



**SeVEDS**  
Advancing Southern Vermont

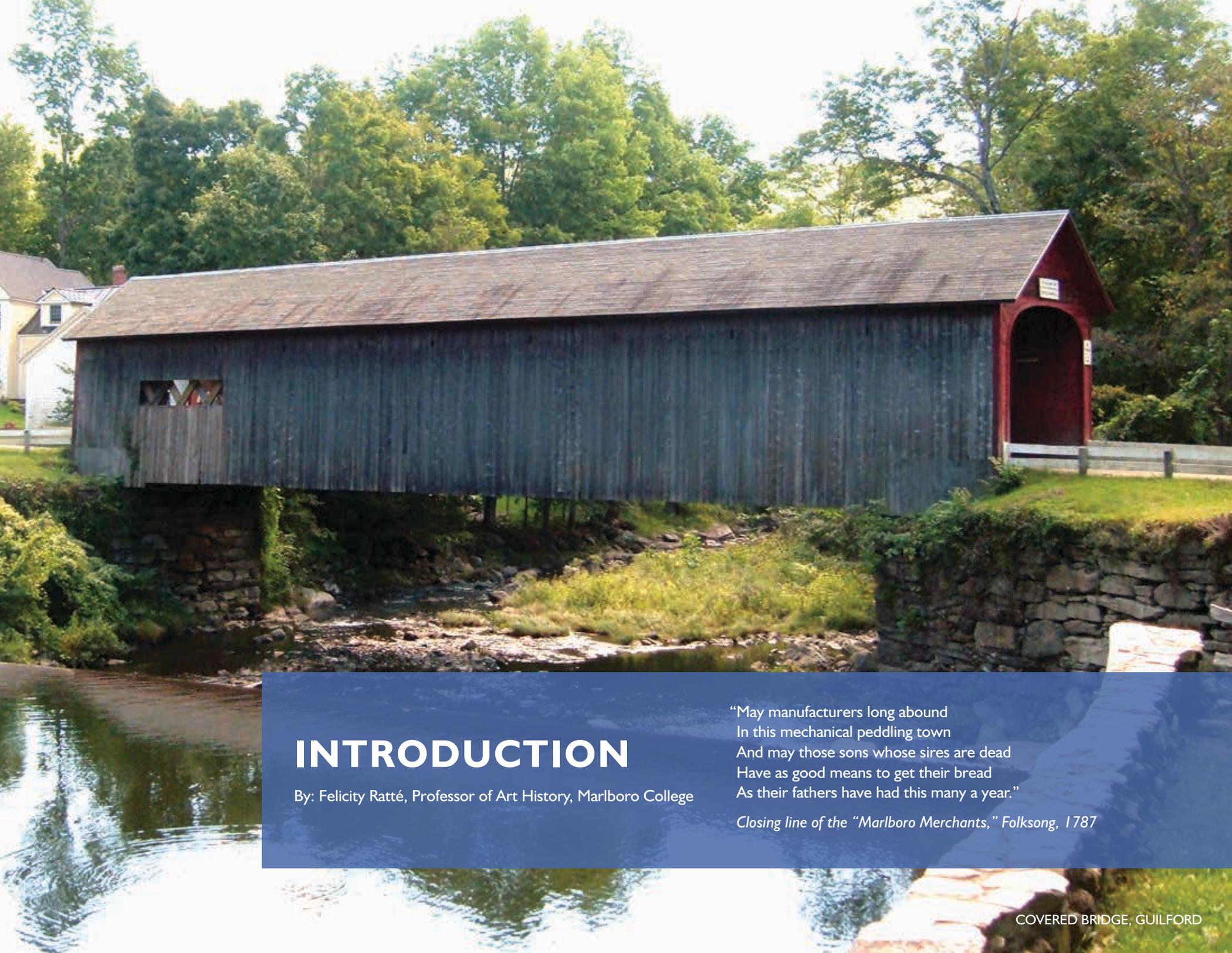
**2014 S.M.A.R.T. CEDS REPORT**



This 2013 Southeastern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is dedicated to Jeffrey M. Lewis whose vision, curiosity and perseverance connected us together in this regional effort.

This CEDS is the result of years of unprecedented collaboration across the public, private and nonprofit sectors of southeastern Vermont. The people, businesses and towns in our twenty-seven town region have invested significantly of their time and talents to learn about how our regional economy works and how we can improve it while sustaining our quality of place. In a place where individuality is one of our most cherished attributes, we have come together and created an opportunity for our future.

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Design by Woodward Design*



# INTRODUCTION

By: Felicity Ratté, Professor of Art History, Marlboro College

“May manufacturers long abound  
In this mechanical peddling town  
And may those sons whose sires are dead  
Have as good means to get their bread  
As their fathers have had this many a year.”

*Closing line of the “Marlboro Merchants,” Folksong, 1787*



WINDHAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE, NEWFANE

**A**t the midpoint of the twentieth century Vermonters took great pride in representing a past way of life to the more modern states of the union. Today, Vermont has come to represent to itself and its clear-sighted neighbors and friends, not just the past but more importantly, the future. Its habits of historic and environmental preservation, small-scale industry (exemplified by the opening quote) and self-sufficiency are hallmarks of today's environmentally and socially conscious "slow" movements. The Windham Region is made up of 27 towns and stretches across 3 counties. Its population, although still predominately rural,

contains innovative, forward-thinking entrepreneurs, educators and skilled laborers both native born and transplants, whose devotion to maintaining the unique aspects of Vermont's identity is serious and strong. Understanding that identity and capitalizing on its virtues is a key part of our economic development strategy. At the same time, we are not going to allow the myths of the past, either of our greatness or our inadequacy, to get in the way of our ability to clear-sightedly understand and assess where we need to go next and what we need to do to get there. With this in mind our CEDS report begins with this

brief look back at consistent attributes of the state, and region, that make it what it is today. Among the key features of this history is our ability to adapt to changes. These changes are varied and not always friendly or welcome. They include changes in transportation, in the market place for our goods and services, changes in what our land can produce for us and for what we can make out of it, changes in the people who come and go, and finally changes that Mother Nature foists upon us.

Europeans first settled the region in 1724 with the building of Fort Dummer south of Brattleboro. After achieving statehood in 1791, exploitation of the native forests began in earnest contributing to the development of 650 lumber mills across the state by 1870. As the forests receded due the successes of the lumber industry, the inhabitants of the state turned to sheep farming, producing world-renowned Merino wool until foreign imports forced them into dairy by the mid-point of the next century. Each change of focus precipitated a change in population, either a move from the country to the towns or from unsuccessful farm to more successful one. One of the key features of the entire state is the dramatically low rate of population growth after the initial spurt that followed statehood in 1791. The arrival of the railroad, which reached Brattleboro in 1849, set in motion another shift in the region's economic activity. For a few decades the access to the rest of the country made possible by the railroad stimulated the state's production of dairy products. But by the late 1860s, when the state's steady population growth actually began to reverse itself, competition from the larger western states cauterized the flow of milk out of the state. As our milk ceased to be competitive, a sector of the state's young farm stock left looking to farm the more productive and open lands of the west. In their place, the tourists and second homeowners arrived. From the 1890s onward, state government

and a proportion of local people set about capitalizing on the potential of this new influx—transforming the state yet again.

The introduction of a second wave of transplants (since the first wave of settlers to the state in the eighteenth century also came from the southern New England states) to the state gave the region another way of thinking about its natural resources. It might be possible to begin to chart Vermont's environmental awareness to this period, although most would date it to the publication of *Man and Nature* by George Perkins Marsh in 1864. It was in this later period when the scenic beauty of the state and its small-scale, well preserved historic architecture was seen as both a basic good and a potentially lucrative asset. In addition to the realization that there was money to be made in the preservation of Vermont's rural way of life, the arrival of the railroad and the tourists promoted a new kind of industry, hospitality. The exploitation of the state's ability to attract foreign visitors was dramatically affected by the development of skiing from the 1930s onward. Today, while global climate change shows signs of diminishing winter's attractiveness to alpine skiing enthusiasts, the region's mountains, Stratton and Mt Snow, have moved into four season pursuits.

