



Economic Development Working Group Meeting April 16, 2014 from 4-6pm, CVRPC Office

Pre-meeting, please review the following items:

- Revised draft Regional Economic Profile – Executive Summary
- Agriculture and Forestry Profile

Attendees:

- Julie Potter, Town of East Montpelier
- Sam Andersen, Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation (CVEDC)
- Peter Hood, CVEDC and Town of Middlesex
- John Boyer, Washington County Youth Services Bureau
- Mary Neibling, Central Vermont Community Action Council
- Don LaHaye, Town of Waitsfield
- Joshua Schwartz, Mad River Valley Planning District
- Margo Wade, Sugarbush Resort
- Ken Jones, Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- George Malek, Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce
- Stephanie Smith, CVRPC Staff
- Amelia Norris, CVRPC Staff
- Kim McKee, CVRPC Staff
- Sue Sinclair, CVRPC Staff

Summary:

1. **Regional Economic Profile update:** An updated and formatted draft of the Regional Economic Profile is available for download on the Plan Central Vermont web site at: <http://plancentralvermont.org/the-plan/economy/#regionalprofile>.

Staff offered an overview of revisions since discussion of the previous draft and the Working Group offered further comments on the Executive Summary, including:

- Remove all references to statewide inventories or trends (i.e. Maple Processors inventory on p4 of Summary); only focus on Region-specific info
- When reporting Unemployment trends, George noted that it is important to mention the caveat that though the number of workers has been declining – a coinciding trend that has impacts on the unemployment picture

- Wages by Industry – it would be interesting to see the gender discrepancies by industry; industries representing the lowest wage quartile seem to encompass jobs traditionally held by women

Staff also recently met with a **Central Vermont Community Action Council** team to discuss overlap of our efforts with their Community Assessment process and topics covered. Findings from their upcoming Community Survey regarding Education, Training & Employment; Housing & Home Energy; Transportation and Child Care will be incorporated into the Economic element and other parts of the Plan when available August 2014. Staff is also providing assistance with refining survey questions.

Staff provided an overview of the added Agriculture and Forestry section of the Economic Profile. These sections include inventories, data and trends compiled from the recent **Central Vermont Food Systems Assessment** and **Forest Values Report** from the Forest Stewardship project. The Agriculture data will be updated upon the nationwide release of the **2012 Agricultural Census data** in May.

Working group members reiterated that it is important to only include Regional trends and information and to add notes to reports when we are waiting on new data releases or will be updating information.

2. **Economic Development Goals:** The five overarching goals as drafted by Draft Review Committee on 4/1/14 were as follows – Working Group member comments are listed below each goal:

- **Full employment and high quality job opportunities in a diverse range of occupations.**

Sam noted that “Full employment” as a goal is unattainable and too difficult to measure. If you have to footnote the goal to explain what type of unemployment rate implies a healthy employment level or “full employment,” then the term shouldn’t be used in a goal. Julie noted that the concept is an “ideal state,” but it reads more as a Vision than a measurable Goal.

Recommended changes included “Good wage-paying jobs across all industry sectors will provide for a vibrant economic climate” or “Increase employment opportunities.”

Staff noted that the term “high quality jobs” was recommended by the RPRDC as the concept of job quality extends beyond just wages.

Joshua and Ken mentioned the Gross Progress Indicator being developed/utilized at the State level to measure Vermont’s Economy and

that GPI could be considered as a benchmark related to this type of Goal.

Ken noted that the Committee should consider whether the ultimate goal is growth within the Region (population growth, growth in # of jobs)

- **Incomes sufficient to meet basic needs at a minimum with opportunities to achieve and maintain financial security.**

Mary noted that this Goal would benefit from some mention of opportunities to advance “up the career ladder” or some other term that implies the same concept.

- **Sustainable and viable agricultural and forest lands.**

Some Working Group members questioned whether these Sectors deserve highlighting as a stand-alone Goal – and whether the terminology reflected the full suite of “Quality of Life” factors that affect the Region’s ability to attract visitors, residents and businesses.

Other comments included that this Goal was worded as such because the economic viability of “working lands” is the base factor; key to preventing their continued loss and supporting the growth of the value-added businesses; and that the economic value extends beyond the employment levels and wages in these sectors. Working Group members noted that using the term “working lands” or “working landscapes” may benefit this Goal.

A recommendation included a change to “Sustainable and viable businesses that support agricultural and forest lands,” or “that support the working landscape.”

- **Dynamic and resilient downtowns, villages and commercial districts.**
- **Effective business retention, growth and development that anticipate and meet market opportunities.**

Sam recommended that the word “Effective” is vague and could be removed; also that the phrase “that helps businesses be competitive in the global marketplace” could be a more clear way to phrase “that anticipate and meet market opportunities.”

3. **Discuss and Identify Key Issues/Trends:** See separate attachment for this list and related discussion.
4. **The next meeting is scheduled for May 21, 2014, 4-6pm at CVRPC Offices.**