Team say that gaining community trust, through one-to-one relationship building, is the grease that keeps their efforts moving.



New Ruralism communities display a cooperative spirit, ingenuity, entrepreneurship, leadership, volunteerism, and creativity.

Celebrate Incremental Wins

Numerous community interviewees reported that, *to keep momentum going for long-term projects, organizations and groups must celebrate all the incremental wins along the way.* For example, when members of Quimper Village were developing their senior co-housing ideas, they knew that many housing cooperatives get stalled permanently in the idea phase. Rather than letting that happen, all members were assigned working teams with responsibilities. Progress in any team was celebrated by all teams, frequently. They also note that the act of celebrating in and of itself builds community connections and good will. Mixing in fun (music, food, dance, theater, and more) with the work builds social cohesion – the cement that holds a diverse community together. The NewAllen Alliance, when drafting their rural revival plan, took celebration to the next step. They publicly celebrated successes with the shared community, releasing frequent press statements, newspaper articles, and online announcements about victories throughout the process. This purposefully celebratory attitude kept momentum going throughout the planning process and into implementation.

Communicate and Share Out Often

Just like the importance of celebration, leaders from our case study communities emphasized that *frequent, timely, clear, and direct communication is vital to the success of projects.* In managing something as large as a regional planning process, NewAllen Alliance made the decision to dedicate a

significant portion of their budget to high-quality communications materials that promoted the region, the plan, and the **communities' goals**. Professionally designed websites and videos helped the community understand what was happening and increased engagement in the process. Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center has also invested meaningfully in educating their community by sharing about their efforts often. Staff engage local residents, the business community, local government officials, and educators not just on supporting artists but on why the arts are important, what is unique about their craft-based heritage, and how the arts can contribute to broader economic development goals.

Be Adaptable and Listen to What the Community is Saying

Each of our case studies reminds us that to find success, organizations and groups must be willing to grow and adapt to changing times. Numerous interviewees stressed the importance of *listening to what the community is saying that their need is, and adapt to what they say*. Be willing to change course as needed. Fisherman in Port Clyde, when facing significant threats to their **livelihood, listened to the community's** desire for environmentally sustainable, locally-caught seafood. By developing Fresh Catch, a community-supported fishery with redesigned environmentally friendly nets and diversified species options, they were able to develop a niche local market to sustain themselves. The Relief Zone Community Youth Center also shared a story about the importance of evolving to

stay relevant to community needs. The center started on the premise that youth needed a safe place to go on the weekends; their Saturday evening teen programming was a mainstay of the organization for over a decade. Eventually, participation in that program dwindled, while the need for childcare for younger children became an urgent need for working parents in the town. The decision to cease Saturday night programming in favor of daycare programs was hard, but they knew that evolving with the community was the best way to serve families. Local Foods Plymouth, when faced with fewer than anticipated sales, developed a new purchasing option called Farm Desk. This program allowed office workers and employees of schools and hospitals to order food online to be dropped off at their workplace on Fridays. This condensed the number of deliveries for the organization and made purchasing local easier for residents.

Learn from Other Communities

Community interviewees all admit that, to get their projects off the ground, they had plenty of learning to do. Rather than reinvent the wheel, *they spoke with other communities nationwide with similar ideas or goals, utilized technical assistance, and communicated frequently*. The Deer Isle Island Employee Cooperative, when transitioning from privately-held company to employee cooperative, sought out information on financing, democratic management, grant support, and legal issues from the Cooperative Development Institute, Coastal Enterprises, and the Associated Grocers of New England.

Monadnock at Home, in New Hampshire, also reached out to other organizations addressing aging in place, learning from the Village to Village Network how to develop their membership and manage volunteers. Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center cites attending conferences and workshops that provide exposure to new cultures and ideas keeps their work fresh and helps them develop contacts in the field of arts development.

Look for the Ripple Effects and Play the Long Game

Big changes in small communities often lead to a positive ripple effect completely unanticipated by the original group or organization. Efforts to address environmental, economic, and social sustainability often become a spark or catalyst for more long-term and wide-spread development. Identifying and accounting for these waves is critical to building more success. Maine Grains exemplifies this. While the project started out as converting an abandoned building into a functioning grist mill for local farmers, today the efforts have triggered new development across Skowhegan with downtown development, an annual bread kneading conference, tourist traffic, and the renaissance of a local grains industry. The **Women's Rural** Entrepreneurial Network, similarly, set out to provide alternative employment options for women during an economic downturn. Today, the network has not just kick-started businesses but brought craft markets, art galleries, maker-space, and shops to their region. In East Allen, Indiana, the long-range effects of their rural revival plan will be felt for a generation. All of these

efforts reflect what Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op and the Island Employee Cooperative have latched onto – true change comes from viewing every action as part of the long game. *For efforts to truly light a community-wide spark, there must be dedication and an attitude of playing the long game for deep, sustainable change.*

The Road Forward

We hope these stories of dynamic rural communities creating their own futures resonate with other small towns and rural places. As a team, we are inspired by the everyday leadership, entrepreneurship, volunteerism, and dedication nestled in small places across the country.

Our twenty case studies represent just a small portion of the thousands of small communities working under the radar to increase sustainability and self-sufficiency. Across the country, many are working to **strengthen their town's economy**, protect their natural resources, and support local families. Our towns and rural communities are home to people who work every day, often without professional staff or outside funding, to energize volunteers and apply creative solutions to improve everyday life for residents. The overarching goal of the New Ruralism Project is to help these local leaders and volunteers learn from others without having to start from scratch.

We hope these cases help other communities generate fresh ideas, develop newfound motivation, and catch the current of excitement in rural America.

Do you know of a local initiative in a small town or rural area that might inspire and inform a grassroots effort elsewhere? We will continue developing the New Ruralism on-line library with additional case studies and examples that address emerging issues like the COVID-19 pandemic which has tested resilience in many small towns.

If you would like to nominate a community, email Tara Bamford at tebamford@gmail.com or Mark Lapping at mlapping@maine.edu with a brief description of the project. The team will reach out to obtain additional information and determine if your community is a good fit for a New Ruralism case study. We look forward to keeping the on-line library growing and relevant.



Acknowledgements

The New Ruralism Initiative thanks the following people for their time, expertise, and stories:

Aaron Brown, Transportation Program Manager, Vital Communities

Amber Lambke, President, Maine Grains

Barb Smith, Vice President, NewAllen Alliance

Daniel McKenna-Foster, previous Associate Planner, Kodiak Island Borough

Kent Castleman, President, NewAllen Alliance

Jessica Garrow, Community Development Director, Design Workshop

Kristi Sturtz, NewAllen Alliance Liaison, Sturtz Public Management Group

Kristin Law, Art Programs and Marketing Direction, Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center

Lisa Lyon, Executive Director, the Relief Zone Community Center

Sulynn Cresswell, Executive Director, Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center

Tyler Kornelis, Project Manager, Kodiak Area Native Association

...And many more who contributed their time and energy to this initiative.

Quimper Village: Building Senior Co- housing in Port Townsend, WA

About Port Townsend, WA

Quimper Village, a senior co-housing community, is located in the Victorian waterfront town of Port Townsend, WA. Home to 44 people, this intentional self-governing community is demonstrating a new model of senior living that allows residents to age in place while remaining an active part of the vibrant Port Townsend town.

At the tip of the Quimper Peninsula in Jefferson County, Port Townsend guards the entrance to the Puget Sound and the greater Olympic Peninsula. A little over two hours north of Seattle, the town of 9,315 people is often ranked one of the best places to retire in the country. Once a major seaport to the Pacific Northwest, the town's maritime economic wealth is reflected in Victorian-era housing looking out over an active and architecturally significant Main Street corridor. One of only three Victorian Seaports on the National Register of Historic Places, the entire downtown core is preserved as a National Historic District. Walkable tree-lined streets, locally owned businesses, multiple festivals, and abundant arts and culture organizations contribute to the town's charm. With the Olympic Mountains as a backdrop and the Salish Sea at the doorstep, the region's protected beaches, temperate climate, and natural beauty attract visitors from across the country.



Figure 1. Port Townsend is in Jefferson County, in northwest Washington.

Port Townsend's population reflects its reputation as an ideal retirement location. With a median age of 55 years, residents are around eighteen years older than the state's median age. More than half of residents have a bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctoral degree compared to around 35% of people statewide. Median household incomes at \$50,330, however, are much lower than the statewide average of \$66,174, perhaps due to the high number of retirees.

The town's numerous natural, cultural, and historic assets have contributed to steady population growth that is projected to continue. With seasonal tourists and new permanent residents increasing, vacant land



Figure 2. Each home in Quimper Village has a small front yard and porch facing neighbor's front doors to encourage interaction with other community members.

has become scarcer and housing prices have steadily increased. Predominately large aging multi-story single-family homes abound, and higher density housing is at a premium. Housing shortages are present at every level of housing accommodation. Both town and county governments are focused on limiting sprawling urban development and maintaining compact development within strong urban growth boundaries. As residents of Port Townsend decide how they want to age in place, and new people choose to retire in the area, Quimper Village's senior cohousing community promotes close neighborly interaction, easily maintained single-story housing, active living, and strong community support.

Project Description

Quimper Village provides housing for people aged 55+ in a self-governing condominium community where teams of residents carry out the work of the village. All residents have a voice in decisions and responsibilities within the community. The village promotes community-building and close-living through a village of 28 homes built around a 3,000 ft² common house with a communal kitchen, dining room, meeting space, workshop, bicycle barn, art studio, and some shared transportation. Residents come together around meal-sharing, yoga and tai chi, movies, art, education, and village maintenance. When in need, residents take care of one-another through ride shares, companionship, meal preparation, and shopping assistance. Shared guest rooms in the common house provide accommodations for visiting family members, and an additional apartment provides space for nursing care staff should a member of the community require more advanced care. The village includes six total acres with large open space areas with bio-engineered storm water management, many trees and plantings, pedestrian walkways, and vehicle parking. At \$10.5 million, Quimper Village was one of the largest residential projects in Port Townsend in over a decade.

Project History

Origins & Timeline

The dream for Quimper Village started when Pat Hundhausen wanted to age in place in her Port Townsend community but couldn't stay in her two-story home because of accessibility issues. After speaking with members of her church, she found she wasn't alone in her dilemma. When she hosted an adult learning program on aging through her church, 65 people attended expressing the great need for accessible housing within the community that residents knew and loved. Several attendees took the next step of registering for a ten-week workshop course in spring of 2014 based on the book with McCamant & Durrett Architects, a national co-housing provider, on creating a co-housing complex. Excited about the potential for senior co-housing, the group organized themselves as an LLC, developed a governance structure and process for decision making, and marketed their idea to the wider community. By September of 2014, supported by Katie McCamant from CoHousing Solutions and Charles Durrett from McCamant and Durrett Architects, the group identified suitable land and began six months of design decisions on how they wanted their community to best meet their needs for aging in an active and community-focused place. As new members joined from Port Townsend and beyond, the group gained momentum. Within five months of breaking ground, all units were sold. The first residents of Quimper Village moved in at the end of October 2017 – a little over three years after the idea for senior co-housing was hatched in Port Townsend.

Design and Construction

The owners of Quimper Village were the developers of the project. They partnered with McCamant & Durrett Architects from Nevada City, CA and Terrapin Architects, a local architecture firm to design their community. Fairbank Construction Company

of Bainbridge, WA was the general contractor. The community offered three different floor plans with two and three bedroom and one- and two-bathroom options. Units included appliances but came unfurnished. Because many members were in the process of downsizing, residents furnished the common house, kitchen, and other communal areas together.

Developing the six-acre two-plot site triggered a Planned United Development process. The process, along with other municipal requirements, necessitated 25% of the land to remain undeveloped with a band of natural meadow around the site, the addition of one block of city street for emergency vehicles, and on-site storm water management. Parking for the village, at 1.2 spots per unit, is in a shared parking lot located away from the housing units. The village also provides three shared vehicles - a pickup truck, car, and golf cart are available to all members.

Financial Details

Financing a new housing development was no small feat for Quimper Village members. To provide financial and legal direction, they partnered with an experienced consultant from CoHousing Solutions. In a region with high and rising home values, and no public financial mechanisms for supporting affordable co-housing, members decided to build market rate housing in the form of air-space condominiums with a reserve fund for external improvements, maintenance, shared utilities, and common space. Members put the equivalent of a down payment, or 22%, up before construction started, and guaranteed the construction loan. Some members financed the purchase of their unit through mortgages while others sold their previous house to finance the purchase. Washington state securities laws required that all members be previous Washington residents and most community members moved to Quimper Village from the greater Port Townsend area.

Lessons to Share

Reflecting back on the process of designing, building, and living in an intentional senior community, Quimper Village offers up lessons for other communities facing a shortage of appropriate senior housing and the desire to age in place:

- **Stay focused and keep moving:** Quimper Village evolved from idea conception to move-in date in just over three years. Members credit this fast pace to their dedication to keeping the project moving every single week. Many co-housing projects can stall for years and potential members lose hope in the project. As older adults, Quimper Village members were clear that they wanted to live in their new community as soon as possible. From the early days of the idea, all interested members were organized into working teams with responsibilities related to finances and legal issues, design and development, land procurement, advertising and marketing, and more. Progress was celebrated early and often. Most importantly, the work of creating the cohousing development was vital to building community with each other.
- **Engage in thoughtful governance:** Quimper Village credits their remarkable ability to make group decision by being thoughtful about how they chose their governance structure from the beginning.



Figure 3. Quimper Village's common house is the central gathering point for food, entertainment, education, and more.

The community utilizes a dynamic governance form, called sociocracy. Rather than making decisions based on majority rules, all 44 people's voices are heard through the decision-making process and consent to the decision.

- **Share your message:** The idea of senior co-housing often attracts people's interest and questions. Marketing and communication are essential. During the design phase, members had to generate awareness about the project and attract potential new members. Now that the village is occupied, marketing continues. One resident's primary responsibility is to provide tours of the community, which can happen up to three times per week. On Open House days, the village attracts over 200 visitors interested in viewing a new model of senior living. Members of the village speak at conferences and to media, participate in Port Townsend activities as a group, and are advocates for senior co-housing nationally.

Quimper Village demonstrates the New Ruralism qualities of co-operatives, self-sufficiency, creativity, and leadership.



Figure 3. Quimper Village was the brainchild of Pat Hundhausen, one of the founders and organizers of the community (1941-2018)



Figure 4. An aerial view of Quimper Village shows the community layout and design.

Additional Information

For additional information about Quimper Village and Senior Cohousing, see the links below:

Quimper Village:
<https://www.quimpervillage.com/>

SAGE Senior Cohousing Advocates:
<https://sagecohoadvocates.org/>

McCamant & Durrett Architects – The Cohousing Company:
<http://www.cohousingco.com/>

CoHousing Solutions –
<https://www.cohousing-solutions.com/>

For questions, contact Quimper Village at QVcoho@gmail.com

Interviewee:

Carolyn Salmon, President of Quimper Village Condominium Owners Association & Treasurer of SAGE Senior Cohousing Advocates

Recommended Citation

Whittaker, Jennifer. 2019. 'Quimper Village: Building Senior Co-housing in Port Townsend, WA.' In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 4 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



American Planning Association
Small Town and Rural Planning Division



American Planning Association
Northern New England Chapter

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NewAllen Alliance:

Leading a Rural Revival in East Allen, Indiana



Figure 1. Allen County is located in Northeastern Indiana.

About Allen County, IN

East Allen, home of the Rural Revival Regional Development Plan, is located in Northeast Indiana. Referring to themselves as a community of communities, East Allen comprises seven rural communities in eastern Allen County, IN, including: New Haven, Woodburn, Grabill, Leo-Cedarville, Monroeville, Harlan, and Hoagland. All seven communities are united by the East Allen County School District. Originally a farming community, today the county is home to several large manufacturing plants, including General Motors. With an affordable cost of living and low unemployment, the region is often voted one of the best places to live and do business.

Though Allen County is home to the city of Fort Wayne, eastern parts of the county are very rural. The small-town vibe is maintained in part because of the proximity to employment in Fort Wayne. Because the county has the third largest population in the state, representation of rural communities can be a challenge. For example, while the East Allen communities are home to 56,491 people, they represent only 16% of the total Allen County population.

Allen County is part of the larger Northeast Indiana Region. This region is set to grow their population by over a million people over the next decade. Rural communities, like those found in East Allen, want to ensure they are

part of this economic and population growth by investing in quality of place projects that will attract businesses, industry, and their workforce while retaining local residents and improving their quality of life. East Allen's position within the Fort Wayne metro area and the larger Northeast Indiana Region has been a driving part of their desire to engage in a regional planning process.