Even during its early settlement, the Southeastern Vermont region demonstrated a dramatic capacity for diversity of manufacturing and self-sufficiency as attested by the wealth of manufactured products listed in the folksong "*Marlboro Merchants.*" This song, dating to 1787, counts off numerous goods from jack knives and hatchets to red ochre, saltpeter and butternut physic produced and sold by the merchants of the town. Marlboro, which today lists its population at just below 1,000 individuals, boasted a population of 1,300 at the

time the song was written. At such a number, the town was just shy, by about 200, of the size of neighboring Brattleboro. The vicissitudes of time that have transformed this town from a hub of small-scale manufacturing to a village which is home to a small liberal arts college (founded in 1946) and a nationally recognized summer music festival (founded in 1951) suggest that the way forward can be charted through our past. At the time that the college was founded, the end of World War II and the new GI bill presented a ripe crop of motivated students with the means and desire to embrace the challenge of rural life in return for an open-ended educational structure that offered a path to successful civilian life. The Marlboro Music Festival, on the other hand, capitalized on a half-century of the state's promotion of itself as a rural idyll to attract renowned musicians to work with promising musicians in an environment free from the stresses of the concert circuit.

Each of our 27 towns presents a similar story of change and continuity in the face of environmental and economic stress and transformation. The region's main town, Brattleboro, chartered in 1753, exemplifies the region's past as both a manufacturing hub (producing a diversity of products that mirrors those of its smaller neighbor and noted as one of New England's richest villages of its size in 1824) and tourist destination. The phenomenal business acumen of Jason Estey (1814–1890), who saw and capitalized upon the potential of the developing interest in music of the young nation by establishing an organ factory in Brattleboro in 1852, is echoed in today's regional businessmen and women who understand the power the Vermont brand in today's marketplace for upscale, purpose-designed and locally produced goods, from ceramics to dairy products.

The Estey organ factory, today home to a small set of elegant condominiums, a daycare, a museum, and multi-use spaces, presents an example of both the problems and the potential of the town's future advancement through the development of its historical architectural heritage. The core buildings, built in the 1870s and characterized by their attractive slate exteriors are expensive to preserve and maintain but an undisputed asset to the town because of their history. Another example of this is the Brooks House on Main Street. The Brooks House, opened in 1871 replete with 80 upscale rooms and a ballroom, exemplified the growth of local businessmen's capitalization upon the newly burgeoning tourist industry made possible through



BRATTLEBORO FOOD CO-OP

the arrival of the railroad. The Brooks House transformation one hundred years later into a multi-use structure of apartments and retail space evidences another phase of the region's economic history. This phase was brought about by the arrival of the Interstate 91, easing communication, the movement of goods and services, and an ever-growing number of tourists to the state.

In 2011 the Brooks House was severely damaged in an electrical fire, destroying 59 housing units and displacing 8 businesses. Exemplifying the changing fortunes of the region, this fire, which might have



spelled the end of this landmark building, has instead presented an opportunity for a transformation of the space yet again into up-scale and market-rate apartments, retail spaces and an educational center. The arrival of Vermont Technical College and Community College of Vermont into this newly renovated space promises to create a boost to downtown's food and retail markets, in addition to its overall atmosphere of activity. This transformation did not happen without a struggle, however, as the dramatic cost of the total renovation far exceeded the capacity of the building's owner at the time, a local consortium of investors formed in order to buy him out and move the project forward using a wide variety of tax credits and other government provided financing in addition to direct equity and loans. This illustrates one legacy issue for the region: although the attractiveness and allure of historic downtowns and village centers constitutes a key feature in sustaining a key element of our regional economy, in fact, the current commercial built environment is worth less than it would cost to replace.

Like the situation that faced the community during the period of uncertainty at the Brooks House, the smaller towns in the region have discovered time and again that survival requires facing tough decisions and change.

In 1833 the town of Wilmington decided that, in order for it to thrive, it needed to be closer to the recently constructed Brattleboro-Bennington Turnpike and moved nearly all the town's structures down from Town Hill, the village's original location, to its current location by the Deerfield River.

While it is not so simple now, to move a town, it is possible to imagine developing additional economic centers to strengthen the town, diversifying the income potential that will lessen the impact of the inevitable next flood. As the community continues

its recovery from the flood, it does so with a new awareness and understanding of the risks involved in developing property in a river valley.

Like Wilmington, Londonderry too is thinking through its history as a way to understand its next step. The town of Londonderry, population just above 1,800 in 2009 and located at the northern border of our region, has moved moved from agriculture to industry to tourism and back in the 243 years since its settlement (it was adjacent to one of the earliest ski mountains in the region, Bromley, which opened in 1936). The town got a boost in 1867 by the arrival of the West River Railroad from Brattleboro, which opened it up to the fast developing tourist trade. A marble works opened in the same year, another example of this region's consistent history of small-scale, diverse industry.

The town lost much of its industry, however, to the flood of 1927 and fell back to agriculture. In 1995 the town opened the weekly Farmer's Market, which has become famous and continues to attract consumers and retailers from around the area. This capitalization on the rise of the marketability of small-scale agriculture, like CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), which is also strong in the region, is a key component of the region's character. It is what attracts recent immigrants and what makes it possible to imagine a successful future.

As this CEDS goes to press, yet another change is taking place in the region with the announced closure of the Vermont Yankee (VY) nuclear power plant that employs over six hundred individuals. Like the loss of lumber, the downturn in wool prices and the competition for dairy, this change will have a profound impact on the region specifically and the state in general from employment to taxes to philanthropic donations, every sector of the economy could potentially suffer. But this change



MOUNT SNOW, DOVER

has been anticipated and plans are being developed to address a post VY future. We only need to keep moving, confident in our history of adaptation and resilience.

This CEDS, then, is addressing another economic transition of the Southeastern Vermont region.

### What is a CEDS?

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a region's playbook for engaging in a collaborative, region-wide transformation of the economy in order to raise productivity, create wealth, and increase prosperity for residents.

### Why is an economic development strategy necessary in Southeastern Vermont?

The residents of Southeastern Vermont have important decisions to make about the economic future of the region. On the one hand, the region's

cultural heritage, small town character, and natural beauty combine to provide a quality of place that many communities around the US are striving to duplicate. The region has benefited from that sense of "authenticity," cultivating a deep appreciation of the arts and culture that attracts creative entrepreneurs and workers, as well as retired or semi-retired households from nearby urban areas searching for a better quality of life.

From the perspective of economic development, as the "free agent" workforce—self-employed, freelancers, artists, etc.—continues to grow, its share of total employment in the US, Southeastern Vermont, and other regions like it, can leverage its quality of place as a competitive advantage. The region's proximity to large population centers and ability to deliver a unique experience are strengths that should be at the core of any strategy targeting sustainable economic development.

Yet, quality of place and the ability to attract artists, free agents, and retired or semi-retired households are not sufficient conditions for long-term, sustainable growth and regional prosperity. Developing and maintaining community assets that contribute to quality of place, for example, requires steady growth in the region's tax base. Cultivating the region's appreciation for creative industries, such as artists, theater, and writers, does little good if the next generation of residents cannot find employment that provides enough discretionary income to attend performances or donate to non-profit arts organizations. And retirees, while valuable members, leaders, and sources of discretionary income in any community, cannot offer much in the way of employment opportunities for the next generation of workers.

Accordingly, achieving sustainable development in quality of place communities like Southeastern Vermont means striking the right balance between preserving natural and cultural assets and growing the regional economy at a sufficient pace to provide the resources that are necessary to preserve those assets. In that respect, the region is facing several challenges that must be recognized and addressed:

- Maine and Vermont rank #1 and #2 as the states with the oldest residents, and Windham County is aging faster than Maine or Vermont (2011 median age 44.9 years).
- Age cohorts entering the working population (late teens and early twenties) have been small and the significant decrease in persons of prime workforce and childbearing age threatens the region's future labor force availability.
- Job creation has been stagnant since the early 1990s, after twenty years of steady growth between 1970 and 1990.



- Average earnings for workers, adjusted for inflation, were lower in 2011 than they were in 1970.
- Per capita income nearly doubled between 1970 and 2011, but much of that growth was from rents, investments, and transfer payments, not wages.

In short, low wages, rising cost of living, and limited job opportunities are creating a disconnect between Southeastern Vermont’s perceived sense of economic security today and a future that looks anything but secured, especially for younger residents. Failure to address that disconnect will result in many Southeastern Vermonters continuing to search for economic opportunity elsewhere.

## Disconnects and Lack of Cohesion

Throughout the CEDS development process, two themes have consistently risen to the top—*lack of cohesion* within the region and the insular *disconnectedness* of the entire region. In many ways, Southeastern Vermont can be viewed as a collection of unconnected silos of good, which if properly connected have the potential to become centers of excellence. It has also been accurately noted that the region is neither well connected within and across the region nor connected to the surrounding areas of Vermont, southwestern New Hampshire, or western Massachusetts.

Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS) endeavors to solve these problems of lack of cohesion and disconnectedness. There are, however still significant barriers. Northern areas of the region are more connected East-West to Manchester and Springfield than North-South to Bellows Falls or Brattleboro. “The Valley” (Wilmington, Dover) is equidistant between Bennington and Brattleboro. Additionally, even within the region many communities of interest and organizations remain disconnected. The underlying challenge is the marked lack of a history or culture of collaboration and the extremely strong culture of looking inward to the local town or village rather than a central county or regional convening entity.

## What is SeVEDS?

SeVEDS started in 2007 as a small group of people from across the region looking to improve broadband and cell service. After many meetings and input from stakeholders it became clear that lack of broadband and unreliable cell service were symptoms of a larger and more concerning problem: lack of economic development. In order to respond, SeVEDS incorporated as a non-profit organization and established a legal affiliation with the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation.

**SeVEDS Mission Statement** SeVEDS exists to reverse the economic decline of the Southeastern Vermont region.

**SeVEDS Vision Statement** Southeastern Vermont will have an economy that generates long-term growth and prosperity and that improves quality of life and sustains our quality of place.

Today, SeVEDS is led by a twenty-member board of directors representing public, private, and non-profit organizations from across the region.

### Executive Committee

**Chair** Jenna Pugliese (Stratton Mountain)

**Vice Chair** Patrick Moreland (Town of Brattleboro)

**Treasurer** Drew Richards (Richards Group)

**Secretary** Adam Grinold  
(Mount Snow Valley Chamber of Commerce)

### Standing Committees

**Post VY committee chair** Stephan Morse  
(Retired, Windham Foundation)

**Windham Region Young Professional committee chair** Jenna Pugliese  
(Stratton Mountain)

**Communications committee chair**  
Julia Sorensen (Brattleboro Retreat)

**Redevelopment** Robin Sweetapple (BDCC Staff)

**Workforce Development** Patricia Moulton Powden  
(BDCC Staff)

ROGER ALBEE, SEVEDS WORKFORCE COMMITTEE MEMBER



### Board Members

*Jenna Pugliese (Stratton Mountain)*

*Patrick Moreland (Town of Brattleboro)*

*Drew Richards (Richards Group)*

*Adam Grinold (Mount Snow Valley Chamber of Commerce)*

*Stephan Morse (Retired, Windham Foundation)*

*Lisa Sullivan (Bartleby's Books)*

*Jeff Lewis (Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation)*

*Susan McMahon (Windham Regional Planning Commission)*

*Bill Colvin (Bennington County Regional Planning Commission)*

*Bob Stevens (Stevens and Associates)*

*Colby Dix (Vermont Geeks)*

*Martin Langeveld (Strolling of the Heifers)*

*Jill James (Chroma Technology)*

*Ann Andresatos (New Chapter)*

*Cynthia Stoddard (Town of Putney)*

*Ariel Brooks (Marlboro College)*

*Francis "Dutch" Walsh (Town of Rockingham)*

*Konstantin VonKrusenstiern (Brattleboro Retreat)*

In addition, SeVEDS has established a CEDS advisory committee to augment the SeVEDS leadership with even broader community representation during the process of creating and implementing the economic development Strategy.

*Gail Nunziata (Latchis Arts)*

*William Anton (The Dover School)*

*Rachel Selsky (Camoin Associates)*

*Connie Snow (Windham Windsor Housing Trust)*

*Tapp Barnhill (Community College of Vermont)*

*Chris Moore (Attorney at law)*

### What will SeVEDS accomplish?

In 2010, SeVEDS began to uncover and understand the underlying regional economic and demographic trends impacting the region's performance. This work, in concert with input collected from business owners, workers, and residents, resulted in SeVEDS deciding to focus on four core themes for improving the region's economy:

- Reversing population decline.
- Increasing the number of well paying jobs.
- Improving the quality of the workforce.
- Raising household income relative to surrounding areas.

In 2011, SeVEDS adopted five objectives to guide the organization's activities:

- Create an operational and fiscal sustainability plan for SeVEDS by December 2011.
- Improve wage parity with the surrounding labor shed.
- Increase the size and quality of the workforce.

- Increase the 25–44 age cohort from 23 percent to 28 percent of the region’s total population by 2017.
- Create an entrepreneurial environment.

An additional objective was discussed early in the 2013 CEDS process:

- Build regional redevelopment capacity by 2018.

Recognizing the progress already made by SeVEDS since 2011, and as a result of all community input and the diligent work of the Board and CEDS advisory committee, the following six guiding objectives have been adopted as the core of the 2013 CEDS:

**Objective 1** Act regionally.

**Objective 2** Create an entrepreneurial environment and culture to enhance existing businesses and grow new business.

**Objective 3** Improve wage parity with the surrounding laborshed.

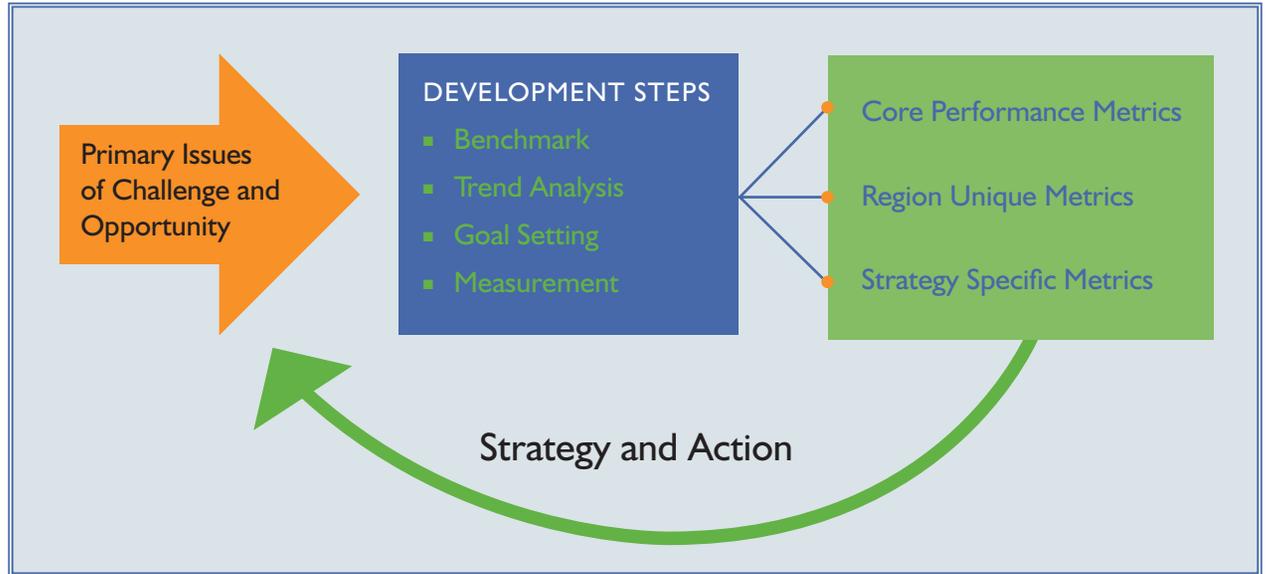
**Objective 4** Increase the size and quality of the Workforce.

**Objective 5** Retain and attract younger talent through engagement linkages, lifestyle amenities, and meaningful career opportunities.

**Objective 6** Develop immediate VY-specific workforce and site mitigation strategies prior to the 2014 closure of Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant.