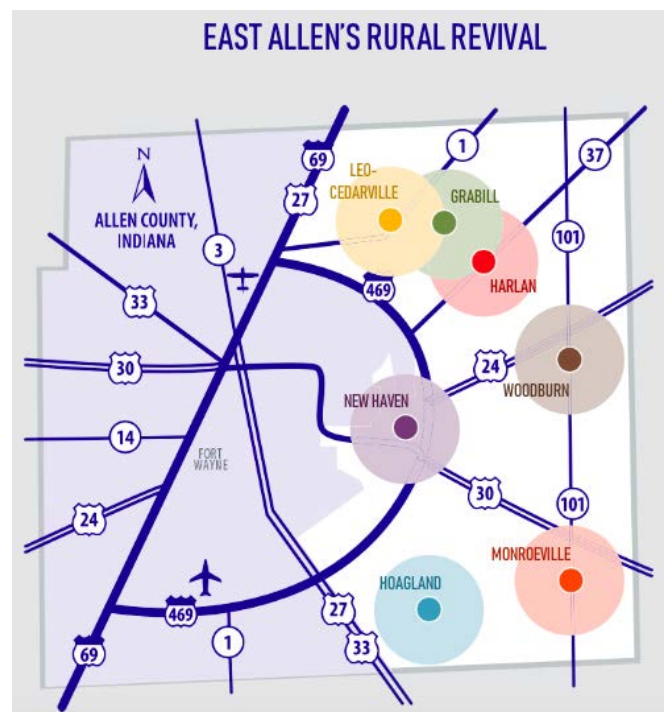


Figure 2. Seven communities east of Fort Wayne in Allen County form the NewAllen Alliance.

Source: NewAllen Alliance.

Project Goal

In Allen County, the presence of Fort Wayne has often meant that regional economic development efforts are led by urbanites. Rural communities were rarely included or specifically considered in decision-making processes despite being a vital part of the region. East Allen communities wanted to reverse this through the development of the East Allen Rural Revival, a planning and development process led by the NewAllen Alliance. This process set the explicit goal of creating a unified voice for rural communities, fostering coordinated efforts in community and economic development, and bringing new investment, job creation, and improved quality of life.

Description

The East Allen Rural Revival was developed and led by the NewAllen Alliance, an organization formed by volunteers in 1991 to improve the communities in East Allen County. They sought to coordinate community and economic development efforts across the region and ensure that rural communities were represented in county-level economic development efforts. Each of the seven communities were represented in the Alliance through a board seat held by a community member with connections to local businesses. Seats were also held by representatives from Allen County Commissioners, Allen County Council, East Allen County Schools, Greater Fort Wayne, Inc., North Indiana Public Service Company, Indiana Michigan Power, Paulding Putnam Electrical Co-op, Ivy Tech Community College, and Upstate Alliance of Realtors. Monthly networking meetings facilitated cross-community learning, sharing, and planning. The Alliance started with three separate programs. An original \$150,000 revolving loan grant from the USDA allowed them to offer low interest loans to local businesses for infrastructure investments. The group then invested interest from the loans into a matching program for business

façade improvements. They also coordinated a continuing education program for businesses to assist in improving business models and operations. All three of these programs are still run by the Alliance.

Building off their over two decades of work, in 2014 the NewAllen Alliance embarked on an organizational assessment and strategic planning process. Results from the organizational assessment pointed to the need for regional strategic planning that brought together all seven communities in the region while also giving specific attention to the needs of each community individually. This overarching goal has become the backbone of their recent work in creating the NewAllen Strategic Investment Plan.

The NewAllen Strategic Investment Plan, funded by the Allen County-Fort Wayne Capital Improvement Board and facilitated by Sturtz Public Management Group, engaged over 800 East Allen residents through surveys, committee participation, and community workshops. The plan united all seven communities in a quest to improve regional quality of life, but also identified several key projects in each of the seven communities through the creation of seven individual plans. These cohesive plans were built around three priorities: cultivating an environment for sustainable economic growth, fostering community vitality through quality of place investments, and building a strong foundation to support livability. Creating the seven plans collaboratively allowed common issues and potential strategies to emerge across communities. The plans include projects such as owner-occupied housing rehabilitation, downtown streetscape and corridor projects, trail and park building, senior housing construction, sidewalk improvements, and community centers renovations. The Alliance began to raise funds to implement the plans. In 2017, the NewAllen Alliance was awarded the John Keller Award for Outstanding Planning Initiative by the American Planning

Planning Association's Small Town and Rural Communities Division.

The John Keller Award was only the beginning. In 2018, the Indiana Regional Stellar Communities Program announced a new focus on regional collaboration with significant funding for selected communities. The Stellar Communities program is a competition offered by a collaboration of state agencies to build sustainability, increase the capacity of local governments and leverage the quality of place through transformative planning processes. The NewAllen Alliance submitted a concept proposal based on the NewAllen Strategic Investment Plan. When they were selected to continue in the award process, they refined the NewAllen Strategic Investment Plan alongside numerous other planning projects to develop the East Allen Rural Revival Regional Development Plan, a plan that took a 'both/and' rather than 'either/or' approach to uniting rural and urban places.

In 2018, NewAllen Alliance was notified that they received the Indiana Regional Stellar Communities Award, along with \$17 million in support for projects outlined in the plan. The award also unlocks access to set-aside funds from Community Development Block Grants, Federal Transportation Funds, Rural Health Funds, and affordable housing tax credits. The Alliance will be using these sources and leveraging an additional \$47 million to fully fund all parts of the Rural Revival Regional Development Plan.

From starting with a \$150,000 USDA revolving loan grant to winning millions in regional development dollars to support rural communities, the NewAllen Alliance demonstrates the power of rural volunteers.

Lessons to Share

In reflecting back on the last several years of volunteer work that have contributed to the Rural Revival Plan, the leadership of NewAllen Alliance have several lessons to share with other communities:

- **Communicate well and often:** Many rural communities don't communicate with each other, with their residents, or with their

neighboring urban communities unless a big issue draws them together. As a result, neighboring projects go unnoticed, successes are overlooked, and decisions are made in private. The NewAllen Alliance notes that communication and celebration has been critical to their success. They use an active and **up-to-date website** to communicate with the public where they store toolboxes, plans, and data for public use. They **celebrate successes** across all communities – online and in print – through press releases and promotional activities that share collective impacts with residents in the region and beyond. They also spend funds on **promoting their region**, goals, and impacts. While spending **money on communications professionals** and polished websites and videos can be expensive, the benefits extend far beyond the region.

- **Mobilize in advance:** When grant opportunities and proposal calls are released, larger and more well-resourced communities often have a leg up in the process because they have previously drafted plans, reports, and analysis. Small and rural communities can't compete in short timeframes with volunteer staff. The NewAllen Alliance recognized this challenge and started **mobilizing people**, data, and communications efforts in advance of large funding opportunities. For example, because they had already engaged in a community-based regional



Figure 3. The East Allen Rural Revival Regional Development Plan helped East Allen win the Indiana Stellar Communities Award, winning over several larger regions. Source: NewAllen Alliance.

planning process, they were ready when the Indiana Regional Stellar Communities proposal was announced. They credit **grassroots organizing** around the need to regionally plan as vital to their ability to be competitive. Leadership is constantly identifying and engaging community members and building relationships to ensure that the work is sustained even when big and flashy projects come to an end. **Local governments officials must also be engaged** and informed throughout the process as they will be key players who help bring others on board.

- **Train rural leaders:** Volunteer-run rural organizations bring together people of all different abilities and experiences. In these instances, leadership training is essential. Yet, many leadership development programs are urban-based and urban-focused. Surveying what leadership skills are needed in a community and **investing in training rural leaders** is vital to ensuring successes. Similarly, **assigning appropriate and specific roles** for leaders can help organizations function smoothly. For example, the NewAllen Alliance has some leaders that work on project management while other leaders manage political strategy and communications.
- **Lobby for your people:** Lobbying and **self-promotion** doesn't come easily to many small-town leaders. NewAllen Alliance members, however, urge others to do it frequently and **don't hold yourself back**. For example, they describe how they wanted to have a seat on the board of Greater Fort Wayne, Inc. – a chamber of commerce and economic development entity for the city and county - where several regional power players were sitting. They lobbied for rural communities to be represented in the chamber so that they would know how major decisions affected their rural residents. Armed with solid arguments about the need for rural representation, they landed a seat. Inserting rural leadership into regional and urban-based conversations can be critical for ensuring rural people are represented.

The NewAllen Alliance demonstrates the New Ruralism qualities of volunteerism, empowerment, creativity, and leadership.

Additional Information

For additional information, see the links below.

NewAllen Alliance website:

<http://www.newallenalliance.net/index.html>

East Allen Rural Revival Regional Development Plan:

<http://online.flipbuilder.com/dvak/vnqo/mobile/index.html>

For questions, contact:

Kent Castleman, kentcastleman@gmail.com

Interviewees:

Kent Castleman, President, NewAllen Alliance

Barb Smith, Vice President, NewAllen Alliance

Kristi Sturtz, AICP, NewAllen Alliance Liaison, Sturtz Public Management Group

Recommended Citation

Whittaker, Jennifer. 2019. 'New Allen Alliance: Leading a Rural Revival in East Allen, Indiana.' In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 4 pgs.

Available online at:

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Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op: Bringing Local Foods Back to Kodiak Island

About Kodiak Island Borough

Kodiak Island Borough in Southern Alaska is home to the Kodiak Archipelago, a series of islands in the Gulf of Alaska approximately 30 miles off the Alaskan coast. The Borough covers around 29,000 square miles, of which about 6,000 square miles is land, lakes, and rivers, and 23,000 square miles is coastal waters. Around 250 miles southwest of Anchorage, the islands rely on ferries and planes to transport all goods and people to the archipelago. Kodiak Island Borough includes the City of Kodiak (population 6,013) and nine smaller communities: Akhiok, Aleneva, Chiniak, Karluk, Larsen Bay, Old Harbor, Ouzinkie, Port Lions, and Womens Bay.

The Kodiak Archipelago was originally populated by the Alutiiq Natives and is today occupied by ten federally recognized native tribes. The archipelago was colonized by the Russians in the mid 1700s and was a staging area for North Pacific operations during World War 2. Today, Kodiak Island continues to house a Coast Guard base, Kodak Station. Today, the borough is racially and ethnically diverse, with numerous native tribes, a large Filipino population, and a growing Latino population.

Historically, salmon fishing has been a large contributor to the local economy and remains so today. In addition to salmon, today's fisheries include pollock, crab, Pacific cod, sablefish, halibut, herring, rockfish, and



Figure 1. Kodiak Island Borough in the Gulf of Alaska.

many other species. The borough is home to one of the largest ports in the country for value and volume of fishery landings, harvesting an average of 252 million pounds of seafood annually. In addition to fishing, seafood processing employs between 25-30% of the population depending on the season. Population growth over the last several decades has grown sporadically with booms in the fishing industry.

Though agriculture plays a small role in employment, livestock producers maintain significant land holdings and leases across the archipelago. The borough's comprehensive plan encourages agriculture and ranching because of its historical and economic significance in the region. Though Kodiak's climate is subarctic, climate change is creating a climate increasingly milder and more amenable to agriculture. Despite small farms decreasing nationally, Alaska has experienced



a 67 percent jump in small farms from 2002 to 2012. High shipping costs and limited access to produce has increased demand for locally grown produce, resulting in a significant increase in direct to consumer agriculture. Kodiak is home to three farmers markets that sell local produce grown in hoop houses in addition to cottage production of processed foods.

Project Goal

In Kodiak Island Borough, all food must be shipped to the community by barge or flown in by plane. Shipping costs substantially raise the price of food sold at big box stores, and this money is not locally retained. Additionally, previous generations of Kodiak residents grew their own produce in backyard gardens and small farms. Much of the local knowledge and traditions around growing have been lost as large grocery stores have located in the borough.

The Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op was created to retain income within the community and increase local expenditures by providing a market for produce and seafood grown or caught locally. The economic development-based concept encourages residents to grow local products, particularly in the villages outside of the City of Kodiak, to sell to other residents for income while by-passing the shipping costs of important food. This concept also includes seafood from local small family-owned fisheries interested in selling locally.

Description

The Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op began as a grassroots community economic development project that has grown into an over 400-member food co-op on the eve of hiring their first employee. The co-op's vision includes building a community-owned full-service grocery store that emphasizes locally harvested seafood and produce supplemented with regionally sourced goods. In doing so, the co-op works towards a mission of providing Kodiak communities with quality food choices that are locally sourced, economically sustainable, and environmental responsible while promoting education and engagement in the borough.

when Kodiak residents participating in Kodiak Strong! Community Planning Day expressed their desire for a food co-op that would provide healthy and affordable food for residents. A steering committee was developed and surveyed the community finding significant interest in developing a local foods market. Initial development was supported by a 2016 \$85,000 Healthy Tomorrow's community wellness program grant from the Providence Medical Center that led to incorporation of Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op in August of 2016. The grant also funded an objective market study, conducted by Hambleton Resources, to assess interest through key stakeholder interviews and secondary data analysis. Positive results from the market study resulted in funding for a full feasibility study, done by University of Alaska Anchorage Center for Economic Development's Alaska Cooperative Development Program, that analyzed the area's population, average income, grocery expenditures, and market share. The feasibility study set a benchmark of gathering 500 membership shares from the community to create a successful grocery store. The Alaska Cooperative Development Program also assisted with creating a sustainable business development plan. The co-op created an official board in 2017 composed of nine members with three-year terms focused on member recruitment, business development, and financial viability.

By early 2019, the Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op had recruited 409 members and raised discretionary funds through the sale of locally-caught locally-canned Sockeye salmon



Figure 2. Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op's first sale of locally canned Sockeye salmon.

and Alaska-grown produce. These first funds will be used to hire the co-op's first employee, a sales and outreach coordinator, who will focus efforts on building relationships with local producers, purchasing supplemental produce from off the island, and increasing membership shares.

Long term goals of the project include opening a brick and mortar store that employs residents with a living wage, expanding markets for farmers growing direct-to-consumer produce, and utilizing cooperative wholesale purchasing power for residents of more remote villages. The co-op hopes that providing a brick and mortar store will open up a permanent and year-round market for farmers who are presently limited to selling through once-a-week farmers markets or Community Supported Agriculture shares (CSAs). This market may encourage an increase in locally grown or caught produce, seafood, and livestock. In time, the co-op may trigger other activities, like reviving and recertifying a local slaughterhouse or transitioning unused land into agricultural production, that will strengthen the local food system, create or retain jobs, and provide healthy and affordable food to Kodiak residents.

Lessons to Share

As the Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op enters their third year, they have a few lessons to share for other rural communities interested in starting a food co-op.

- **First**, co-op creation is a long-game economic development approach to gaining living-wage jobs, investing in workforce development, and providing healthy and affordable food to a region.
- **Second**, the timeline can be slow with incremental achievements. For example, the co-op quickly sold 100 membership shares but then sales slowed down. They introduced a pilot produce project where they partnered with a buyer to purchase Alaskan-grown produce flown in to Kodiak Island and sold through the co-op. The Alaskan-grown produce was of much higher quality than produce in local big box stores, and quickly sold out. This pilot activity demonstrated not only was locally-

grown produce of higher quality but that there was also local demand for the product. Membership surged over 400 shares, helping the co-op move closer to 500 shares.

- **And Third**, focusing on and celebrating incremental progress can be key to keeping the that community engaged and moving forward.

The Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op demonstrates the New Ruralism qualities of creativity, entrepreneurship, local ownership, co-operatives, self-sufficiency, and leadership.

Additional Information

Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op website:
<https://www.kodiakharvest.org/>

Kodiak Area Native Association website:
<http://kodiakhealthcare.org/>

For questions, contact Tyler Kornelis at
tyler.kornelis@kodiakhealthcare.org

Interviewees

Tyler Kornelis, Project Manager, Kodiak Area Native Association

Daniel McKenna-Foster, Previous Associate Planner, Kodiak Island Borough

Recommended Citation

Whittaker, Jennifer. 2019. Kodiak Harvest Food Co-op: Bringing Local Foods Back to Kodiak Island, Alaska. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 3 pgs. Available online at:
<https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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The Relief Zone:

Serving the Needs of Youth and Families in Frewsburg, NY

The Relief Zone Community Youth Center, located in Frewsburg, NY, provides practical assistance and high-quality programming to the community's youth and families. Born out of a volunteer effort to provide activities for the town's youth on the weekends, the center now provides before and after school day care, after school tutoring, and summer day camp for over 175 families in the community. Physically located in the center of the hamlet, The Relief Zone has become the center of the community for families with children. With a mission of equipping, unifying and serving the school, church, and family, the youth center benefits from their grassroots relationship-based approach to caring for the needs of the residents. As the hamlet's needs have changed over the past two decades, so too has the Relief Zone's efforts. Today, the youth center's reach extends far beyond the hamlet, to neighboring communities and across Chautauqua and Cattaraugus Counties.