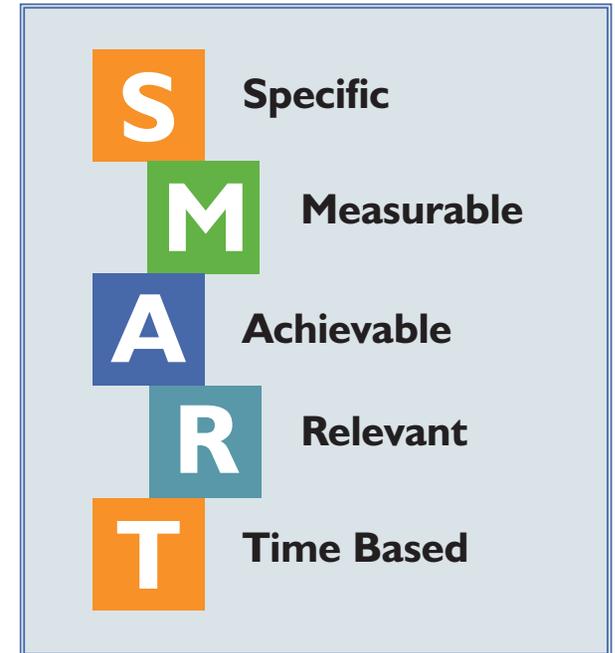
### How will this Strategy be different from previous planning efforts?

Economic development, as practiced by many communities, is plagued by a lack of seriousness about measurable progress and tangible improvement in the livelihood of residents. Traditional programs, such as marketing and recruiting, are necessary components of a well-rounded economic development effort, but insufficient if the goal is economic transformation, which is expected for Southeastern Vermont.



SeVEDS is employing ViTAL Economy’s S.M.A.R.T. CEDS framework and principles to guide the development of SeVEDS S.M.A.R.T. CEDS Report. These principles include:

- **Process**—based on proven best practices for regional community economic development and open, transparent collaboration.
- **Regional focus**—coordinating and leveraging assets at the regional level in order to compete successfully in the global economy.
- **Asset-based**—focus on indigenous assets and home-grown competitive advantage rather than defining strategies around what the region lacks.
- **Diversified**—regional resiliency requires diversification in order to weather downturns and navigate economic change successfully.
- **Measureable strategy**—informed by trends, relevant to the true priorities of the region, and focused on tangible progress.
- **Disciplined and consistent**—open collaboration requires a commitment to broad participation but recognition that all ideas are not equal and priorities matter in order to be successful.





# SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

## Economic Profile

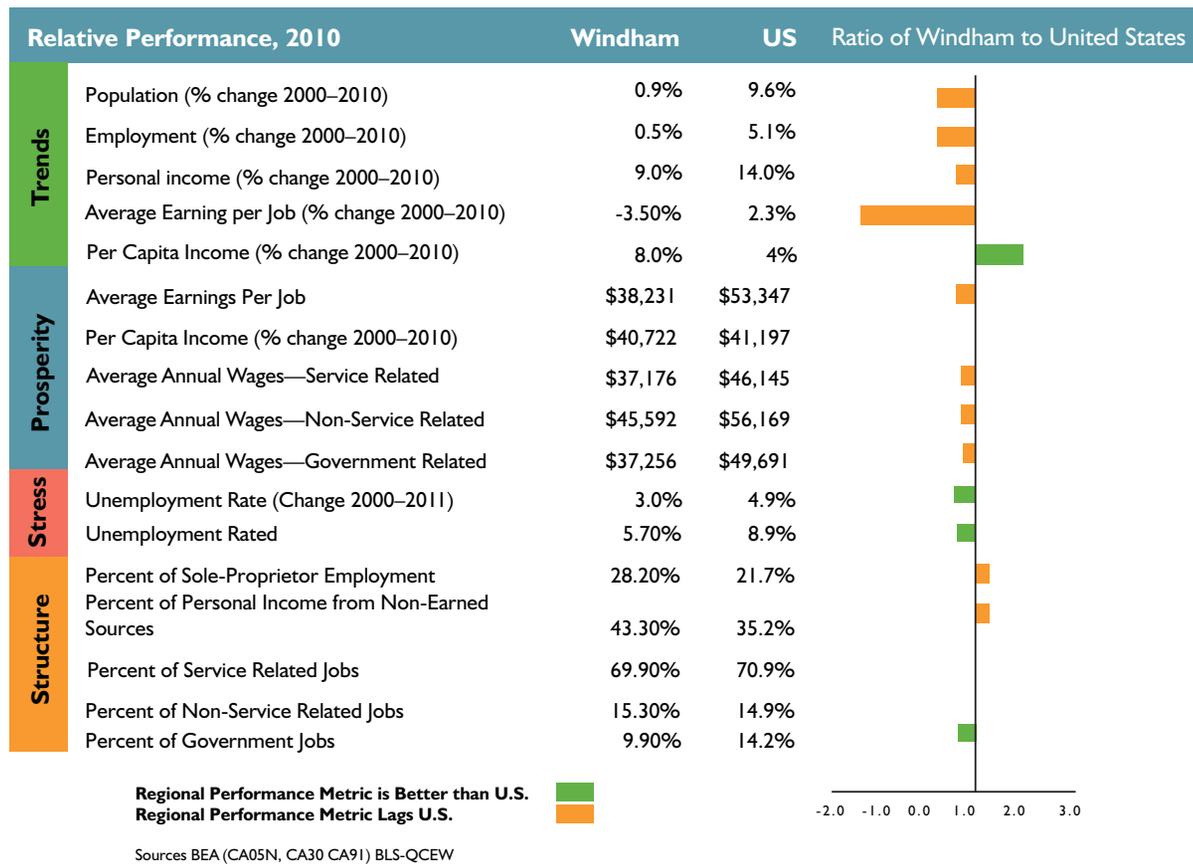
Data, while informative, tells only part of the story in terms of identifying key trends that are impacting a regional economy. Data must be combined with the influence of events, people, perceptions, and attitudes in order to get as close as possible to what could be called “truth” about the performance of a regional economy.

This section highlights key data findings that, when combined with input collected from businesses, residents, and other stakeholders, can inform the goals, objectives, and activities outlined in the regional strategy.

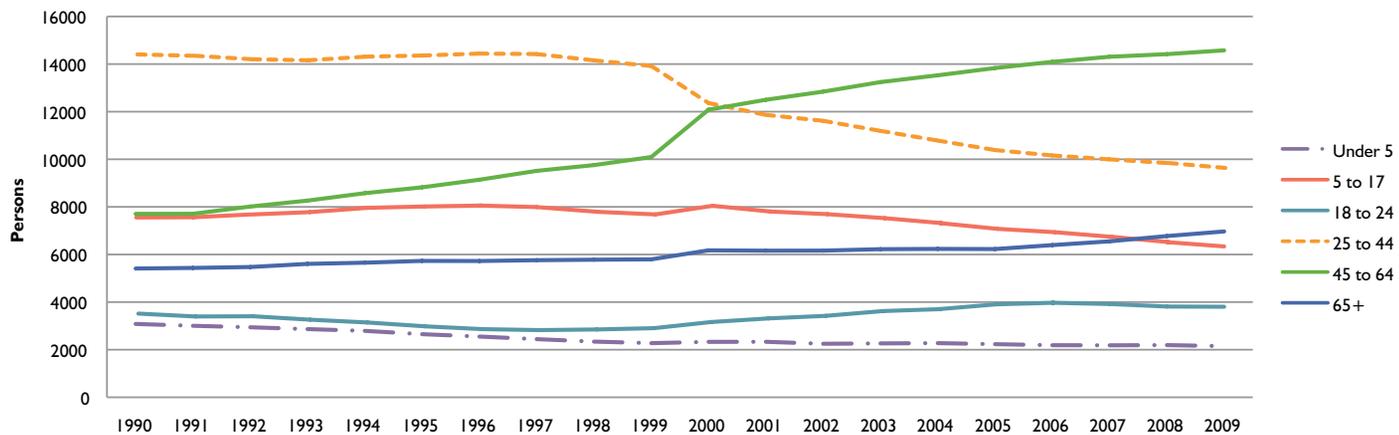
Key events and issues impacting analysis of the Southeastern Vermont economy:

- On the night of April 18, 2011, a devastating fire swept through the iconic Brooks House in downtown Brattleboro, destroying 50 housing units and displacing 8 businesses.
- Four months later, at the close of August, Tropical Storm Irene’s torrential rain led to wide-spread and record flooding which caused significant destruction to homes and commercial property, business interruption and massive devastation to critical public infrastructure.
- Vermont, in particular Southeastern Vermont, must continue to plan for a post-Vermont Yankee (VY) reality with the potential loss of hundreds of high-wage jobs and considerable economic impact on the region. Entergy has announced the date certain closure of VY as December 2014.
- Perceptions and attitudes about what constitutes “appropriate” economic development and growth are not universally shared in Vermont and perhaps even less so in Southeastern Vermont. In fact, some have expressed a preference for no economic growth.
- With release of data from the 2010 Census, it has become starkly apparent that projecting future population trends for Southeastern Vermont defies trend analysis and further confirms the stagnant nature of the regional economy.
- Windham County is aging faster than almost any other county in Northern New England or in the US, which raises questions about the region’s ability to achieve long-term, sustainable development.

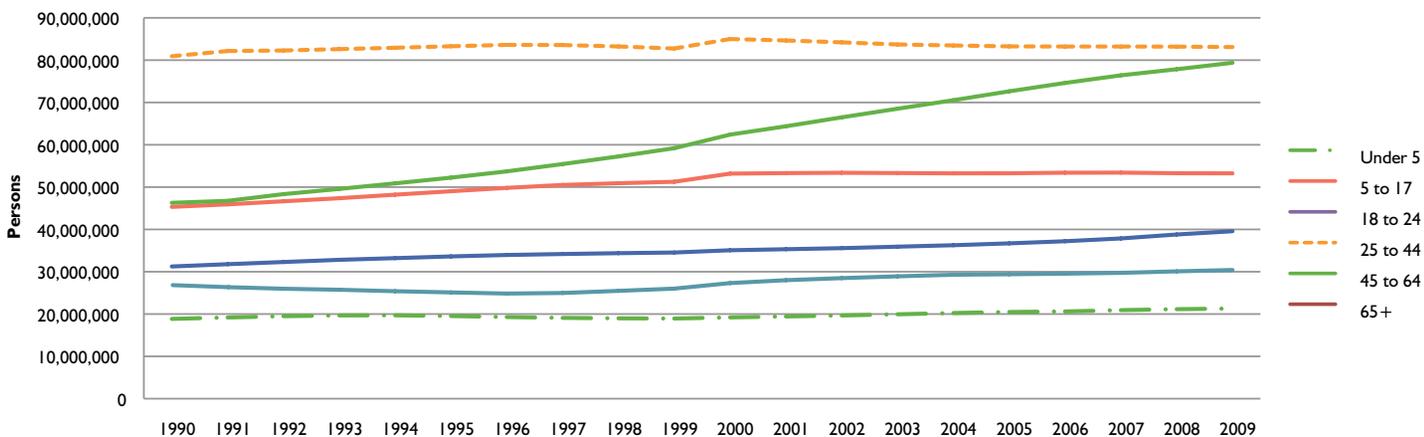
### Economic Performance Comparisons—Windham County vs US



**Windham County, VT  
Demographics Trend 1990–2009  
by age bracket**



**United States  
Demographics Trend 1990–2009  
by age bracket**

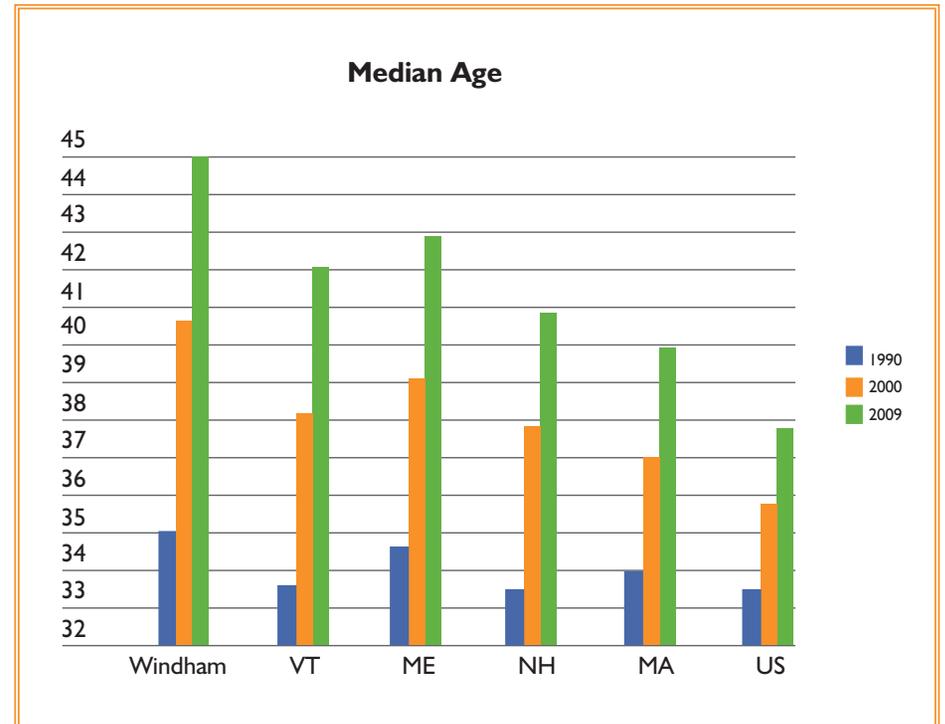
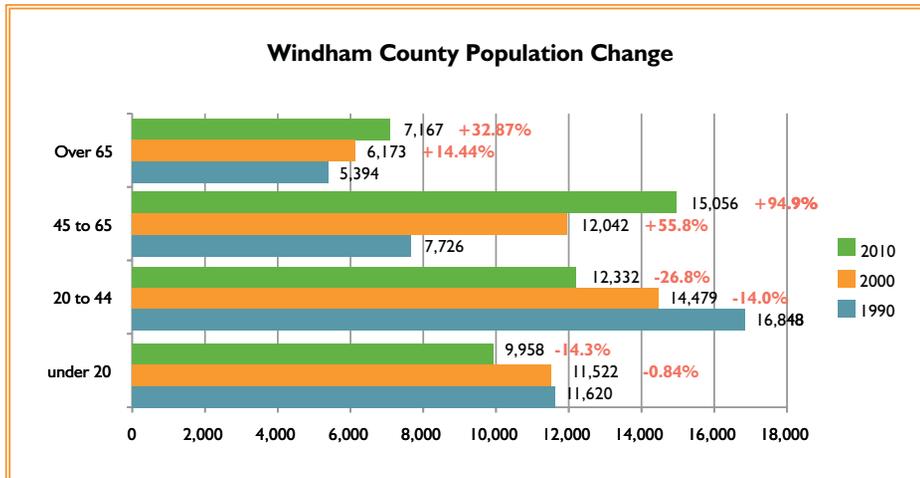


The following paragraphs highlight only portions of the data analysis completed for this CEDS. See Appendix C for the complete data findings.

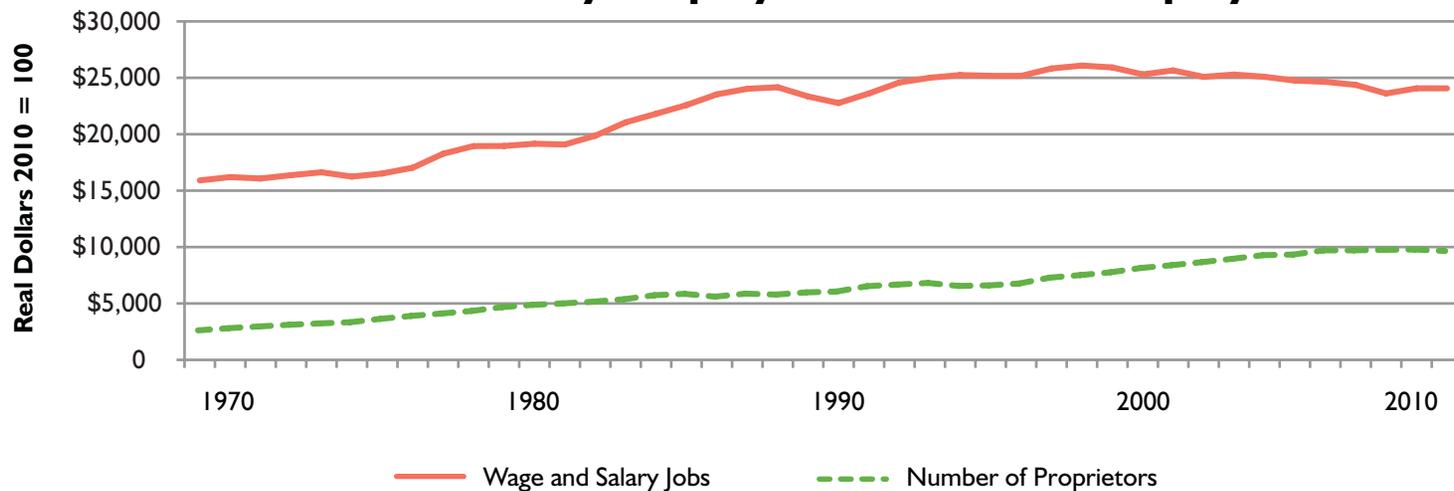
**Southeastern Vermont is getting older.** In the 2010 Census, Maine and Vermont ranked #1 and #2 as the oldest states, and Windham County is aging faster than Maine or Vermont. There

has been a significant increase in the population approaching retirement age. Age cohorts entering the working population (late teens and early twenties) have been small and there has been a significant decrease in persons of prime workforce and childbearing age. If current trends persist, this decline will accelerate, as there has been a downward trend in the number of school-aged children since 1990s.