About Frewsburg, NY

The Relief Zone is rooted in Frewsburg, a hamlet within the larger town of Carroll, in western New York. Predominately an agricultural community, the landscape of rolling hills, fields, and waterways offers outdoor recreation in skiing, hiking, fishing

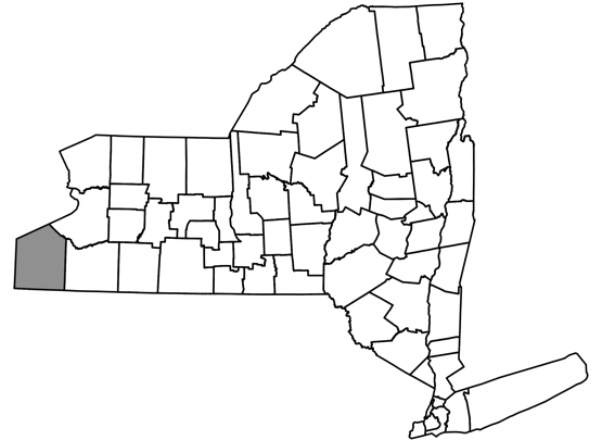


Figure 1. Frewsburg is a hamlet in the town of Carroll in the southeastern corner of Chautauqua County, NY.

hunting, boating, and horseback riding. The Main Street retail corridor has maintained a grocery store and a handful of restaurants and shops – though many residents drive to nearby Jamestown, NY (pop. 29,500) for most retail needs. The close-knit community maintains strong local institutions, with several churches, a robust school system, active volunteer fire department, and nearly century-old Old Home Week annual festival.

The town of Carroll, where the Relief Zone is located, is home to 1,471 households who have a median household income of \$43,899. Around 300 households have



Figure 2. The Relief Zone occupies a former church building in downtown Frewsburg, NY.

children, and approximately 9% of them are living at or below the poverty line. The Relief Zone also works closely with the Frewsburg Central School District (FCS). The FCS district has a student body of 791 students and serves 4,500 families across 75 m2 within parts of five townships. Around one third, 28%, of students receive free or reduced lunch.

The Frewsburg community, with its high-quality school district, low cost of living, and small-town feel, has long been a desirable community for families with children. Yet, like many small rural towns, outside of school hours, there were few activities for youth that didn't involve long drives for parents or a cost to participate. Teenagers especially had few spots for free and safe recreation. The town also had a prominent building standing vacant. Within walking distance to the school, just across the street from the public library, and at the town's 'five corners', stood the empty Frewsburg United Methodist Church. Following a church merger that moved the congregation to a new location just outside of town, the building itself – a classic white steepled structure – was still owned by the church but unused. A group of parents came together, wanting a safe and structured environment for their own children and town's youth. Requesting permission to use the vacant church as space, they gathered donated furniture, pool tables, ping pong tables, and created a space for teenagers to hangout. With \$1,200 for a year of

programming and snacks, the Relief Zone Community Youth Center was born in 2000.

Project Description

Today, the vacant church is far from empty. Bustling with activity and fully remodeled to meet the programming and service needs, the building features plenty of indoor space and outdoor recreation to meet the needs of hundreds of children and families that come through their door annually. The pews were removed long ago to make the space more adaptable. The facilities are licensed as a New York State School Age Child Care Center with a full kitchen. Programming runs year-round from summer camp, tutoring programs, and before and after school programs hosted in multiple locations. The center has a full-time paid Executive Director and employs 34 people annually.

The building is also open for community use. Everything from scout troops to family reunions, parent groups, and children's yoga practice takes place at the Relief Zone. The building is also home to The Rock Community Youth Ministry, a weekly evening program led by local church leadership for teenagers to share discussion about faith. With many small churches in the area unable to financially support their own youth pastors, several congregations combined efforts to create a space for youth to gather at the Relief Zone with a shared youth pastor. With a memorial holiday tree lighting, annual 5K, pig roast, and numerous other events, the Relief Zone has become a key physical and cultural institution in the Frewsburg community.

Project History

Origins

From their origins as a volunteer effort to provide a place for teenagers to today's full-scale programs, the Relief Zone has experienced substantial growth since 2000. In their early years, the center primarily served adolescents and teenagers in the town. Open on Friday and Saturday nights as a space for youth to hang out in a semi-



Figure 3. The renovated building includes an expanded kitchen for cooking classes and meal preparation.

structured safe environment, the early years of the Relief Zone were experimental. With a physical space that still functioned very much like a traditional small church – a sanctuary with pews, a basement kitchen and hall, and a few offices – youth and volunteers slowly started transforming the physical space to meet their needs. Transformation of the space became part of the programming, with teens painting group murals, setting up gaming areas together, and finding furniture and supplies to furnish the space. Saturday evenings programs featured speakers and a message from local youth pastor. Occasionally local teen bands would play concerts in the space. As youth gradually took ownership of the space, the physical space continued transitioning.

The youth center's earliest years also included outreach with the Frewsburg Central School District. Starting in 2003, Young Minds tutoring program provided free customized tutoring services to middle school students twice a week. The program employed high school juniors and seniors, pairing them with middle schoolers who needed homework help. Located just a block from the Jr/Sr. Highschool, the location was walkable and didn't require parents to provide a ride. Today, the program has modified slightly. It currently runs four days a week and provides tutoring services to elementary students during before and after school programming.

An Era of Growth

In 2005, the volunteer group received a federal \$50,000 Compassion Capital Fund (CCF) grant. CCF grants were created under the Bush Administration and administered through the US Department of Health and Human Services to providing grassroots faith-based and community organizations with capacity building, training, and technical assistance to enhance the quality and volume of services provided. The CCF grant boosted the organization from all volunteer services to paying two people from the local community as program developers who set up a board of directors, vision statement, handbooks, and more formalized assessment of community need

A resounding need emerged from this assessment: the need for before and after-school childcare. Elementary school staff were concerned about children being dropped off at the school building more than an hour before the school day started so that parents had time to drive long distances to work. There were similar issues after school. Even for parents who had the funds to pay for childcare found the rural area to be a childcare desert with few options besides relying on friends, family, and neighbors. In response, the Relief Zone's Jumpstart Before School program was born in 2006. Providing care for children from kindergarten to sixth grade, the program functioned out of the same downtown building. The program was built around being convenient for working parents with no locked-in spots, affordable prices, and payment only when the program was used. After School Program followed in 2011. The school district, thrilled that the programs opened, agreed to provide school buses to transport students back and forth from the elementary school to the Relief Zone.

Soon, before and after-school programming expanded to include childcare on days when the school district had a half day or no school on holidays. Full day summer camp programming followed, attracting families from several nearby towns. The after-school tutoring program expanded and outgrew the Relief Zone space, eventually moving to a nearby church location with the school district providing bussing services between the school, church, and Relief Zone.



Figure 4. The Relief Zone's summer programs include indoor and outdoor activities for all ages.

An Era of Transitions

In 2015, the organization was able to hire their first paid Executive Director, who guided the organization through several transitions, the largest being licensing their facilities and programs with New York state. This process triggered many changes. In order to be compliant, the building required \$75,000 worth of upgrades, staff required specific trainings and there were required staff to student ratios. Becoming and remaining state compliant increased costs.

During renovations, the Relief Zone asked the school district if they could temporarily transfer some of their before and after school programs to the elementary school. That ended up being such an easy transition for both institutions and families that the program remains there to this day. This arrangement attracted so much attention that another nearby district, Randolph Central School (RCS) asked the Relief Zone to provide similar services for them at their elementary school. RCS provides funding for staff, and parent fees are used to cover the cost of snacks, craft supplies, and activities. Between the two districts, approximately 200 children are registered for the programs.

The summer camp program and no-school programs have continued to blossom with around 90 children participating in summer programs hosted at the Relief Zone. Summer camp includes weekly field trips, sports, arts and craft activities, and outdoor activities.

In 2017, the organization made the tough decision to shutter their Saturday evening teen outreach program because of consistent low attendance. As the founding program with a legacy of seventeen years of weekly events, the decision to transition was difficult. Staff note that youth culture has changed significantly in nearly twenty years. This change frees up staff and resources to focus on programs the community needs most.

A Bright Future

The Relief Zone is approaching their twenty-year anniversary as a dramatically expanded organization with multiple sites, 34 paid staff, a completely renovated building, and hundreds of families participating in programs. The organization benefits from a strong organizational structure, updated financial planning, shared liability, and regulatory compliance. They let go of programs that didn't work or didn't benefit people, kept popular programs fresh and evolving, and stayed true to their mission of providing for the needs of the community.

Funding

Despite having consistent growth in their budget, the Relief Zone remains a grassroots community-supported organization. Their funding comes from a wide variety of sources including childcare fees, small foundation grants, family donations, an endowment fund, three yearly fundraisers, faith-based congregations, and some local and state grants. The Relief Zone also receives generous in-kind donations from local businesses. For example, in 2015 when the building needed a significant overhaul to meet state requirements to be a licensed childcare facility, the community supported a new kitchen and bathroom, updated septic tanks, a monitored alarm system, emergency lighting, new flooring and painting, and an updated furnace. Local businesses rallied around the organization, donating in-kind labor, appliances, and materials. The center also has relied on volunteer efforts for many years. One of the first founders, who served as the Executive Director, was a volunteer for fifteen years before the center had enough funds to bring on a paid director position in 2016. Speaking from a place of deep gratitude for the local community, the current Executive Director says sometimes she is down to \$100 in the bank account and they will receive a surprise donation or gift that fills the gap. The town's residents' financial, labor, and material support are vital to the center remaining a part of the community.

Impact

The Relief Zone's impact on the community is tremendous, with secondary benefits demonstrated in multiple areas. Over two decades, thousands of youth from and the greater county have passed through their doors. Children and teens know that there is a safe and welcoming space right in town for them staffed by caring people who serve as positive influences. Parents, who may not be able to afford extracurricular activities or have the time to drive their children across the county for programming, know that there are solid local options for their families.

Going on twenty years of open doors, the Relief Zone now has an intergenerational impact. Many Frewsburg youth grow up in the Relief Zone's programming and now send their own children to programs. Four of the current staff were previously in the Relief Zone's programming as children.

The Relief Zone also has developed and enhanced a sense of community. Their efforts cultivate an environment and narrative that Frewsburg is good place for families, that people know each other, care about one another, and support each other. Institutional relationships between the school district, local churches, public services, and other institutions have been strengthened. In addition to using their own space, Relief Zone activities take advantage of other walkable town spaces like the athletic fields at the school and facilities at the Town Park. The



Figure 4. The Relief Zone's programs take advantage of all the area has to offer, including exploring the outdoors.

local business community offers strong financial and in-kind support of the center, and in turn the Relief Center purchases materials and services locally. Now, other towns ask the Relief Zone for advice and information on how to start their own youth centers.

In a county with steady population decline, Frewsburg remains a desirable community and school district for young families. The Relief Zone's adaptive reuse of a vacant building at the 'five corners' of town, often active with children playing outside, signs highlighting community events, or bright with holiday decorations is a visual representation that Frewsburg is an active community with young families.

Lessons to Share

Reflecting on two decades of providing youth services, collaborating with town institutions, and adapting a vacant building, the Relief Zone leadership offers up lessons for other rural communities wanting to better serve the needs of youth and families.

- **Collaborate with everyone:** A large component of the Relief Zone's success has been their community-wide collaboration. The organization has become an integral part of the community fabric by forging long-lasting connections with multiple churches, the school district, the local government, and other institutions. By sharing facilities and resources, expenses are minimized, resources are fiscally well-managed, and goodwill is generated community wide. Successes become shared successes. And, when emergencies arise, organizations already have experience collaboratively problem-solving and working together.
- **Listen to the community and be willing to adapt:** Long-running organizations run the risk of becoming stale or falling into a rut. Relief Zone leadership stresses that listening to what the community points to as a need and identifying and refining the programs

that best meet those needs will ensure long-term community support. Building structure into these programs and serving the community well ensures success. Evolution and transition can be challenging but doing so is vital for both the organization and wider community.

- **Learn from other organizations:** The Relief Zone started as a grassroots adventure in the truest form. From renovating a vacant building to developing successful programming, everything was created from scratch. As the organization developed, they reached out to other childcare and tutoring organizations in the county to ask for advice and guidance. They met with the local United Way and community foundations to learn about organizational sustainability and financial planning. Learning from larger and more established organizations pointed the Relief Zone in the right direction and positioned them within a larger network of service providers.

- **Share back:** Just as the Relief Zone benefited from others' instruction, they believe in sharing back with other towns in the county. Numerous communities have reached out to them about how to start their own similar programs. Center staff have provided assistance, advice, resources, and encouragement to other towns, two of which have started their own youth centers.

The Relief Zone demonstrates the New Ruralism qualities of being grassroots-driven, self-sufficient, and creative. As they approach their twenty year anniversary, strong leadership, well-developed relationships, refined programs, and community-wide support point to another twenty years of success serving the greater Frewsburg community.

Additional Information

For additional information about The Relief Zone, visit: <http://www.thereliefzone.org>.

For questions, contact:
Lisa Lyons at lisa@thereliefzone.org.

Interviewee:

Lisa Lyon, Executive Director of The Relief Zone.

Recommended Citation

Whittaker, Jennifer. 2019. 'The Relief Zone: Serving the Needs of Youth and Families in Frewsburg, NY.' In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 6 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



Figure 4. The Relief Zone's staff are an integral part of the community, serving youth with love and plenty of humor.



American Planning Association
**Small Town and
Rural Planning Division**



American Planning Association
Northern New England Chapter

ABOUT THE NEW RURALISM INITIATIVE

The New Ruralism Initiative is a project of the American Planning Association (APA) Divisions Council, the Northern New England Chapter of the APA, and the Small Town and Rural Planning Division. The initiative seeks to highlight the ingredients that have made for successful innovation in rural communities.

Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center: Investing in the Arts for Economic Development



Figure 1. Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center is based in the town of Camden in Wilcox County, Alabama.

The Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center (BBTCAC), nestled in Alabama’s Black Belt, is a non-profit arts center selling fine arts and heritage crafts from over 450 regional painters, sculptors, potters, basket weavers, quilters, woodworkers, and artists. With gallery space, studios, and arts education classrooms, the center is spurring new bed and breakfasts, retail, a downtown restaurant scene, and a growing tourist following. With nearly fifteen years of dedication to the arts, culture, and place, Black Belt Treasures is now the center of a budding arts-based economic revitalization in the region.

About Camden, AL

Black Belt Treasures is located in Camden, Alabama, near the Alabama River. As one of five incorporated communities in the county, the town serves as the county seat for Wilcox County. Home to just over 2,000 people, the town is predominately African America. Though it’s located nearly an hour from the interstate, numerous waterways and forests attract fishers, hunters, and wildlife watchers to the region.

Originally a cotton-based agricultural economy, the region continues to have high levels of unemployment and few economic

drivers. With a median household income of \$33,295 and poverty rate resting at 22.5% according to the 2017 American Community Survey, Camden is one of the brighter spots in Wilcox County, a persistent poverty county consistently ranked one of the poorest counties in America. The county is part of a ten-county region served by the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission (ATRC), a sub-state regional planning and development organization based in Camden. The ten counties have a combined population of around 541,000 spread across in southern Alabama, each with similarly high poverty and unemployment.



Figure 2. Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center is located in downtown Camden, Alabama.

Black Belt Treasures is proving that, despite this dire economic narrative, they can rebuild an economy based on arts, heritage, education and tourism. Disregarding entrenched stereotypes about rural Alabama, they are investing in partnerships, physically reunifying their towns, and restoring their community from within.

Project Goal

Black Belt Treasures Cultural Art's Center seeks to "foster, develop, and promote economic development initiatives aimed at creating jobs and increasing the income of local residents through the marketing of arts, crafts, literature, food products, and other items unique to Alabama's Black Belt and to cultivate and provide arts education in the region". These dual goals, of enhancing the regional economy through arts-related jobs and tourism and of becoming a region-wide venue for arts education, are premised on reviving, preserving, and sharing the culture of the Black Belt locally and nationally. In a region plagued by negative press, the arts center has strived to recreate the public's perceptions through the arts in their region.

Today, the institution serves as a cultural arts anchor. Their campus, in downtown Camden, includes a gallery store, a multi-use education center, artist studio, with future plans for additional maker spaces, art support industry space, and community meeting space. Workshops, demonstration projects, cultural exchange activities, and celebrations



Figure 3. The gallery store features regional artists using a multitude of different mediums and styles.