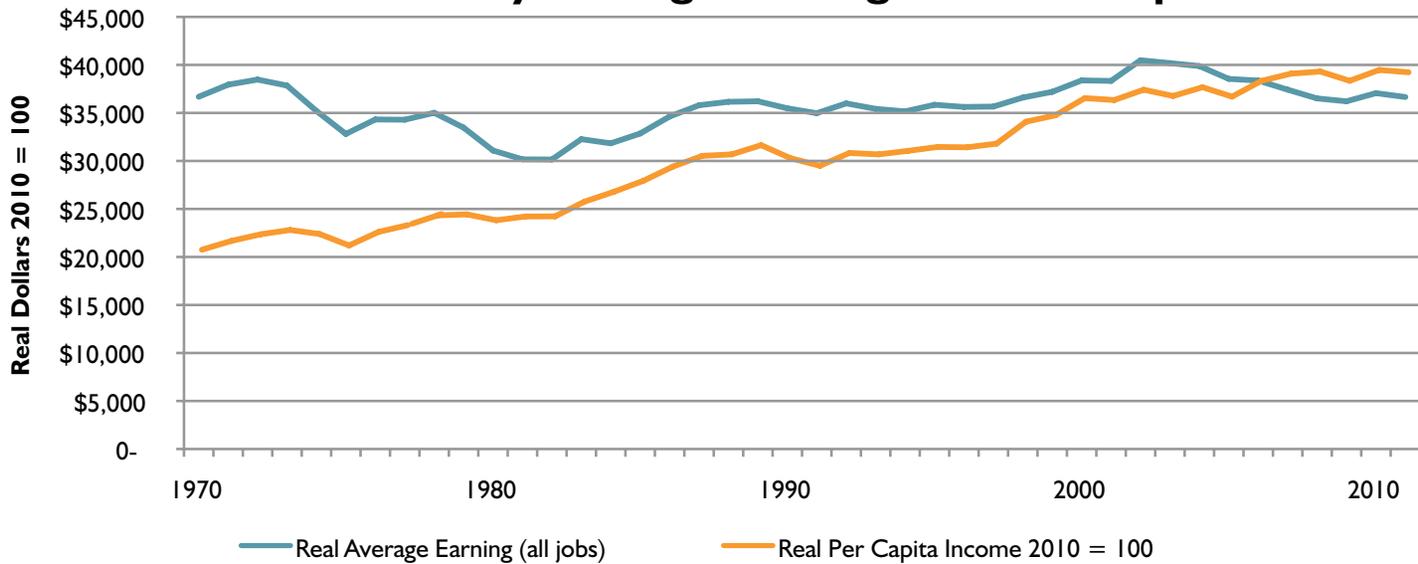
**Job creation has been stagnant since the early 1990s.** Between 1995 and 2011, wage and salary employment has been stagnant, after increasing during the twenty years from 1970 to 1990. Self-employment has shown steady increases over the last forty years. However, self-employment may not be a viable option for many young people entering the workforce for the first time. More employment opportunities are needed in order to attract and retain young residents and highly-mobile young professionals in today's labor market.



### Windham County Employment and Self-Employment



### Windham County Average Earnings and Per Capita Income



**Non-wage income is driving gains in prosperity.**

From 1970 to 2011, average earnings per job in Southeastern Vermont, adjusted for inflation, fell from \$36,682 to \$36,657, a drop of \$25 during that 42-year period. In that same time period, real per capita income grew from \$20,755 to \$39,232, which is an 89% increase. Rising per capita income is an encouraging indicator for regional economic development, but the fact that it's decoupled from wage growth suggests that most gains in standard of living are through rents, investments, and other forms of income available primarily to older workers and retirees.

**Average wage in Southeastern Vermont is lower than nearby markets.**

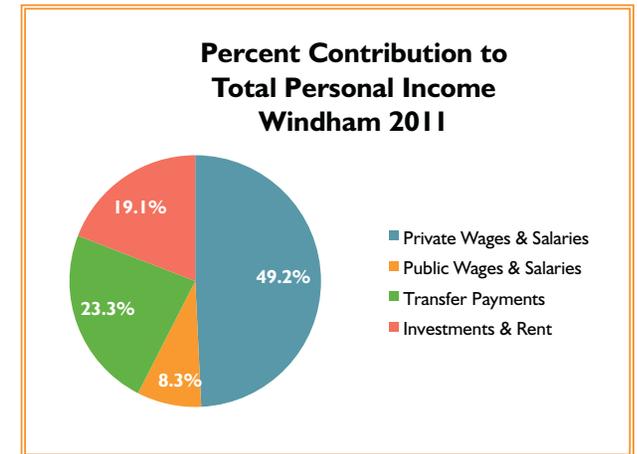
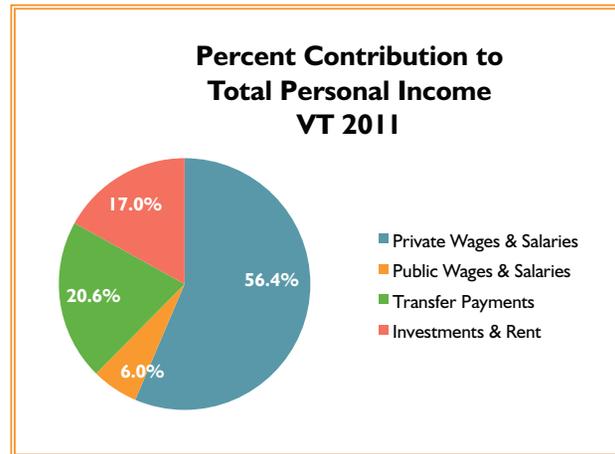
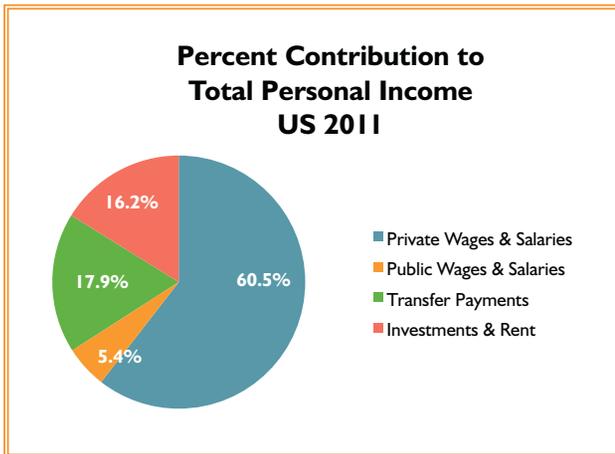
Wages and salaries are a function of skills, productivity, and supply and demand

forces, as well as the structural make-up of the regional economy. Examining Southeastern Vermont's wage structure in comparison to the rest of Northern New England reveals that the region is at a significant disadvantage in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce due its lower average wage.