Are hosted with partners from across the region. An artist incubator program and business development workshops provide training for local artists in managing and growing their sales. And, the organization continues to grow. Black Belt Art House, a recently completed large renovation to their warehouse, includes additional studio space, pottery studios, and a visual arts classroom. Future phases of the renovation will include makerspaces and a multi-purpose event space for more arts, tourist-based and community events.

Black Belt Treasures is one part of a long legacy in the region of using the arts for community development. Long before Black Belt Treasures, Gee's Bend quilters came together first as the Freedom Quilting Bee, and later as the Gee's Bend Quilt Collective, an offshoot of the Civil Rights Movement. Located in Gee's Bend, an isolated community across the river from Camden, the collective sewed quilts to sell to support the community. Quilts produced by the collective are made from colorful bright patchwork in vernacular African American patterns. Today, quilts from this small community are world famous and found in art museums nationwide.

Description

Black Belt Treasures opened their doors in Camden in 2005 as a result of the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission's assessment of tourism possibilities in the region. Though the commission was originally looking to identify historic sites to draw tourists, the assessment recognized a wealth of local craftsman and artists with few opportunities to show or market their arts and crafts. The commission was interested in creating a gallery space that would draw folks off the interstate to experience the culture of the region. They identified a vacant auto dealership near their office downtown that, with renovation, could function as a gallery. Partnering with Ala-Tom Resource Conservation and Development Council and

the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development to create a website, develop business documents, and a sales system, the project went from concept to brick and mortar gallery in just a year.

Today, the organization employs two full time staff and two part time support staff. They are supported by on-contract outreach and arts educators, interns from local universities, volunteers, and a board of directors. They function as a separate nonprofit from the Regional Commission but maintain close ties.

The Artists

In the earliest days of Black Belt Treasures, there was concern that the organization wouldn't find enough local artists and craftsmen to fill the walls of the car dealership-turned gallery. Today, the organization represents over 450 regional artists who sell artwork or teach in one of BBTCAC's art classes. The gallery attracts so much interest that staff are now more selective about which artwork is featured in the gallery, store, and online sales. Initially artists were identified by six individuals who traveled across Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission's ten counties, meeting with local leaders, asking about artists, putting out posters and calls in local newspapers, visiting artists and craftsman in their homes, taking photos, and discussing the new art center they were opening. These early days relied on BBTCAC creating a sense of trust with artists who could share their vision and agree to sell their artwork for a 70% split with the gallery. Many of the earliest artists are still showing their work in BBTCAC's gallery.

Today, Black Belt Treasure's artists are a diverse group. From 12 years old to 96 years old, some artists are self-taught and others formally trained. Established artists blend with promising emerging artists. Mixed-media and digital artists mingle with folk artists who are using the techniques passed down in their family for generations. Some artists sell their work to support their hobbies while many depend on their sales for their

livelihood. While some artists have started their own businesses planning for inventory, accounting, advertising, and taxes, others want BBTCAC to handle the business side of sales while they focus on creating art. BBTCAC serves as a resource for all of their artists, helping emerging artists gain attention and helping established artists grow and increase sales.

Arts Education

In addition to artwork for sale in the gallery, arts education is a large part of Black Belt Treasure's mission – from educating artists to teaching the arts. Their ArtsCultivate curriculum, developed in partnership with University of West Alabama, University of Alabama Center for Economic Development and Small Business Development Center, teaches artists how to market their work and build business skills so that they can increase their income. Artists also teach community members their skills from painting and drawing to basket weaving, pottery, fiber arts, and chair caning workshops open to the public. BBTCAC's Teaching Artists program trains local artists to teach art, including storytelling and heritage crafts, across schools in their region. In addition to increasing arts education in the schools, this program pushes back against stereotypes about Alabama, teaching children



Figure 4. Arts education in schools is a key part of BBTCAC's efforts in the region.

about the area's rich culture.

Funding

Start-up grant funding for Black Belt Treasures came from numerous sources including the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, the Delta Regional Authority, and Alabama Power Foundation. Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission's Revolving Loan Fund provided funding for initial inventory and equipment purchases. Today, Black Belt Treasures funding come from a diverse mix of sources. All art sales are split 70/30 with artists; the thirty percent from sales, while a small fraction, accounts for a significant part of the organization's budget. Guild membership contributions and large and small grants add up. Statewide and regional foundations, like Daniel Foundation of Alabama, Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation, Black Belt Community Foundation, and Community Foundation of South Alabama have all contributed to the organization's programs, operations, and capital improvements. A large portion of the operating budget comes from the Alabama State Education Trust Fund and Department of Tourism which is directed towards operations and arts education. Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission continues to partner with BBTCAC on designated programs and to own the organization's downtown building. The commission views BBTCAC as a success story and a strong arm of their economic development work in the region.

Impact

Black Belt Treasures has had an impact on numerous aspects of the community, from job creation to creating an arts community. For a town with a population of around 2,000, even locals have a hard time believing that Camden attracts people from all around the world. Black Belt Treasures estimates they have around 14,000 visitors a year, from all fifty states and thirty-two countries so far. Capitalizing on tourism has become a major part of the region's growth. BBTCAC has a

symbiotic relationship with other tourist-based businesses including the Gee Bend Quilters who are a ferry-ride away, and tourists traveling the Civil Rights Trail. The art gallery is no longer the only previously-vacant building now contributing to renewal in the area. Several restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and businesses have opened to serve tourists.

Fulfilling their early goal of economic development, BBTCAC artists have earned over a million dollars in profits from sales. They benefit from having a physical space to show their work while also being able to sell across the country via BBTCAC's website. They are also able to develop relationships with other artists across the multi-county area. Many of them also earn income from teaching and hosting workshops. The organization's new Art House will likely increase sales and provide a location for expanded education, art creation, and community gatherings.

Staff and artists involved with BBTCAC are also active in the greater revitalization efforts of the region, sitting on comprehensive planning boards, quality of life meetings, health and wellness panels and beautification committees.

BBTCAC's deep investment in the arts also ensures that many folk-art traditions remain in the regional community and are passed down to the next generation. They credit the immense talent, skill, and generosity of the region for building a space where culture, heritage, and art is preserved not just in galleries and museums but in the heart and soul of their community.

Lessons to Share

Reflecting on nearly fifteen years of partnering with artists, educating the public, and training the next generation, Black Belt Treasures leadership offer up lessons for other communities interested in using the arts and cultural preservation to promote economic development:

- **Look within to develop a movement:** Black Belt Treasures leadership aptly note that outside investment isn't going to radically transform the Alabama Black Belt; change must come from within. They note that no matter how small, or how rural, or how low-resource, communities wanting to improve must look within to identify what makes their place unique and special and cultivate that. Communities should identify what resources of value they possess and link it with what others in the community need. By developing a web of assets, the overall community becomes more self-reliant and resilient.
- **Focus on collaboration, not competition:** Small rural communities succeed when they collaborate with each other rather than compete with each other. Black Belt Treasures leadership believe that the arts become a more powerful tool for development when many artists and arts-based organizations blossom. With this mindset, they do not view their efforts as competitive with other places but rather lifting a whole region full of many thriving communities. They partner with many organizations, individuals, local governments, businesses, educational institutions, and artists toward common goal of improved economic outcomes and preserved and celebrated arts.
- **Invest in learning:** Engaging in arts-based work in rural areas can sometimes feel isolating, lonely, and hard. Learning about what is happening outside of your community is motivating, inspiring, and necessary even when travel budgets are tight. Black Belt Treasures cite attending outside conferences and state and national events as opportunities to make connections with other professionals in the field, learn about what other places are doing, adapt their efforts, and share their own experiences. Through attending events like Creative Place Making Summit, they have gathered ideas and resources on everything from budgeting to outfitting arts education classrooms to cross-training their teachers. Exposure to new cultures, groups, and ideas keeps their work fresh. And, they note that signing up to be a presenter or panelist can sometimes help offset costs of attendance.
- **Invest in teaching:** Arts-based community economic development rests just as much on education as it does on economic growth: education of the community about the benefits of an arts-based approach and arts education to ensure arts and craft-based heritage is continued. Black Belt Treasures staff engage local residents, the business community, local government officials, and educators on the importance of the arts for the region, emphasizing the ways that the arts can contribute to many positive outcomes across the region. The organization as a whole also invests heavily in arts-based education in part to ensure that the handicraft traditions of the area are passed down to the next generation. Treasuring and fostering the customs of residents and providing space and materials for inter-generational skills transfer ensures the region continues to prosper from the arts.



Figure 5. Arts education is infused with lessons about regional artists, craftsman, and the history of their craftsmanship in the region.

Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center demonstrates the New Ruralism qualities of being creative, grassroots-driven, and dedicated to local investment. Their efforts have proven that, no matter how small

or how rural, arts and culture are a dynamic tool for community revitalization.



Figure 6. Teaching regional crafts, like basket weaving, ensures these skills remain a part of the community for future generations.



Figure 7. Artist Rita Williams displays her painting as a member of the BBTAC.

Additional Information

For additional information about the Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center visit: <http://www.blackbelttreasures.com/>.

For questions, contact: info@blackbelttreasures.com.

Interviewee:

Sulynn Creswell, Executive Director, Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center

Kristin Law, Art Programs and Marketing Director, Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center

Recommended Citation

Whittaker, Jennifer. 2019. 'Black Belt Treasures Cultural Arts Center: Investing in the Arts for Economic Development.' In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 6 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>

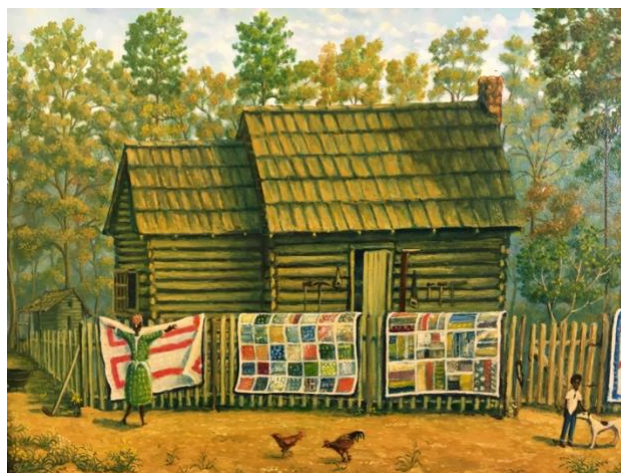


Figure 8. Artist Stephen James from Monroe County uses oil paints to depict historic scenes from the region.



American Planning Association
**Small Town and
Rural Planning Division**



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Northern New England Chapter

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Local Foods Plymouth Plymouth, N.H.

Project Goal

The goals of Local Foods Plymouth are to reduce the miles that food travels from farm to plate, increase avenues for farmers and growers in the Plymouth area to sell their products locally, and encourage people in the Plymouth area to purchase food from local farms by making it easy, fun and reliable.

Description

Local Foods Plymouth is a project that aims to connect local farmers and area residents in order to support local agriculture and communities. They are an online marketplace that offers food products from area farmers and growers once a week. Buyers purchase these foods, pay online, and then pick up their food at a central location later that week. By providing an online outlet for locally made or grown products for purchase, it enables easier access to fresh and local foods. They encourage community members to become more aware of and to sustain their local food providers. LFP is made up of a committee and volunteers.

Local Foods Plymouth was created collaboratively by D Acres Organic Farm & Educational Homestead and the Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative (PAREI). The project was conceived in December 2005 and was launched on June 22, 2006. USDA Rural Development and the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food granted startup funding for the project. The two grants that funded the project totaled \$4495.



The funds were split between D Acres and PAREI for staff time. Both of them have also donated labor.

They wanted to start off small with a select buyer base so that they could work out any kinks or problems with their buying website. At first LFP did not pay for any advertising, but they did recruit buyers using three methods:

- D Acres and PAREI spread the word about the project within their own networks.
- Local Foods Plymouth talked about the program by telling individuals and giving presentations, to people who were members or supporters of D Acres and PAREI.
- They created a tri-fold brochure and business cards, which they set up at their presentations at the pickup/drop-off table at the market.



Lessons to Share

The first season of LFP went exceptionally well and the public loved the project. At first the website had a fair number of glitches, but they were all smoothed out by week 4. The project can succeed only if there is a significant number of people and organizations that are willing to take on the various roles involved in the project.

LFP began with seven advertisers, which created advertising dollars that could amount to a significant portion of the revenue needed to pay for the administrative costs of the program. When getting advertisers determine how much your project wants to earn from advertising, how many advertisers you think you can get, and how much those advertisers are willing to pay. They started off small at first with a \$50 fee for advertisers in order to make it accessible for local organizations.



A project like this is highly fundable by using words such as local agriculture, food security, community and rural development, small enterprise, etc. It is important to try to find somebody with experience in grant writing, which many communities have. For the first year LFP did not charge a handling fee, but it is a good option for taking a cut because it shows that it is an additional fee for program management. In order to give their farmers as much of the income as possible, they gave them everything they received after PayPal took its cut. They believe that handling fees are a good way to generate income and to provide incentives for the administrators of the program to advertise the program effectively. A buyer buy-in fee is another option, which would charge a base membership fee for people to participate.

LFP planned from the start to run concurrently with the Plymouth Farmers Market at their location. They sent out Farmer info Sheets and Farmer Applications to all the farmers at the market and within a 30-mile radius. They explained the project and every farmer was excited to participate. One farmer chose not to participate after the first week because they had a relationship with a restaurant that took everything that they produced. If a farmer works with Local Foods Plymouth it is not exclusive.

Local Foods Plymouth has gone from having 20 members to now having about 40-50 members. They have done this by expanding their growing season so that they offer local foods all year. They have also had to think outside of the box, which has led to the creation of far-desk. Farm-desk allows employees of schools, hospitals, businesses, etc. to order to food online, and then on Friday it is dropped off to them at their workplace. This has led to a large increase in members and has boosted up the project considerably.

LFP almost had to close their doors in 2010, but between farm-desk and allowing people to SNAPs they have grown stronger than ever. The SNAP program makes it so that people can buy local foods with food stamps and get double the amount of credit by doing so.

LFP has found it very important to have a good relationship with the community. They rely on collaborating and partnering with local businesses and organizations. LFP also goes along with Plymouth's master plan. In the Vision for Plymouth's Future section of the master plan they list many goals that are supported by Local Foods Plymouth. One goal is a healthy population, supported by food supply supplemented by local agricultural products. Another is a vibrant sense of community, fostered by "Community activities and events that regularly celebrate Plymouth and its residents." They vision an economic well being of local residents, based upon "recognition of local agriculture businesses in maintaining the town's economic diversity and rural character." LFP is a project that helps to achieve this vision for Plymouth's future. They encourage feedback from both the farmers and members, which allows them to improve.



Putting Healthy Food
Within Reach



Additional Information

For additional information about Local Foods Plymouth visit: www.localfoodsplymouth.org

Mailing Address:
PO Box 753
Plymouth, NH 03264
Phone: 603-536-5030

Recommended Citation

'Local Foods Plymouth: Plymouth, NH' In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 3 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Monadnock at Home

Jaffrey, N.H.



Project Goal

The Monadnock at Home project has the purpose to give people over the age of 62 both the practical means and the confidence to live their lives to the fullest while staying in their own home.

Description

Monadnock at Home is a non-profit member-based organization that enables seniors over 62 and mostly in the middle income bracket to stay at home. They have joined the Village-to-Village Network, whose mission is to help communities establish and effectively manage aging in community organizations initiated and inspired by their members. Although they are a member of the Network-to-Network Village, they started before the network was setup, and they continue to operate independently. They engage the community mostly by word of mouth because advertising has proven to be ineffective for them. They also contacted their local chamber of commerce.

The services they provide include convenient one-call access to all services, transportation to appointments and once-a-week grocery shopping, help with simple maintenance or basic technical/electronics problems, telephone check-ins if desired, social and educational opportunities, volunteer opportunities, and peace of mind for the individual and their family.

Monadnock at Home was started with some grants, but mainly by initial funding from the board. Now about 20% of their budget comes from donations from the board. The members of this organization pay a membership fee for the at home services that they offer. In the five years since Monadnock at Home was started, they have doubled the members they started with – now at about 130.

Monadnock at Home has an Executive Director and Assistant Director. They also have a Board and Advisory Committee of 30 people, and are supported by about a dozen volunteers. Both members and non-members have opportunities to volunteer. The Executive Director knows their members and facilitates the resources needed when they request them. Some towns have a Town Coordinator who helps recruit volunteers, and when requested keeps in touch with the members of the town. This creates opportunities and strengthens the relationship with the community.

Lessons to Share

Monadnock at Home has faced some challenges over the past five years. Compared to other examples in the Village-to-Village Network they are in a rural state with a low population density. Their members are spread out further, which creates transportation issues. Lack of funding has

also been an issue. Another issue they face is getting independent strong-minded elderly people to become members of their organization. Many times they find that these people won't admit that they need help, and are unwilling to reach out for help.

When getting started on a similar project it would be important to contact the Village-to-Village Network. They provide necessary resources needed to start up. Visit their website to access the Village 101 Toolkit, which includes an introduction, overview of the village model, and exploratory phase information. That is all available for free on their website and there is also development phase information that is only available to members of the network.

Moving forward Monadnock at Home hopes to become better known and to grow as an organization. They hope they will work with hospitals more, and be contacted by the medical centers when patients are treated or released who could benefit from Monadnock at Home's services. They have seen some resistance with their project over the years, primarily from commercial retirement communities who would prefer the elderly join their community rather than become a member of Monadnock at Home. If the elderly are able to stay at home, they won't be moving to these retirement communities.

Additional Information

For additional information about Monadnock at Home visit:

<http://www.monadnockathome.org>

Mailing Address:

PO Box 422

Jaffrey, NH 03452

Phone: 603-371-0809

Recommended Citation

'Monadnock at Home: Jaffrey, NH' In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 2 pgs.

Available online at:

<https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative

Plymouth, N.H.



Project Goal

Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative's (PAREI) Energy Raiser project has the goal to help members of communities reduce and produce energy.

Description

The Energy Raiser is a project where volunteers from the community come together to install a solar thermal renewable energy system on a hosts' home, which make hot water from the sun's rays. On average this saves the burning of 200 gallons of oil or its electrical equivalent per year. Since 2005 PAREI has hosted 35 Energy Raisers in 11 towns around Plymouth, NH. Energy Raisers have many benefits that include making solar energy more accessible to the average person, while also teaching homeowners about the inner working and benefits of solar technology. They reduce the cost of installation for low and middle-income families since they are performed by a group of volunteers. All the homeowners have to pay for is the equipment. It is also great for educating and motivating others on what could be done on their own homes. It exposes local trades people of communities to solar installations, which could allow them to offer solar installation as one of their services. They strengthen communities by giving people the opportunity to work towards tangible goals that benefit the local economy and environment.

The first step of the Energy Raisers project is a solar site visit. A member from PAREI determines the feasibility of using a solar energy system on that site. They also discuss with the homeowner where the solar collector should be mounted, along with the best route for the pipes, and what size collector is right for that particular home. They also determine what materials that are currently being used in the system can be reused. Once the site is determined feasible the Energy Raiser coordinator meets again to discuss what will happen on the day of the energy raiser, along with what should be done prior for setup.



The homeowner then hosts a setup night where the schematic is finalized, the parts list is reviewed, and the tasks are determined for the team leaders. The day of the Energy Raiser a volunteer meeting is held for introduction, house keeping items, overall goals, and to determine teams for the project.

Energy Raiser Projects are based on the concept of paying it forward. Before you can host your own Energy Raiser where a solar installation is performed on your house, you have to volunteer at least three times. Then after you host you pay it forward. This has created a constant cycle of old/new volunteers. In the end knowledge is shared, cost is reduced, and access is gained.

Moving forward PAREI will be maintaining these systems that they set up, and learning to be good stewards. They rely on word to mouth for continued projects and installations.



At the time that PAREI started the government was looking for organizations like them who they could provide funding for. They called the Regional Department of Energy and were told about an initiative that was started under the Clinton Era. They were given a \$35,000 grant as part of the U.S. Department of Energy's Million Solar Roofs Initiative. This initiative's purpose was to install solar energy systems in one million U.S. buildings by the year 2010. They have also received government support through the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, which was established through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning was excited about the start up of this organization because they believed not enough was going on locally or statewide. They saw PAREI as a group that they could point to as an example for future communities.

Moving forward PAREI will be maintaining these systems that they set up, and learning to be good stewards. They rely on word to mouth.

Lessons to Share

Starting small and then adding on worked well for PAREI. They believe that you should plan for your energy future like you would for your financial future. It was important for them to create a market before the usual market indicators told them to. They made an effort to not be controversial. They decided to work with the people who wanted the help and information, and then allow them to talk and convince their friends to join. They believe in the saying, "When the people lead the leaders will follow." They believe that it was crucial at the start to stay away from controversy.

The Energy Raiser projects are a success because they are bringing the community together to build solar thermal energy renewable systems, while also teaching people

the ways to reduce and produce energy. The project is growing in the number of volunteers and people are paying it forward.

At the start it was important to identify the needs of the community through info sessions. They also held an energy exchange for members, which was attended by 40 people. It was important that the community had enthusiasm and desire for information on how they could conserve energy, how they could reduce consumption, and how they could learn about renewable energy.



Additional Information

For additional information about Plymouth Area Renewal Energy Initiative visit: plymouthenergy.org

Mailing Address:
PO Box 753
Plymouth, NH 03264
Phone: 603-536-5030

Recommended Citation

'Plymouth Area Renewable Energy Initiative' In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 3 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Port Clyde Fresh Catch

Port Clyde, ME

Project Goal

Port Clyde Fresh Catch provides fresh fish and Maine shrimp harvested from the Gulf of Maine waters using environmentally conscious fishing methods. Port Clyde Fresh Catch guarantees 100% traceability that starts at harvest and continues through packaging at the Port Clyde based HACCP-certified processing facility.

Description

The village of Port Clyde, Maine is a small fishing village located in Knox County, in the town of St. George. Port Clyde, at the tip of the St. George Peninsula, is all about fishing for its year-round population. The fishing industry in the community goes back 200 years. Port Clyde's location at the confluence of Muscongus and Penobscot Bays provides access to number of fishing grounds, for shrimp, haddock, cod, flounder, Pollock and hake. Today, as the last remaining fishing fleet between Portland and the Canadian Border, about a dozen ground fishing vessels comprise the Port Clyde fleet. The Port Clyde Fresh Catch brand, and Community Supported Fishery (CSF) model, was developed by the fishermen to preserve their heritage, their community and the resources they depend on for their livelihood. The Port Clyde Fresh Catch CSF was the first one in the country, taking the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and adapting it to the fishing industry.



The CSF provides customers, restaurants and other seafood retailers with traceable fresh seafood. Every step of the path from Maine waters to the plate is documented. It is a return to past traditions, with wild, fresh seafood that can be traced to its source. This approach, and its traditions, helps protect healthy fisheries and the communities that depend on them.

Lessons to Share

Look for opportunities and alternatives when facing a problem. Port Clyde Fresh Catch was born in crisis. Overfishing and the traditional auction house market for seafood sales were threatening the fishermen's livelihood. Rather than give up, the fishermen got together and did something radical. Rather than quit, they looked for alternatives. After one of the fishermen heard a talk about community-supported agriculture, the group decided to try a similar approach with their seafood, eliminating the middleman, processing their seafood themselves, and then selling directly to consumers. They started out selling Maine shrimp to members of a local church in nearby Rockland.

Doing things differently has helped the Port Clyde fishermen distinguish themselves while also serving their livelihood. They take an environmentally proactive approach to their

work. For example, they redesigned their nets to permit younger fish to escape. They also diversified to catch more species of fish, which allows them to receive a price more in line with their actual costs.

Thinking creatively and responding to market opportunities also helps CSF's survive. Port Clyde Fresh Catch offers recipes and a cookbook to help customers prepare and enjoy their fresh seafood. Gift cards are available to provide buying options. And they sell general merchandise (i.e. t-shirts) to help promote the Fresh Catch brand.

Additional Information

For additional information about Port Clyde Fresh Catch, visit:
www.portclydefreshcatch.com

Mailing Address:
18 Lobster Pound Road
Port Clyde, ME 04855
Phone: 207-372-1055

Recommended Citation

'Port Clyde Fresh Catch: Port Clyde ME'. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 2 pgs. Available online at:
<https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network: Northern New Hampshire

Project Goal

WREN is, "Dedicated to improving lives and livelihoods, WREN's mission is to inspire, create and connect through economic, educational, personal and community development."

Description

The Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network (WREN) is a membership-driven organization for makers, artists, tinkerers, producers, entrepreneurs and DIY'ers that inspires possibilities, creates opportunities and builds connections through community. Their work connects people with one another, provides access to resources that many couldn't afford on their own, offers learning opportunities including entrepreneurial business training and technical assistance, and creates and supports markets for entrepreneurs. WREN's members benefit from and support WREN's many initiatives and resources that include Local Works, the Gallery at WREN, the Local Works Farmers Market and Outdoor Marketplace, their WINGS program, and their office incubator office program and their public access technology center.

WREN began in 1984 as an 8-month training and support program to assist 12 very low-income women. Three women wanted to help empower other women so that they could improve their own lives and livelihoods. The goal was to help them achieve their dreams of business ownership. Before WREN the only opportunities of jobs for women in similar situations were often minimum wage jobs. This program was proven to be a success when, by spring of 1995, the WREN pioneers were operating

their own enterprises. Due to that success, the pioneers began building a WREN Community, which offers many benefits for its members. WREN has grown to have nearly 1400 members of both men and women, with almost half of those members currently operating their own business. They have assisted more than 1850 business owners over their 20-year history. WREN was first started with a small grant. They are a unique example of a non-profit organization because they generate 60% of their income and only get 40% from grants. They are working on becoming as self-sustainable as a non-profit organization as possible.

The possibilities for WREN moving forward are endless. They are opening a maker studio in Berlin in spring 2015, which will replicate WREN's model for economic development in another community. WREN is great for communities who have seen an economic decline, such as Berlin, New Hampshire, after its mills closed down. The maker studio will be open to members and the public, and will include public access to free technology space, with comfortable seating, laptops, and free Wi-Fi. The members will have access to new technology such as 3D printers, laser cutters, and CNC machines to further the ability to make and create in the Rapid Prototyping Studio. It will also include an art and fiber studio, a media studio, a large classroom, and a clay studio. These studios will have classes and teachers to explain the safety and use of the materials.

Lessons to Share

WREN provides many benefits to the community through their Local Works store, the Gallery at WREN, Local Works Farmers Market and Outdoor Marketplace, their Wings Program, and their incubator office program and public access technology center. One of their great successes is giving people the opportunity to learn about how to start a business. WREN has brought the

community together, and has given the community members a common place to go. WREN's local works marketplace is a retail store that features the products of nearly 300 vendors. This allows their members a market access point to sell their products. The gallery at WREN displays works of a wide variety of artists, and usually attracts hundreds of people. They display work of both beginners and experienced artists. This has become a main attraction in the town of Bethlehem. Every month they place a new exhibit on display, which has been a huge hit.

WREN has started a Local Works Farmers' Market, which provides local farmers, growers, artisans and crafters a place where they can come together. They provide the community with high quality, fresh produce and crafted products. It takes place in an easy accessible area and creates and place where the community can shop and get the community feel. WREN offers a Wings Program that is for girls and boys ages 8-14. Their incubator office program is great for for start up businesses. It includes an all-inclusive cheap space with utilities, Internet, and access to all of WREN's spaces. That space is often used by the start up businesses until they grow to large. White Mountain Science, Inc. (WMSI) is one example of business using the incubator space. They share their science technology teaching skills and hands on work in 3D printer technology with local youth. They encourage art, engineering, and math education through fun interactive summer camps, workshops, and classes.

WREN has also faced some challenges and adversity throughout its history. For the most part the community is very supportive of the work that they do. However, there have been some unsupportive people. When WREN asked the town for money there were people who didn't believe that a non-profit organization should do that. Another problem they face is that most of their members are older, and they have had trouble attracting younger people. This has a lot to do with the demographic of the area, since there is a large older population. WREN has found that most of their members are second-tier entrepreneurs, meaning that they do it on the side to make extra money along with their other career. This could be due to the fact that WREN is located in a rural region lacking exposure and access to a large consumer base.

Additional Information

For additional information: <https://wrenworks.org/>

Snail Mail Address:
P.O. Box 331
Bethlehem, NH 03574
Email: wrencentral@gmail.com

WREN Central
22 Park Ave
Bethlehem, NH 03574
Phone: 603-869-9736
Fax: 603-869-9738
Office Hours: Monday thru Friday, 9am – 5pm
Email: wrencentral@gmail.com

Local Works Marketplace
2011 Main St
Bethlehem, NH 03574
Phone: 603-869-3100
Hours: Open daily, 10am-5pm

The Gallery at WREN
2013 Main St
Bethlehem, NH 03574
Email: gallerywren@gmail.com
Hours: Open daily, 10am-5pm

WREN in Berlin
117 Main St
Berlin, NH 03570
Phone: 603-752-0060
Email: lauralocalworks@gmail.com

Recommended Citation

'Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network: Northern New Hampshire. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 2 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Farm to Plate: Vermont



Project Goal

Farm to Plate is Vermont's food system plan being implemented statewide by the 350+ member organizations of the Farm to Plate Network to increase economic development and jobs in the farm and food sector and improve access to healthy local food for all Vermonters.

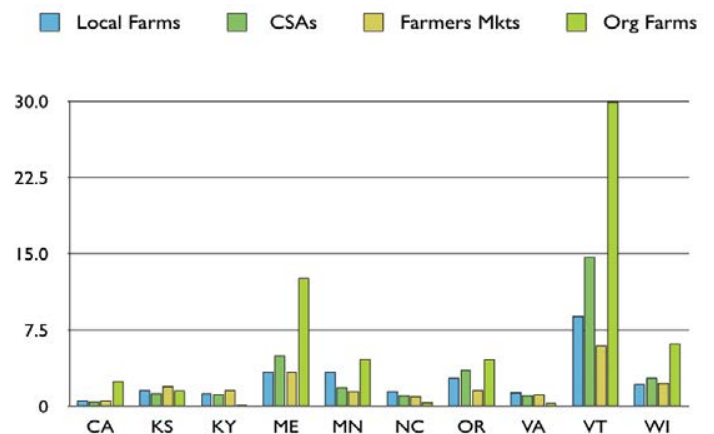
Description

The Vermont Farm to Plate Initiative is a multi-faceted approach to help create a more-balanced food system by addressing the “how”, the “where” and the environmental impacts of food production, the profitability of food production, and enabling all Vermonters to access local food. The explosion of the local food movement led to the Farm to Plate Initiative being set into motion in the spring of 2009 by the Vermont legislature with the creation of the Farm to Plate Investment Program. At the legislature's direction, the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, in consultation with the Sustainable Agriculture Council and other stakeholders, was given the task of developing of 10-year Strategic Plan to strengthen Vermont's food system.

The resulting Strategic Plan was a comprehensive analysis of Vermont's food system and “crosscutting” issues such as education, workforce development and technical assistance and business planning, among others, all of which impact food systems as a whole. It was developed with effort and

from over 1,200 Vermonters. In order to implement the Strategic Plan, 25 goals were identified and for each goal, accompanying strategies and actions were also identified. For each goal, indicators were identified in order to measure, gauge and track progress. Since 2011, an annual report on the progress Vermont is making towards implementing the 25 Farm to Plate goals has been prepared for the Vermont Legislature which highlights the progress made and challenges ahead.

The Strategic Plan outlines Vermont's food system goals and guides the Farm to Plate Network's work to implement the plan's goals. The Network is made up of over 350



State Number Per Capita for Vermont and selected states for Local Farms, Community Supported Agriculture, Farmers Markets, And Organic Farms in 2008. Sources: produced for vtrural.org by Stuart Rosenfeld

<http://www.sustainabletable.org> and USDA Economic Research Service, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/organic/>

organizations including farm and food system businesses, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, funders, educational institutions and community groups all working together to collaborate and align activities. The Farm to Plate Network is largely self-governed, but receives overall guidance from a steering committee comprised of the Vermont Secretary of Agriculture, the Vermont Secretary of Commerce, individuals representing the Vermont Food Funders Network and the Sustainable Agriculture Council, as well as Network group chairs.

The Vermont Food Atlas is a mapping tool that is used as a supplement to the Farm to Plate Initiative and augments the work of the Farm to Plate Network. It is designed to provide a “bird’s eye” view of education, financing and technical assistance resources for farmers and food businesses, as well as build connections between distributors, processing centers, farmers and all other entities involved in Vermont’s food system.

The Farm to Plate Network model to implement the Strategic Plan uses the Collective Impact framework, first defined by John Kania and Mark Kramer in the Stanford Social Innovation Review. They also learned a lot about networks from the coordinators of RE-AMP, a collection of over 150 organizations across eight Midwestern states working on climate change and energy policy. Generally speaking, Collective Impact is a commitment from a collection of relevant and important actors from a broad range of sectors to a common agenda to help solve a specific social problem. There are five conditions that, when combined, form the Collective Impact framework: (1) a common agenda; (2) shared measurements; (3) mutually reinforcing activities; (4) continuous communication, and: (5) a backbone organization.