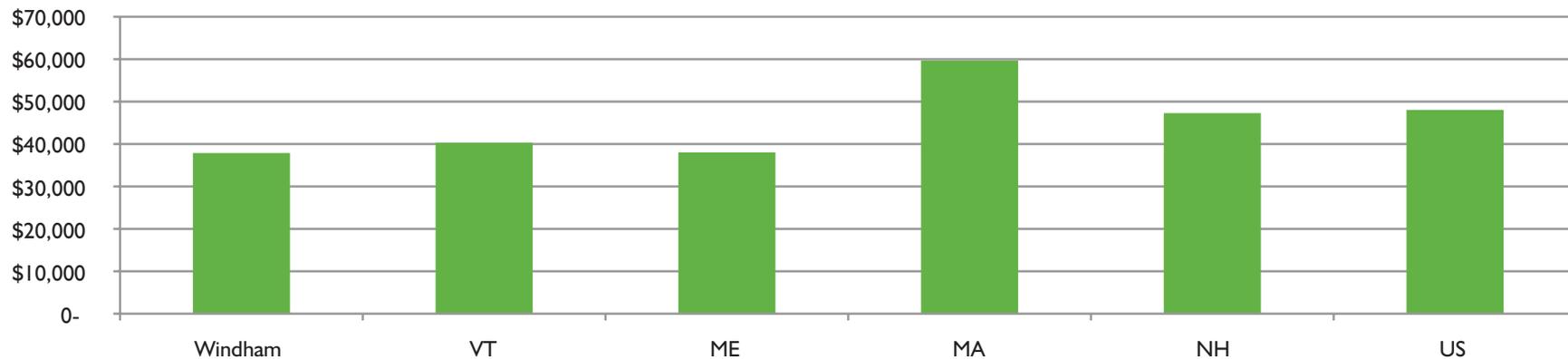
For example, college graduates earn 18 percent more in Cheshire County, NH, and 23 percent more in Hampshire County, MA, than in Windham County, VT.

This situation would be even worse were it not for net inflow commuting from surrounding counties contributing approximately 9.8% of the total workforce. However, this comes at the expense of a net outflow of approximately 5.1% of total regional earnings.

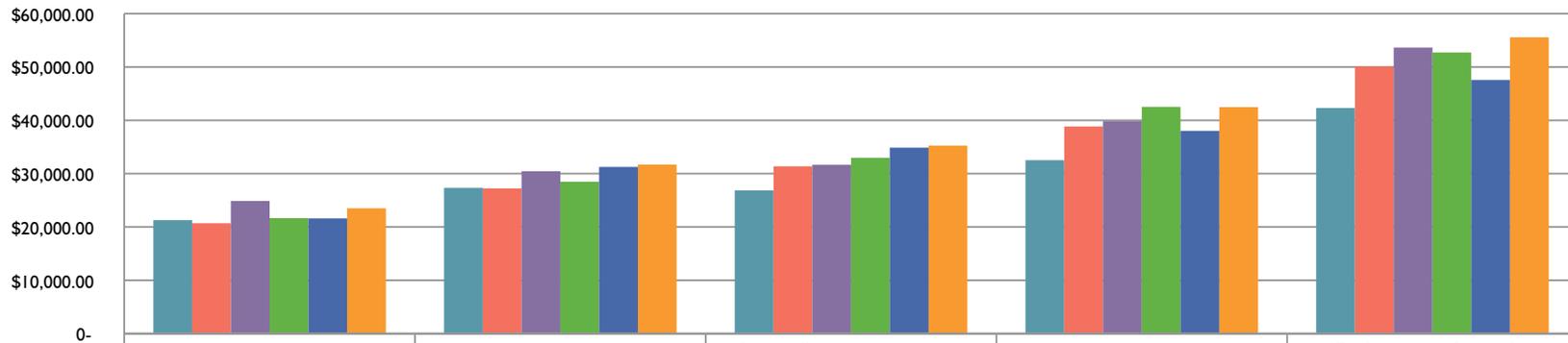
The economy of Southeastern Vermont must be viewed in the context of the broader functional labor shed. This labor shed transcends state, county, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, Windham Regional Commission and other political and planning boundaries. Keene, NH is the largest employment center in the labor shed with 18,661 jobs to Brattleboro's 10,956. Fourth in six is Greenfield, Massachusetts at 9,961, followed closely by Bennington, Vermont at 9,744. Only a small fraction of the labor pool commutes over the mountains between Brattleboro and Bennington. The Windham region is a net importer of labor from both New Hampshire and Massachusetts.



### Average Annual Wage



### Median Earning by Educational Attainment



	Less than high school graduate	High school graduate	Some college or associate's degree	Bachelor's degree	Graduate or professional degree
Windham, VT	\$21,269	\$27,327	\$26,855	\$32,518	\$42,316
Vermont	\$20,698	\$27,231	\$31,374	\$38,837	\$50,090
Cheshire, NH	\$24,866	\$30,452	\$31,653	\$39,857	\$53,647
Sullivan, NH	\$21,654	\$28,480	\$32,972	\$42,523	\$52,721
Franklin, MA	\$21,604	\$31,254	\$34,869	\$38,024	\$47,570
Hampshire, MA	\$23,505	\$31,703	\$35,248	\$42,480	\$55,568



BRATTLEBORO RETREAT

### Opportunities—Competitive Advantages

Southeastern Vermont enjoys several distinct competitive advantages due to the following factors:

- Vermont natural/fresh/green/wholesome branded products or services.
- Expected rapid expansion for demand of green building products.
- Small-scale, high value, technology driven manufacturing—regional history and skills in precision manufacturing dating back to mid-1700s.
- Scale consistent with demographics and political tendency to embrace small to medium sized and/or employee-owned business.
- Natural environment for skiing and outdoor recreation.
- Ski resorts with facilities and associated housing that is underutilized in the off-season months.
- Post-secondary education institutions with strong, niche liberal arts reputations.
- Strong New England market recognition for rural arts and culture.
- Concentration of healthcare facilities.
- Proximity to major New England and East Coast markets.
- Easy interstate access.
- Expectation of increased speed and weight capacity on improved rail line to New York City.
- Foreign Trade Zone.
- Significant recent investment in high speed internet infrastructure.

### Southeastern Vermont can compete effectively in several industries

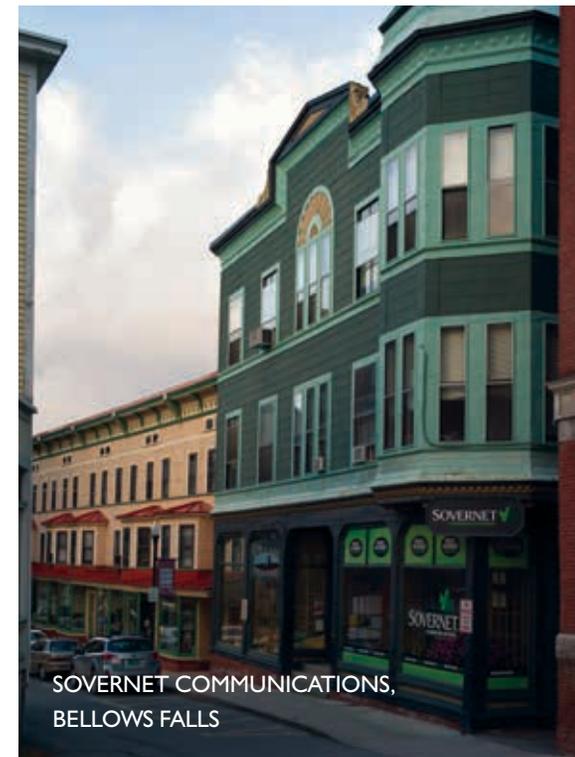
Based on input collected through the CEDS community engagement process, data analysis and asset mapping, and industry interviews, the following industry sectors appear to present significant opportunities for Southeastern Vermont:

- Technology driven precision manufacturing.
  - ◆ Optics
  - ◆ Medical devices
  - ◆ Aerospace
- Business and technology services
  - ◆ Shared services center
  - ◆ Software and IT services
  - ◆ Environmental services
- High quality post-secondary education
  - ◆ International business and culture center of excellence
  - ◆ Intensive summer retreats
  - ◆ Nursing and medical
  - ◆ Administrative support
- Transportation, distribution and logistics
  - ◆ Assembly and distribution of medical devices
  - ◆ Marketing and distribution of green building products
  - ◆ Northern New England transportation distribution and logistics hub
  - ◆ Passenger rail gateway
- Hospitality, retail, arts and tourism
  - ◆ Winter sports
  - ◆ Fall foliage
  - ◆ Active arts and cultural community vibrant downtown and village centers
  - ◆ Resort collaboration with post-secondary education programs
- Healthcare
  - ◆ mental healthcare
  - ◆ Regional health services
- Green building products and services
  - ◆ Product manufacturing
  - ◆ Publishing and consulting
  - ◆ Marketing/distribution under a “Green” Vermont brand
- Niche agricultural products
  - ◆ Vermont fresh/green branded value added
  - ◆ Niche market products
  - ◆ Small- to mid-Size production scale

### Capacity Gaps

Southeastern Vermont suffers from some specific and significant capacity gaps:

- Entrepreneur and innovation ecosystem.
- Redevelopment system.
- No interconnected, collaborative system between high school, community college, and universities.
- True workforce development is non-existent outside of individual business employee training.
- Digital literacy and technology utilization.