The Farm to Plate Initiative is effectively structured based on the five conditions of the

Collective Impact framework. The Farm to Plate Strategic plan outlines the common agenda of the program, while the goals, strategies and performance measures form the shared measurements. The work of the Farm to Plate Network provides opportunities for mutually reinforcing activities and their implementation (to improve coordination, foster collaboration, and decrease duplication), while the Vermont Food System Atlas and Farm to Plate website, along with face-to-face meetings and events enable communication to continuously flow between partners and stakeholders. Rounding out the five conditions of Collective Impact is the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, which functions as the Farm to Plate Network’s backbone organization.

Initially, the Farm to Plate Initiative was funded with \$100,000 in ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009)-State Stimulus Funds and \$114,000 in leveraged funds. Early funders included: the Vermont Legislature; the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets; the Vermont Community Foundation; the High Meadows Fund; the John Merck Fund; the Jane B. Cook 1983 Charitable Trust; and anonymous donors. In subsequent years, the Farm to Plate Initiative received funding from various sources, with considerable funding from private foundations such as the Henry P. Kendall Foundation (over 60% of program funding for both July 2012 through November 2013 and FY2014) and the State of Vermont. Additional program funding is obtained through corporate contributions.

“Vermont’s Farm to Plate is THE model of every other state’s process, at least in New England. I think nationally it is a model as well.”

Mark Lapping, Principal Investigator, Maine Food Strategy and Distinguished Professor, University of Southern Maine.

Lessons to Share

Each year, an annual report has been published for the Vermont Farm to Plate Initiative, highlighting the program's milestones, successes, and investments in the state's food network as well as recommendations for the Initiative's next steps. The annual report is a condensed and polished overview that is inviting to the reader, conveys success easily, can be used in-whole or in-part to convey a message to a specific audience (a good press piece!), and demonstrates the importance of Vermont's food system as an economic driver. In short, documenting and celebrating successes while leveraging successes to achieve future results is critical to securing future funding and stakeholder participation, and the Farm to Plate annual reports are a good example of doing so successfully.

To date, the Farm to Plate Initiative has celebrated a number of successes but two stand out in particular: (1) the creation of a robust Farm to Plate Network which allows for organizations to share information, collaborate on projects and pool resources; and (2) members of the Network are focusing on the goals set out in the Strategic Plan and the distribution of focus on particular goals is relatively balanced, meaning work is being done to achieve all 25 goals.

In the five years since its creation, the Farm to Plate Network has been successful in its mission, due in part to its structure. Given the scope and range of issues working to be addresses across the food system, and the many sectors, organization types and perspectives involved, the Collective Impact framework has, thus-far, proven to be an innovative and effective solution. No one organization could strengthen Vermont's state food network alone, and the unique, yet shared, vision of all organizations that are part of the Farm to Plate Network have a synergist effect on each other's work and their influence on a state-wide scale.

Data from the 2014 Annual Report illustrates the economic impact and success of the effort:

- While total Vermont manufacturing shed jobs from 2002-2013, food manufacturing businesses increased by 77% and jobs increased 36%—the highest growth rates in New England!
- 28% of Vermont farms engage in direct sales – 6th in the nation
- Direct Sales via farmers' markets, CSAs, and farm stands increased 182.4% from 1997 to 2012.

One of many of the products of task forces, a municipal guide to ***Sustaining Agriculture*** was updated via a collective effort:

"A series of agricultural land use planning modules are now available as a resource for land use planners on such topics as farmland conservation, farm and property taxes, commercial composting, agritourism, and food system planning. Municipal officials, local and regional planning commissions, and agriculture advocates will be able to use the modules to guide land use planning for farmland, including ways to update zoning regulations that can sustain and spark more agricultural economic activity in Vermont communities..."

...The agricultural land use planning guide has been broken into five modules and each can be accessed and downloaded from the Farm to Plate website at: <http://bit.ly/VTagLandGuide>."

The use of the Farm to Plate Initiative's shared measurement framework, combined with Result-based Accountability, lends itself well to the program's structure and meeting the goals set out in the Strategic Plan. Results-based accountability distinguishes between results for whole populations (population indicators) and results for particular programs, organizations or services (performance measurements), which means that specific organizations are responsible for the programs/services they administer, but they are not responsible for results of whole populations. Population indicators are influenced by the collective impact of the whole. Results-based Accountability helps to manage expectations of both the Farm to Plate Network as a whole and of individual organizations, as well as track progress at the appropriate scale.

Additional Information

For additional information about Vermont Farm to Place visit:
<http://www.vtfarmtoplate.com>

Recommended Citation

'Vermont Farm to Plate'. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 3 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Vital Communities' Smart Commute Program

King Arthur Flour, Norwich, VT

Project Goal

To reduce commuter vehicle fuel use by developing programs that are tailored to each worksite and its commuter population.

Description

The Smart Commute Program is a workplace trip reduction program that consults major employers on opportunities to get employees carpooling, biking, walking, telecommuting, and using public transit.

Like many businesses located in rural town centers, Upper Valley businesses have employees who commute incredibly long distances. These commutes are primarily done by employees driving themselves in a personal car without any other occupants.

The goal of the Smart Commute program is to work with businesses to develop strategies that will incentivize employees to change their commuting habits.

The Smart Commute program is based on a systematic Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) process. This process identifies and uncovers barriers, and then designs ways to motivate new or alternative behaviors. The CBSM process is developed through a multi-step strategy incorporated within the Smart Commute Program. The steps involved are: administering a survey that tracks changes in driver behavior and preferences over time, crafting a Sustainable Commuting Plan, providing consulting time with each employer to discuss the plan and specific strategies for reducing



single occupant driver time, and creating a promotional campaign that focuses on gaining commitments from employees to try new ways of getting to work.

King Arthur Flour (KAF), located in the rural community of Norwich VT, embraced the Smart Commute program and its incentive-based approach. KAF worked very closely with Vital Communities to develop a strategic approach to improve the driving habits of its employees. Based on the results from CBSM framework, the specific strategies tailored for KAF were: the creation of a commuter benefit program that included a \$3/day carpool incentive, preferential carpool parking, an improved bus shelter, an electric vehicle charging station, and an employee bike-share program (employees can check out bikes for short-term use).

The program was developed and implemented through a mixture of funding sources and agencies, including an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG), Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), the High Meadows Fund, and support from employers. Agencies involved in the implantation of the program were Vital Communities with support from the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, Resource Systems Group, and Nomad Communications.

Lessons to Share

The King Arthur Flour Smart Commute Program has been a resounding success. It proved that commuter fuel use reduction programs can achieve significant energy savings in rural areas and small towns.

Many aspects of the program for KAF have proven to be highly effective. One of the most effective aspects of the Smart Commute Program is developing strategies only after thorough initial research on existing conditions of the business have been done. This research must include barriers to commuting options, and then determining what incentives and programs will appeal to employees based on these barriers. Marketing these strategies must reflect the target community.

“If someone does not find environmental messages appealing, don’t offer him a “green” commute benefit.” - Aaron Brown, Transportation Project Manager with Vital Communities

In the case of KAF, the incentive of \$3 a day for carpooling, combined with preferential parking for carpool users, proved successful. Within one years’ time, carpooling as a primary travel choice increased almost 23%, while transit and biking/walking increased by 2-3% respectively.

One of the key challenges involved with developing the Smart Commute Program is to not overwhelm the employer being consulted. When analyzing the results of surveys and the sustainable commuting plan, it may seem easy to provide many, many strategies for the business to use. It is important to limit these strategies to the top 3-5 choices that will be highly effective. When too many strategies are discussed, employees may find themselves overwhelmed, and the effectiveness of the program will be diminished.

Another challenge associated with the program is achieving high increases in biking and walking as a primary mode of transportation. This is challenging because of the engrained housing patterns of many rural communities. This was especially true for KAF. Average commute distances are extremely high in New Hampshire and Vermont, with many employees commuting over 30 miles per day. Most people are not willing to bike or walk that far for their commute. These findings show that transportation programs are intimately tied with land use policy.

The success of the Smart Commute Program for businesses has proven to be so successful that Vital Communities developed a program directed toward the town level. This will involve a very similar process as the business program, but will have the benefit of potentially reaching a much broader audience.



King Arthur Flour electric vehicle charging station

For additional information, contact:

Aaron Brown, Vital Communities
uvtma@vitalcommunities.org
195 North Main St
White River Junction, VT 05001
802-291-9107

King Arthur Flour
135 US-5, Norwich, VT 05055
802-649-3361

Recommended Citation

‘Vital Communities’ Smart Commute Program: King Arthur Flour, VT’. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 2 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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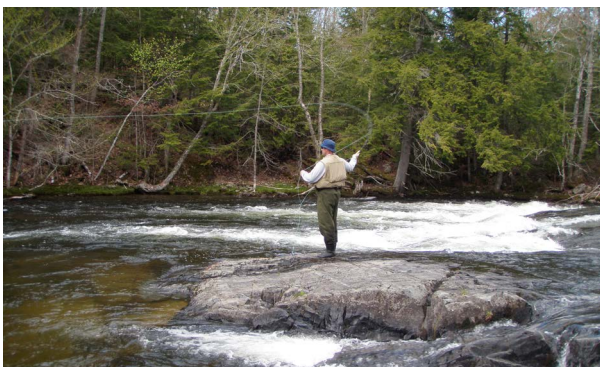
Downeast Lakes Land Trust: Great Lake Stream, ME

Project Goal

Downeast Lakes Land Trust (DLLT) protects the region's lakeshores, improves fish and wildlife habitats, provides public recreation opportunities, offers educational programs, and supports forest and water related jobs.

Description

DLLT was founded in 2001 by the residents of Grand Lake Stream, Maine following grassroots conservation efforts in response to land sales and development plans in the area. Grand Lake Stream, in the heart of the Downeast Lakes region, has long been a destination for outdoor recreation, with exceptional forests, lakes, streams, rivers, and wildlife. The local economy is highly dependent upon these natural resources, which provide livelihoods for local craftsmen, guides, sporting camp owners and employees, and forest industry workers. DLLT works to conserve and manage the region's extraordinary natural resources, for current and future generations, to ensure economic opportunities, recreation access, and environmental stewardship.



In its early days, DLLT, with assistance from the New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) and the Northern Forest Alliance, negotiated an option with Wagner Timberlands to purchase 27,080 acres near Grand Lake Stream around West Grand and Fourth Machias Lakes. DLLT joined forces with NEFF for fundraising, creating the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership.

DLLT's work to conserve the Grand Lake Stream and the Downeast Lakes region has always included an interest in maintaining and creating economic opportunities. DLLT's conservation work supports guides and sporting camps by ensuring the natural resources they depend on for their livelihoods are available. DLLT also has community interests in mind when carrying out its work, ensuring that community growth is accommodated in balance with conservation.

As of today, DLLT has protected 370,000 acres of the forests, wildlife habitats, watersheds, and lakeshores in Grand Lake Stream and the Downeast Lakes Region, helping to sustain the region's economy and spectacular natural environment. DLLT manages the 33,708 acre Farm Cove Community Forest for wildlife habitat, forest products, and public recreation; it includes 71 miles of lakeshore. DLLT, as part of its West Grand Lake Community Forest Project, is now working to purchase a 21,870 acre parcel that surrounds the village of Grand Lake Stream

and is adjacent to DLLT's Farm Cove Community Forest.

Lessons to Share

Early on DLLT realized that advocacy and petitions were not going to be sufficient for protecting the region's valuable natural resources. Buying and preserving land was the only way to ensure integrity of, and access to, the resources that are vital to the local economy. Large-scale fundraising was a challenge in the early days so DLLT formed a partnership with the New England Forestry Foundation, creating the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership. The partnership was a way to leverage individual conservation projects to achieve larger conservation goals. Ultimately, the Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership lands combined with, and connected, more than 1.4 million acres of conservation land.

Considering, and reaching out to, all sectors has been an important fundraising strategy from the beginning. To achieve the broadest "reach," DLLT made a decision to be "apolitical" when issues arise, to allow all constituents to feel comfortable supporting and being a part of DLLT's work.

Building trust has taken time and has been at the core of DLLT's work from the start. In the beginning, relationship building was key. Initial local concerns were that the land trust would restrict public access and manage land in a way that was detrimental to the community. It took time to demonstrate that DLLT was a community based land trust, and that community interests mattered. Since it began, DLLT has been sensitive to, and supportive of, the economic needs of the community. Currently, the West Grand Lake Community Forest Project includes a provision to give a certain number of lots to the town, for the town to use as they choose (e.g. local housing, transfer station, cemetery). A third-party grant of \$650,000 will also be provided for the development of these lots.

Carrying out the DLLT work relies on a strong volunteer effort. With a paid staff of 4, capacity building efforts come from a volunteer structure with committees. In addition, the 9 member board is also very active; board members (who are local residents or have multi-generational ties to the area) are involved with day-to-day operations of the organization.

Paying for day to day operations can be a challenge for conservation organizations who often raise dollars for conservation projects and endowments successfully, but struggle to find general operating funds. To address this, DLLT now makes ongoing stewardship endowment funding part of any conservation campaign; these dollars are included as a percentage in the campaign budget goal.

Unlike many land trusts, DLLT is not a membership organization. Instead of spending dollars on recruiting and supporting members, DLLT relies on "supporters" for a base, saving the costs associated with managing a membership base.

DLLT has grown its education programming, in the community and in the schools, as a way to connect people with the organization. "Education" has become a much larger component of the organization than originally envisioned. It is a way to build support for conservation and the organization.



And finally, over the years DLLT has explored innovative fundraising ideas. Working with the California Compliance Market program, which purchases carbon credits to sell to industries that need carbon offset credits, DLLT is using its fee-owned land for carbon offset credits, selling the credits to raise dollars for the organization. DLLT is the first out-of-state forest carbon compliance project for the California program. DLLT agrees to maintain the required amount of forest land to support the carbon offset for 100 years. Since DLLT also has an active timber program on its lands that helps support the organization, it must balance the carbon offset requirements with its forest management program. Currently, DLLT is harvesting about the same amount of timber with the carbon offset requirement as it would without it, so the two programs are successfully balanced.

Additional Information

For additional information about Downeast Lakes Land Trust: www.downeastlakes.org.

Mailing Address:

4 Water Street.

Grant Lake Stream, ME 04668

207-796-2100

Recommended Citation

'Downeast Lakes Land Trust: Great Lake Stream, ME'. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 3 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Lubec Community Outreach Center: Lubec, ME

Project Goal

The goals of the Lubec Community Outreach Center are to identify, develop and implement effective, sustainable programs that are responsive to the strengths, needs and desires of local families and their community.

Description

The Lubec Community Outreach Center (LCOC), a non-profit founded in 2012, serves the community of Lubec, Maine and the surrounding area. Lubec, with a population of 1359, is the easternmost town in Maine. Since the beginning, LCOC works to enrich the community where residents live, learn, work and play. LCOC carries out its work through collaboration with local governments, schools, businesses, civic organizations, volunteers and non-profit institutions across Washington County and beyond.

Originally, in 2011, the core group that was to become LCOC revived two Lubec youth programs that had been closed for several years under another service provider: the Summer Recreation Program and After School Program. Bringing these programs "back to life" created a foundation for LCOC to build on. Both programs provide a wide array of enriching and educational activities. And growing the original programs helped build support for LCOC. In 2014 enrollment in the "Summer Rec" had grown from 56 children to 78.

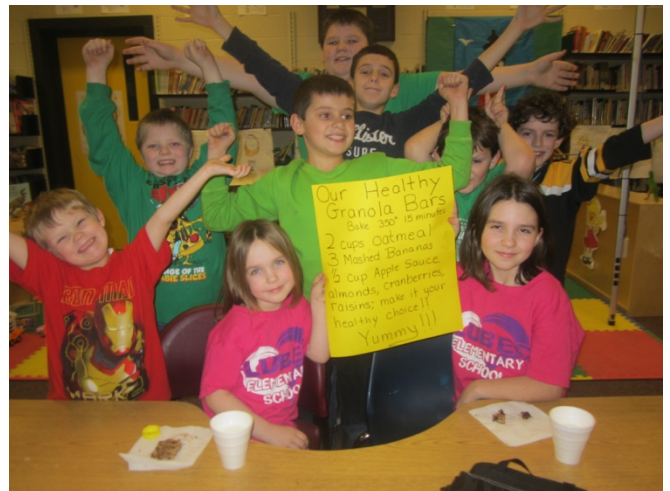
In the summer of 2014, LCOC initiated two new programs, TEAMWork and GetGrowing. These programs are focused on increasing accessibility to healthy food, with an emphasis on local food production. In addition, the programs offer opportunities for youth skill development and



employment. With the support of community volunteer gardeners, preteens and teens learn food gardening skills, including some food preparation and nutrition education. To help enable these programs to serve the community on a year-round basis, program-related activities are being incorporated into school curriculum.

LCOC also manages a school food pantry, called the "Hornet's Hearth." The pantry offers food on the weekend for families with children in the Lubec School, grades Pre-K through 8. Other LCOC programs include an annual holiday celebration and dinner for Seniors and Veterans, put on with broad community support.

Largely grant funded, LCOC has received funding through Maine Community Foundation, Agnes M. Lindsay Trust, USDA Summer Meals, Good Shepherd Food Bank, Healthy Acadia, C.F. Adams Charitable Trust, Elmina B. Sewall Foundation, and program grants from the John T. Gorman Foundation, Machias Savings Bank Community



Development Grant, and the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation. Other funding comes from community donations from the Town of Lubec, Bar Harbor Bank & Trust, The Bank of Maine, and many individuals.

Lessons to Share

Initially, eager to get going with programming, LCOC learned that it would take time for the community to understand what the organization was about and what it was trying to do. Fear was a common attitude in the beginning – fear of the unknown and what it might cost taxpayers. Developing relationships and building trust were essential steps in the early days, and continue to be important to the organization's work. In addition to purposeful meetings, it is the one-on-one conversations/meetings, often spontaneously during daily life in the community (e.g. grocery store), that have been pivotal for trust building.

Community involvement has been integral to LCOC's work. Connecting with people and groups in the community, involving people in LCOC's work, helps the organization demonstrate that LCOC is doing work the community wants them to do. In the beginning, only a few community members were involved helping the one full-time staff person and 2 part-time staff. In the third year, over 80 volunteers have put in more than 650 hours.

Flexibility and a willingness to adapt plans and programs has helped the organization be responsive to community interests and needs, ensuring that desired services are reaching the population. A lot of program changes have been made over time, to better serve the community. An openness to change means the organization is trying its best to be guided by what the community wants.

Although generational poverty is a challenge in the region, LCOC charges a fee for all programs to help communicate the value of its work. That said, recognizing the reality of many family situations, there is a sliding fee scale to make the programs affordable to all. And the organization has sought grant funds to provide scholarships for families that can't pay the fees. Because LCOC is trying to help break the cycle of poverty in many cases, making sure their programs are available to all is important.

Collaboration with ALL other organizations has been a strategy for helping dollars go further. LCOC can provide more for less by working with other organizations, and the same is true for other organizations.

Similarly, reaching out to EVERYONE in the community for financial support has been a lesson learned. Initial fundraising efforts focused on the influx of the summer population – people coming to the area for “summer in Maine.” The summer population brings a lot of talent to the area; these people volunteer and get involved by sharing their talents with LCOC programs. Their involvement, volunteer-wise and financially, has helped LCOC tremendously. At the same time, LCOC has broadened their fundraising to include the whole community, with a desire to make EVERYONE feel a part of LCOC. Support now comes in all sizes/amounts, and more importantly, more

Additional Information

For additional information about LCOC:
www.lubecoutreach.org
PO Box 41
Lubec, ME 04652

Recommended Citation

'Lubec Community Outreach Center, Lubec ME'. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 2 pgs. Available online at:
<https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Mad River Valley Economic Study: Mad River Valley, VT

Project Goal

The primary goal of the study was to undertake a fact-based assessment of the Mad River Valley's (MRV) economy that accurately reflects the current conditions of its unique economic base.

Description

The Mad River Valley is largely comprised of the towns of Waitsfield, Warren and Fayston. Each town within the MRV plays their own unique role in the overall economic vitality of the region. The rural region has a storied influence brought on by mountain resort tourism, and also a rich depth of agricultural history. Both of these economic drivers continue to persist, and in many cases thrive, while continuously adapting to meet modern conditions.

Planning for the future of these communities has always been challenging. Regional and local planning studies always tended to focus on what the economic drivers had been, rather than what they actually are. Planning never seemed to reflect the actual conditions that make up the economy. The fault in this continuing strategy was that planning could never be as truly effective as desired, which would result in policy development ill equipped to handle the current economic and social conditions.

The glaring issue of having policy that is incompatible with existing economic conditions was what led to the creation of the 2014 Mad River Valley Economic Study. The economic baseline study was able to highlight what was actually happening in the MRV, and how a more developed understanding of tourism, recreation and agriculture could be combined into strategies that would promote economic sustainability and vitality.

The project was highly focused on understanding and quantifying the MRV's economic profile and economic health. This was achieved by assessing pertinent data, interviewing key economic players in the region, identifying industries of importance, establishing an economic baseline of the MRV, and assessing strategies that would support and enhance its economic future. By design, the study was immensely data heavy. It combined a wide range of statistics and research of business trends from only the past decade to best capture a more current balance of existing conditions.

Results from the report provided the Mad River Valley Planning District staff, the Steering Committee and other key decision-makers with several important realizations. Examples of this include: the importance understanding seasonality and how fluctuations impact the local economy, the local food movement and its evolution from traditional dairy to more value-added agriculture, and the abundance of professional services. Specifically, these these realizations helped outline a variety of policy considerations that can now be used to inform important decision-making that accurately reflect the economic profile of the region.

The study was commissioned by the Mad River Valley Planning District, but supported and developed by many key stakeholders. These stakeholders included a consulting team consisting of: SE Group, Birchline Planning LLC, and Doug Kennedy Advisors. The study was primarily funded by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) with a

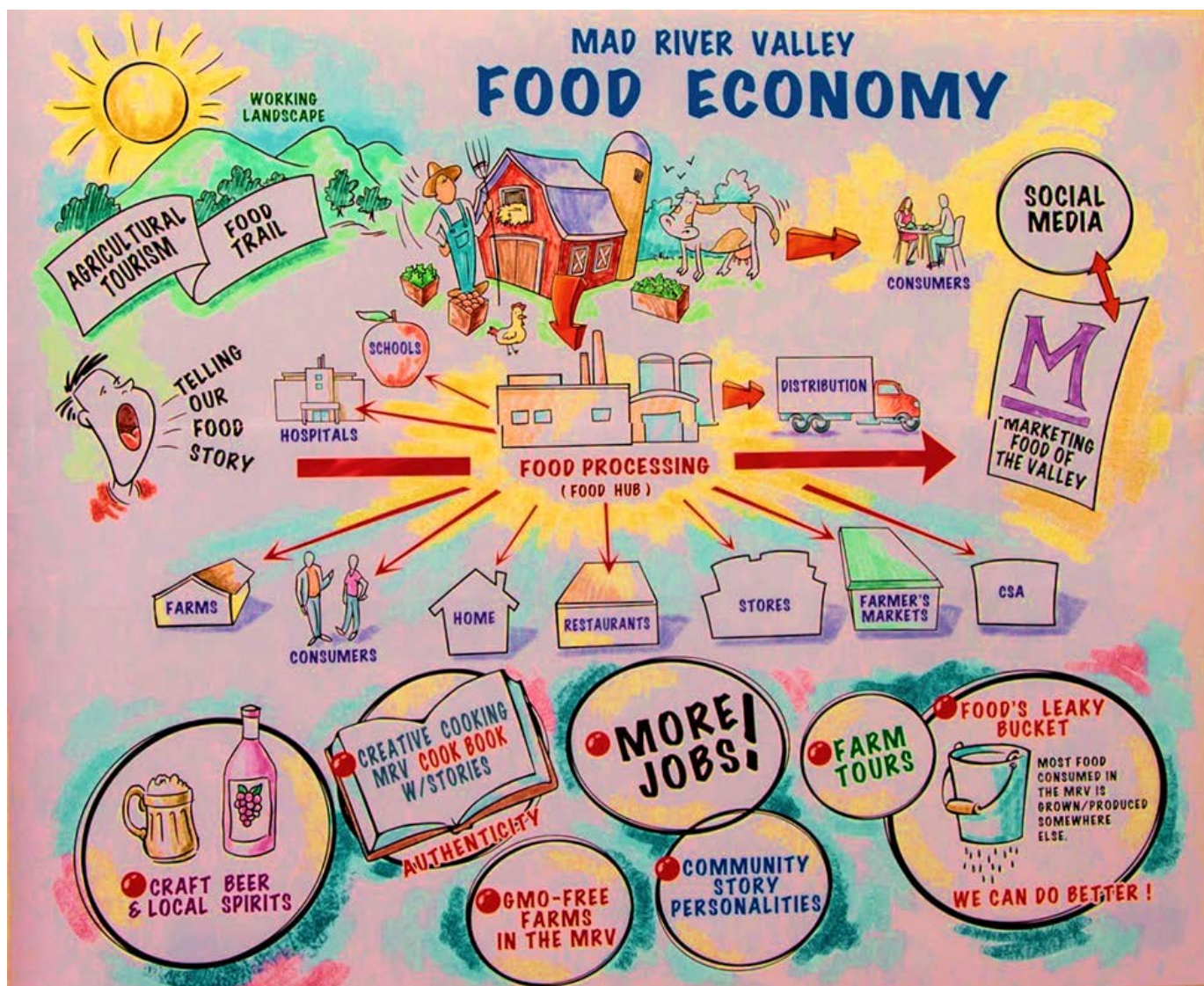
contribution from the MRV Chamber of Commerce. The MRV Steering Committee consisted of a Selectboard and Planning Commission representative from each of the three towns, a representative from Sugarbush Ski Resort, a representative from the MRV Chamber of Commerce, and a representative from the Central VT Regional Planning Commission.

Lessons to Share

The MRV project exemplifies several aspects of strong modern planning practice for a rural region. These aspects can be defined as challenging the status quo of your current planning practice, developing a strategy that embraces both quantitative and qualitative data collection, and presenting the data results for public feedback at a well-attended community event rather than a typical public meeting.

By recognizing that planning for the status quo was not achieving desirable results, the MRV Steering Committee decided to focus primarily on current data sets. To many, utilizing long-term data sets are the typical standard planning practice. Given the goals of the MRV study, only recent data was used, which gave the study much more realistic results.

The MRV study brought forth many key elements that proved to work very well and strengthen the overall project. One of the more defining successful elements of the study was subsequent MRV Economic Summit and Community Picnic. This picnic was held to present the report and gain feedback from the community. This was an important step to develop a consensus among community members in response to the true existing conditions of their region. Instead of just presenting the study, the community was encouraged at this picnic to interact with the



results, and provide insight on the priorities and goals for economic vitality of their region. At the end of the picnic, it was clear that the community was largely in support of the findings highlighted in the study. Having the community's support will be crucial in developing future policy to help strengthen a year round sustainable economy.

Many key challenges arose during the development of this study. One of these challenges was access to important economic measures crucial to the MRV. These measures included a lack of day skier expenditures within the MRV, and the share of income generated by work-at-home businesses. Both were problematic because this data is not something captured by conventional data and reporting, such as US Census and state-wide economic data.

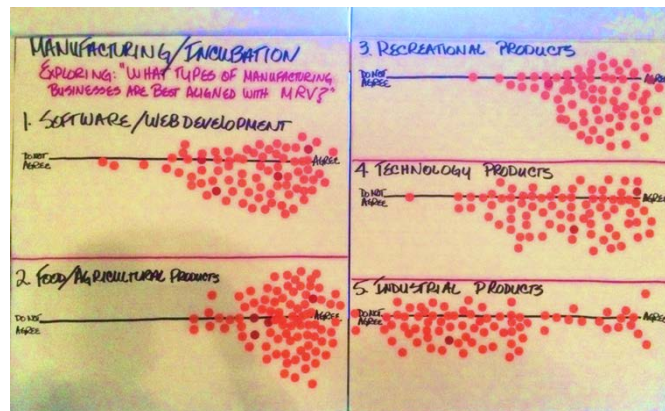
To overcome this challenge, analysts worked creatively with the available data. The analysts were able to infer trends through the geographic origin of ticket purchasers, employment by commuting distance, and several other interesting ways.

Another challenge highlighted by the project managers, was the difficulty in maintaining popular consensus on important trends and data. When developing a study that challenges the status quo, it is important to develop a consensus among political leaders on the data presented, so that appropriate policies will address economic issues correctly. This challenge was partially addressed by the community picnic.

The economic study has been deemed an overwhelming success and follow up projects are already being created to carry the momentum



forward. Policy development is currently being drafted that will specifically address findings from the results of the study. Economic sectors that define the region have been accurately identified and heralded with community approval.



Additional Information

For additional information about the Mad River Valley Economic Study, visit: <https://segroup.com/projects/mad-river-valley-economic-development-study/>

Recommended Citation

'Mad River Valley Economic Study. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 3 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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Flood Recovery on a Neighborhood Scale: Northfield's Water Street

Project Goal

To help a historic working-class neighborhood in Northfield, Vermont, recover from flood damage as a result of Tropical Storm Irene, while preserving a cohesive neighborhood within walking distance of a designated village center.

Description

The Town of Northfield, Vermont lies within the Green Mountains, approximately ten miles from the state's capital of Montpelier. In 2010, the population was just over 6,200, with approximately half of the overall population residing in the village of Northfield. The Dog River, which winds its way through the center of the village, is an important feature of the community. However, the historic flooding that occurred in August 2011 caused by Tropical Storm Irene transformed the Dog River from a scenic river into raging torrent. As a result, the village and other parts of Northfield were severely damaged. One heavily impacted area in Northfield was the Water Street neighborhood, where approximately 100 residential properties were impacted.

The Water Street neighborhood is distinguished in the community for being a historic 1800's working class neighborhood within walking distance of the designated village center of Northfield. After Tropical Storm Irene, this neighborhood began undergoing an unprecedented transformation on a (relatively) large scale. More than a dozen homeowners,

whose homes were severely damaged earlier in the spring of 2011 and then again during Irene, applied for and were awarded funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for a property acquisition or what is commonly referred to as a "home buyout." After the second hit in one year, several property owners approached the town and then word about their possible options spread through the neighborhood. The town and state officials provided public, televised informational sessions to clarify the process. Property owners who decide to pursue an acquisition receive 75% compensation from FEMA for their property's pre-flood assessed value. In this case of a low-moderate income historic neighborhood in walking distance to the town center, the state allocated federal HUD Disaster Relief funding to provide the 25% match. As Michele Braun, the town's project manager further explains, "The Vermont Housing and Conservation Board also contributed less-restricted state funding to ensure that the 25% match was available to all property owners". The process: the damaged structure is demolished and ownership of the property is transferred to the town, with an understanding that, as part of the acquisition process, restrictions on development will exist on the property in perpetuity. This effectively returns the property to floodplain, providing benefits to

the community. In Northfield, the properties that were acquired with FEMA funding are being transformed into a park which will require minimal investment to maintain and return to “normal” after the next major flooding event, while at the same time provide recreational and aesthetic benefits to the community. Architecture students at Norwich University, which is located in Northfield, helped to design the park, thereby adding additional “local flair.”

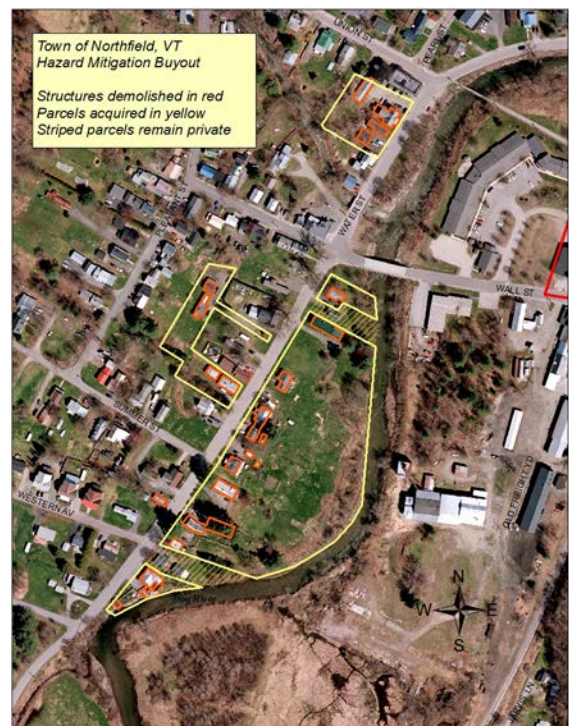
Other homeowners along Northfield’s Water Street decided to remain in their beloved neighborhood, but explored reducing their flood risk in another way: through the process of property elevation. Like the acquisitions, funding for elevations was obtained through FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Elevating any structure presents its own unique set of challenges; however, some are more complex than others. One of the more challenging elevation projects in Northfield involved an 1800’s residential property with a 2007 slab-foundation addition with radiant heat, and a handicapped member of the household. In many cases, there are multiple options for elevating the property to meet the homeowner’s needs, and specific needs may be able to be built into the elevation application package. After three years of exploration, and five years after the flood, none of the three homes are being elevated. Two are heading for buy-outs instead. The third is still trying to pull together the 25% match in costs.

Lessons to Share

The Water Street neighborhood exemplifies many of the challenges currently being faced by Vermont towns and rural towns in general. Historically, the settlement pattern of towns and villages in Vermont is typified by a densely developed town or village center surrounded by rural working lands. Most of these centers sprang up around rivers, as water was closely tied to early manufacturing or processing facilities.

However, the benefits that rivers brought to communities was, and remains to be, tempered by the risk of flooding. It is an overarching statutory land use goal in Vermont to protect the historic settlement pattern, to continue to concentrate development in town and village centers. The state has provided incentives to towns to require new development be located in areas that are safe from flood risk, or that re-development of historic buildings is designed to effectively stand up against flooding events. Existing development can be floodproofed to specific standards depending on the structure type, or elevated. In Northfield, elevations are being used as a way to preserve a cohesive and historic neighborhood of affordable housing close to the village center – an important public asset.

Property acquisitions and elevations are effective ways to reduce flood risk in a community, however, when opting to pursue either option, it is important to understand the process and manage expectations. In order to be eligible for an acquisition, no structures can be removed from the property prior to FEMA’s approval of the final acquisition application. This is oftentimes



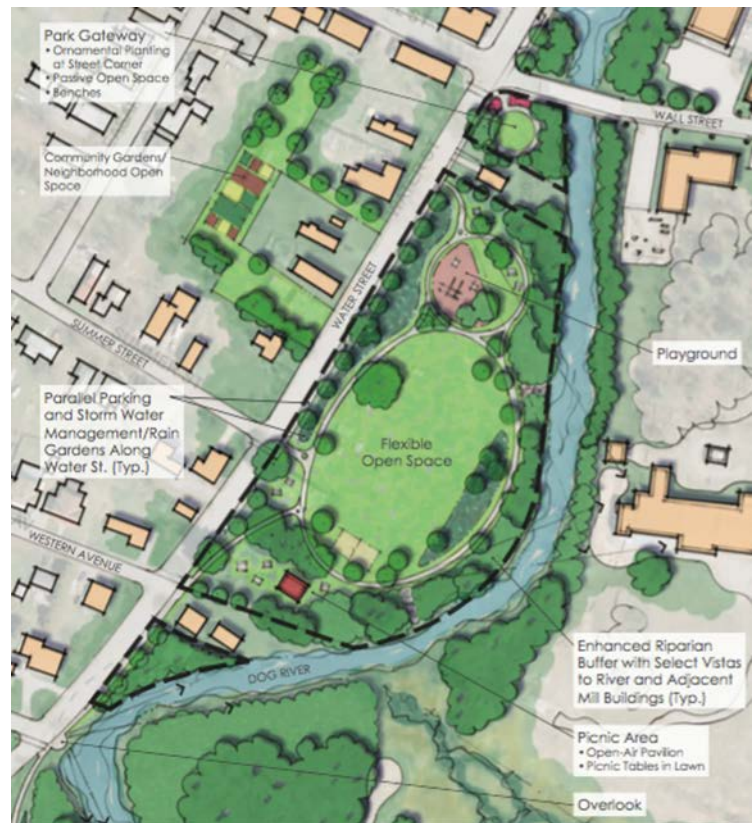
counterintuitive in the days and weeks (even months!) after a severe flooding event because there is desire on behalf of the property owner to return their life to normal.

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program is federal money, which brings its own set of requirements, timelines and frustrations. In order to be successfully awarded an HMGP grant, each proposed project must meet FEMA's Benefit-Cost Analysis criteria. Recently, FEMA has taken steps to expedite this component of an application for properties that meet specific requirements. Regardless of the project, FEMA will only contribute 75% of the cost, so the remaining 25% must come from other sources, which may intimidate property owners or prevent them from submitting an application. Although the state provided that match in most of the Water Street cases, some of the mortgage holders were difficult where the assessed value of the property was less than the mortgage value. The properties were underwater in more ways than one, and intervention by stalwart attorneys was required with certain lenders.

In addition, as demonstrated in the examples from Northfield, each property has its own specific set of challenges, which may further complicate the process and may extend the amount of time needed to complete the project. In some cases, especially with more complex projects, an acquisition or elevation could take three years or more, from the project development stage to the completion of the project. FEMA's grant programs can be used to achieve rewarding and long-lasting hazard mitigation results. However, the process requires patient and long-term commitment by all involved. Experience with FEMA post-Irene has led Vermont officials to describe such projects as "a marathon, not a race".

Additional Information

Northfield Zoning Administrator
Northfield Municipal Building
51 South Main Street
Northfield, Vermont 05663
1-802-485-5431



Recommended Citation

'Flood Recovery on a Neighborhood Scale: Northfield's Water Street'. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 3 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



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The Island Employee Cooperative: Deer Isle & Stonington, ME

Project Goal

To maintain the ongoing operation of an island community's core service businesses and local jobs through a transition in ownership and management to local people.

Description

Deer Isle lies off the coast of the Blue Hill peninsula in mid-coast Maine. Its year-round population of approximately 3,000 nearly doubles during the summer months. Over the years the Seile family built up several businesses—the Burnt Cove Market, the Galley, and V & S Variety and Pharmacy—that formed much of the commercial core of the island and its small communities of Deer Isle and Stonington. In 2013 the family decided to retire and sought new ownerships for their establishments. Islanders were concerned about the potential loss of these important stores, the possible sale to non-residents who might consolidate the businesses and reduce employment opportunities, and a fear that losing the businesses would force island residents to travel approximately 25 miles to the next closest similar services on roads made treacherous during the long winter months. A worker cooperative was established with sufficient financial backing from several sources to permit the successful transfer of the businesses to the majority of their employees. The result is that jobs have been maintained, money stays within the community and people are learning new skills and building new assets that the island can draw upon.

As members of the Independent Retailers Shared Services Co-operative (IRSCC), the Seile's contacted the Cooperative Executive Director who suggested that an alternative to seeking a single purchaser for the Businesses—likely from off-island—might be for the employees to form a cooperative to purchase the stores. A business and financing plan was developed and over a period with many meetings of a local steering committee and others, and with creative financing and advice from Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), a Maine-based community development finance institution, the Cooperative Fund of New England (CFNE) and the Associated Grocers of New England (AGNE), an ownership transition strategy was created that has culminated in the establishment of the Island Employee Cooperative. Currently 45 of the businesses' 60 island employees now own shares in what has become Maine's largest cooperative and the businesses are operating providing services customarily offered by supermarkets, a pharmacy, small appliance and hardware sales, and more. Moreover, for Islanders the stores provide community gathering places and employment opportunities where few others exist.

Lessons to Share

Many rural grocery stores and similar outlets are at peril of closing, especially where owner/operators contemplate retirement. These services, like schools, post offices and

churches, are often vital community assets in rural places and small towns. The case of the Deer Isle solution suggests that employee cooperatives may be one way of providing a successful transition in ownership and control. Moreover, the island Employee Cooperative has maintained jobs in an area where there are few other alternatives, and consumer spending is retained in the community as well as local control over business decisions. The cooperative idea is not entirely foreign to Deer Isle and this may be one of the reasons for the success of the model given the proximity and history of the Stonington Lobsterman's

Cooperative. The role of the Co-Operative Development Institute, Coastal Enterprises, and the Associated Grocers of New England cannot be discounted because of their long history of financing and support for the establishment of independent groceries and cooperatives to promote local control and employee ownership and democratic management. The sellers of the businesses, the Seile family, were especially keen to see the stores remain open and in island ownership and control. Altogether this was a \$5/6 million project. Training and business assistance to the new ownership cooperative is being provided through a local community college, the previous owners, and the above named organizations. In speaking with

named organizations. In speaking with several participants each indicated that patience and perseverance were key elements in the success of the overall strategy.

Additional Information

For additional information about Island Employee Cooperative, visit: iecoop.org

Recommended Citation

'Island Employee Cooperative: Deer Isle & Stonington, ME'. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 2 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>



American Planning Association
**Small Town and
Rural Planning Division**

American Planning Association
Northern New England Chapter

ABOUT THE NEW RURALISM INITIATIVE

The New Ruralism Initiative is a project of the American Planning Association (APA) Divisions Council, the Northern New England Chapter of the APA, and the Small Town and Rural Planning Division. The initiative seeks to highlight the ingredients that have made for successful innovation in rural communities.



The Somerset Grist Mill

Skowhegan, ME

Project Goal

To revive value-added agricultural production in Maine's food sector by developing appropriate infrastructure for a growing grain industry; to rehabilitate an important abandoned building to accommodate new businesses, including a grist mill.

Description

Approximately three years ago Amber Lambke and her business partner, Michael Scholz, redeveloped the old Somerset County Jail facility which had been lying dormant in the very heart of the downtown district of Skowhegan, Maine, the shire town of Somerset County. Taking over three years of what Lambke describes as a “Hodge Podge” of funding sources –traditional bank loans, several interest-free loans from foundations, 10 different private investors, and grants made through the Somerset County Economic Development Corporation – the old jail was redeveloped and equipped for the grist mill that supports the developing grain industry in central Maine and beyond. Prior to its establishment Maine grain farmers had to ship their produce out-of-state for processing into flour and other products. The production and processing of grain is an important element in stabilizing agriculture in Maine, growing soil quality and is crucial to the ongoing growth of the organic milk and egg industry in the state. A once significant grain producing state, Maine is witnessing something of a grain revival aided, in large part, by developments such as the



the Somerset Grist Mill.

Maine Grains, the flour brand marketed by the grist mill, has witnessed a substantial increase in its production each year of its operation and in 2014 it produced 250 tons of product for bakers across the state, including Portland's nationally renowned Standard Bakery, among others. The project cost nearly \$1.5 million and includes the grist mill, Maine Grains, as well as a small yarn store, a small youth-run technology hub,, and the Pick-Up Café. The facility also serves as the retail and wholesale site for the local CSA and, during the summer months, serves as the base for the Skowhegan Farmers Market. Local institutions, such as the hospital, schools and camps, source food from the facility. In terms of employment, especially important in an area with a substantial poverty rate, the grist mill and the other businesses located in the old jail facility have created approximately 20 jobs, many of which have gone to local people without traditionally strong employment records. Together with the Bangor Savings Bank, the Mill delivers programs developed to provide employees with financial and management skills to create a more capable local workforce. Aided by the infrastructure investment from the Town of Skowhegan and Main Street Skowhegan, and additional support from the Fair Foods Network, Coastal Enterprises, Slow Money Maine, and the Skowhegan Savings Bank, Maine Grains and the downtown of which it is a part is being

revived. Pedestrian walkways, new pavement and other improvement have been made. Additionally, several other businesses in the community, such as a brewery and a bakery now feature products using grains milled in Skowhegan.

Lessons Learned

Northern New England is witnessing something of a renaissance in its food system, most especially in terms of agriculture. In Maine the number of farms has actually increased and new farmers are entering the profession. But over the years the food processing infrastructure of Maine, like much of the region, has eroded and this has meant that much that Maine fisherman and farmers produced was sent out-of-state where the value-added was produced. Maine faces significant deficits in its food-related value-added infrastructure. Maine Grains, centered in the Somerset Grist Mill once the abandoned county jail building, is making a significant difference in the state's organic grains industry. Beyond its immediate impact for grain producers, the facility has acted as a catalyst for the renewal of downtown Skowhegan, Maine, and also serves as the site of other food-related businesses that draw people to the community's downtown. Further, as a consequence of the redevelopment project, each year Skowhegan hosts The Kneading Conference at the county fairgrounds. The conference attracts people from all over the nation and even internationally to share and learn about the latest innovations in grain production, baking and related fields. This acts as a magnet for tourism and has established Skowhegan, once again, as a major venue in Maine's evolving food system.

The establishment of the grist mill has, then, been a catalyst for other investments in the downtown, especially in terms of modernized infrastructure, and it serves to buttress and support neighboring farms that have made high quality fresh foods more available to a traditionally under-served community.

Further, local jobs have been created in an area with high rates of unemployment, and skills training has been introduced to enhance the quality and integrity of the local workforce. Many community organizations have come together to support these new ventures. While the ramp-up time for the grist mill and related businesses has been substantial, numerous interdependent relationships have developed that have helped to revive the community in many ways.

Additional Information

For additional information about Maine Grains, visit: www.maine-grains.com

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Thetford Home Energy Action Team Weatherization Program Thetford, VT

Project Goal

To implement a comprehensive program of community-based social marketing initiatives to promote home weatherization in the town of Thetford, putting it on par to match Vermont's statewide climate change goals.

Description

In 2011, the Sustainable Energy Resource Group (SERG) worked with the Thetford Energy Committee (TEC) to promote home weatherization using an ingenious community-based social marketing initiative. The primary goal of this project was to triple the amount of homes being weatherized every year in Thetford, starting from 12 to 36.

The project was developed and implemented by the Sustainable Energy Resource Group (SERG) which was a not-for profit organization that helped communities use less energy while saving money, and the official town energy committee of Thetford – SERG has since merged into another nonprofit called Vital Communities. Both organizations have successful track records of local energy projects, which made developing a work plan for implementation easier to achieve. Funding for the program, which included technical and material support, was obtained from a broad selection of grant funding including: the High Meadows Fund, Granite United Way, VECAN, Clean Air – Cool Planet, Ben and Jerry's

Community Action Team, and local Thetford business sponsors.

To achieve the desired goal of tripling homes being weatherized, the two organizations collaborated and branded a Home Energy Action Team, now referred to as HEAT. HEAT was made up of past community volunteers and weatherization participants, but also included a diverse range of community and neighborhood groups brought on through a broad outreach process. After the recruiting process, HEAT was at fifty volunteers strong, which is impressive for a town of only 2,500.

Before volunteers began their community outreach process, they were thoroughly educated and trained on the importance of home weatherization. After being trained, HEAT members organized and deployed an intensive town-wide door to door outreach effort. The main goal of the outreach was to visit or send information to every home in the town of Thetford. This effort included educating homeowners about home weatherization, providing resource lists, distributing free CFL bulbs, and assisting homeowners in figuring out the efficiency of their homes.

One of the most important aspects of the HEAT volunteer program was the implementation of a cohesive program branding strategy. The branding included bags, t-shirts, letterhead and flyers all

uniformly labeled with the Thetford HEAT logo. This strategy was encouraged in part to make the program easily identifiable, and to develop a complete sense of community effort.

After the door to door process was completed, the volunteers were able to distribute information packets to 650 homes, distributed and installed 158 free 25-watt CFLs in homes, and collected home energy surveys on 240 Thetford homes.

Previous to the development of the HEAT program, the town of Thetford also received a \$24,000 federal stimulus grant to provide incentives, matching those provided by Efficiency Vermont (EVT). The matching funds were available to homeowners who weatherized their homes through the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program (HPwES). Thetford HEAT was able to develop two successful Thetford case studies that were previously financed through HPwES funds. The case studies were included in information packets handed out during the door to door outreach.

Lessons to Share

The Thetford Heat program, combined with HPwES initiatives, delivered solid measureable results. In less than 6 months time, 18 homes weatherized. In the next 6 months, another 12 homes so a total of 30 homes were completed in the year of Thetford HEAT through Thetford incentives. Almost all of the homes weatherized can be directly connected to the HEAT volunteer's activism and outreach.

A quote from one of the project participants sums up the success of this program well. Dennis Donahue of Thetford Center stated, "The door-to-door HEAT program was the tipping point for me. THWIP/HEAT was/is a block-buster. Very clever. And for me the reminder I could do something to save money, reduce energy consumption, and be more comfortable. The SERG general energy calculation results caused me to try to

reduce energy use."

Some of the more telling measureable results are highly indicative of the program's success. The results also show that the primary goal of tripling the amount of weatherized homes set by SERG was very close to being achieved. The economic driver of the HEAT outreach can easily be seen in the cost savings obtained by homeowners that participated and the subsequent impact the work had on the local economy. The 18 homes weatherized are projected to save each homeowner approximately \$914 a year, and the local economic stimulation was projected at over \$160,000 total.

The development and implementation of HEAT worked very well from a community engagement and activation strategy. It is apparent some of the biggest strengths of this strategy were utilizing a broad based community effort, combined with intuitive program branding to gain the trust of local residents. This trust was critical in obtaining the appropriate level of engagement to meet the goals set by SERG and the TEC. Having both strong ties within the community, and being able to leverage the respect of the organizations helped propel this project to success.

Additional Information

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Recommended Citation

'Thetford HEAT: Thetford, VT. In *Case Studies of New Ruralism*. The New Ruralism Project. 2 pgs. Available online at: <https://nne.planning.org/knowledge/new-ruralism/>