SOVERNET COMMUNICATIONS,  
BELLOWS FALLS

### Recent investment in telecommunications infrastructure needs to be leveraged

Telecommunications, whether wired, wireless, or broadband, are essential elements for any region to effectively compete in a 24/7 global economy. Insufficient access, adoption, and digital literacy are holding the region back. Spotty cellular and broadband coverage do still exist, despite concerted and dedicated efforts to unite telecom service providers in addressing these gaps.



### Technology Investments and Requirements

Up until recently, the situation regarding broadband access throughout Windham County could be summarized by stating that a variety of “telco” and “cableco” products are readily available in a significant and growing percentage of the region. However the state of Vermont and in particular the Windham Region, have been the focus of significant public and private investment in telecommunications infrastructure.

Through a public-private partnership (Vermont Fiber Connect), the Vermont Telecommunications Authority (VTA) and Sovernet Communications are investing a \$33.3 million grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program. Through this grant, Sovernet has developed a 773 mile, fiber-optic, middle-mile network in southern, central, and northeastern Vermont. The project (build-out completed in October 2013) connects over 340 community anchor institutions in the project area, including state-owned buildings, public safety towers and all public and private K-12 schools, public libraries and colleges. As the service is currently configured, the capability of Sovernet’s fiber service is 100 Gigabits per second. The service is currently deployed to anchor institutions in nearly every community in the Windham Region.

“Last mile” access—residential and business telecommunications connection outside of primary pockets of population density—exist through a combination of limited range DSL technologies and cableco expansions. It is expected that with the new Sovernet middle-mile fiber network completed, that a multitude of service providers will expand end user connections throughout the region. In the meantime, a second significant telecommunications project is picking up the slack. Vtel of Springfield, Vermont was awarded an \$81 million grant and a \$35 million loan

package to deploy Wireless Open World (WOW) project, a statewide 4G/LTE wireless broadband network. This network is designed to provide cutting edge wireless broadband service to every underserved and un-served community in Vermont.

Looking around the Windham region today, it is clear that the telecommunication landscape is forever changed. For the first time in our state’s history, we occupy the enviable position of being ahead of the curve in deploying both robust and comprehensive capacity. Connectivity, particularly in concert with other quality of place factors, may prove to be a defining competitive advantage. However, strategies for leveraging this advantage are not fully formed. Significant work needs to be done in support of digital literacy as well as marketing the availability of these resources to those industries that can best capitalize on these investments.

### Issues of Challenge and Opportunity

**Analysis** Trend data shows that the Southeastern Vermont region has been declining as an employment hub over the past ten years. This is evidenced by the absolute decline in number of jobs in the region as well as the quality of the employment regardless of age cohort.

Additional data for the labor shed that serves the Southeastern Vermont region demonstrates that median earnings for those living outside Windham County are far more favorable than for those living in Windham County, whether in Massachusetts or New Hampshire counties.

The perception of overall high educational attainment across a broad spectrum of the local populous in the region is not borne out by the data. In fact, the region is producing a much higher percentage of under-educated younger workers than Vermont or



VERMONT YANKEE, VERNON

the surrounding regions. Given increasing demand for highly-skilled workers across nearly all industry sectors, this trend of declining educational attainment among younger residents of the region is concerning. High educational attainment resides mostly in an older, more affluent population, retirees or others who have moved to Southeastern Vermont for the lifestyle.

The preponderance of an under-educated working age population and the inability of the region to meet workforce demand for high-demand, middle-skill occupations are fueling a staggering decline in the 24–45 age cohort, which is the primary birthing and family-rearing years. This reality calls for a real focus on increasing educational attainment in the region.

On 26 August 2013, Louisiana-based Entergy announced that it will close the Vermont Yankee (VY) nuclear power plant in October 2014 citing declining profitability in the face of low natural gas

prices nationwide. The VY operation currently employs 630 permanent employees and numerous contractors. Total payroll for all permanent employees was reported in June, 2012 by Entergy Vermont Yankee as being approximately \$66 million. Wages paid by Vermont Yankee are relatively high for the Windham region, with the 2006 average wage for Vermont Yankee employees being \$103,777. The payroll for contracted personnel during 2006, a non-outage year, totaled \$16,120,183.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) regulations allow for three decommissioning strategies: DECON, SAFSTOR and ENTOMB. To date, no NRC-licensed facilities have requested the ENTOMB option. Each of the other two options has different impacts to employment levels and the timing of the loss of employees. The two options may require different skills than the current workforce resulting in a transient workforce for a period to be determined. The economic impacts to the region could vary greatly depending

on whether the decision is to fully decommission, put the plant in SAFSTOR for up to 60 years as allowed by law, or a combination of SAFSTOR for a shorter period followed by decommissioning.

A fundamental factor that limits the redevelopment potential of the decommissioned sites is the storage of spent reactor fuel on the site, and the related safety and security issues. This has major implications for site reuse.

It is clear that the loss of the professional and support jobs, the loss of the related payroll and loss of contracts Vermont Yankee has with local vendors will have an impact on the economy of the region. Those impacts will be felt in Windham County but also neighboring communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire where the other 60% of Vermont Yankee employees live and shop. Recent examples of the loss of nuclear power plants in Rowe, Massachusetts and Wiscasset, Maine speak to significant impacts to property taxes, jobs and student populations. As of this writing, it is unclear which path will be taken for Vermont Yankee and therefore difficult to fully measure impacts until these questions are answered.

**Strategic Implications** Strategies need to be developed to address the looming implications for the SeVEDS workforce from the projected loss of 8,322 in population for the 0–44 age cohort and the increase of 8,538 in population for the 45+ age cohort. If this is not addressed, existing businesses will not be able to continue in the region.

Strategies that leverage the multi-cultural knowledge of people associated with *World Learning* and its affiliates might be a potential answer for addressing these challenges. This could be one of several measurable strategies to address a goal of increasing the 20–44 age cohort.

The region needs to closely evaluate what constitutes an attractive innovation environment that can be developed based on the real assets of the region, which could reverse the dramatic decline in the 25–44 age population. The vast majority of new jobs are created through innovation, especially at small, employee-based and increasingly virtual firms of networked professionals.

There is an urgent need to develop a more holistic understanding in the region of the potential synergy between economic growth strategies formed around knowledge-based enterprises and goals related to quality of place. The idea that the goals are mutually exclusive is an inhibiting factor for economic development. Economic development is not a “zero-sum game,” despite the highly competitive nature of the industry. Resources need to be allocated toward the development of a SeVEDS regional leadership development system focused on managing and growing a collaborative, entrepreneurial, boundary-free regional economy.

Southeastern Vermont appears to be most attractive to the 45–64 age demographic. This is the population cohort that has the experience to participate in Professional, Scientific, Technical (PST) and Professional and Business Services (PBS) job sectors, which are projected to be the second fastest area of job growth through 2018. Yet the region is underperforming in the percentage of jobs in these sectors.

To summarize the overall economic profile, Southeastern Vermont region continues to lag behind the US in measures of economic trend, prosperity, and structure. Similar to the rest of Vermont, this region came through the “great recession” of 2008–2009 with lower unemployment rates than the national average. However, since 2010, the region has not



added new jobs at the same rate as the national average. As noted above, the announced December 2014 closure of Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant poses significant implications to the short-term and long-term regional economy. Under the DECON option, it is estimated that VY employment will fall below 400 within nine months following shutdown of power generation. Under the best case scenario (barring protracted permitting and legal challenges) DECON could take approximately 5 years, during which time employment at the site (staff and contractors) will dwindle to less than 20 permanent employees. Under SAFSTOR option, employment will drop precipitously to an estimated 30 to 45 permanent employees. The state has estimated lost General Fund

tax revenues from cessation of power generation will be on the order of \$11.5 million per year. Local (Vernon) property tax revenues are estimated to decline from approximately \$240,000 annually to between \$7,500 and \$14,500. Total negative impact on the regional economy will be approximately a 3.5 percent decline in direct employment, 8 percent earned wages lost, and a decline in gross regional product of approximately 9 percent accounting for direct, indirect and induced impacts. Furthermore, examining other similar communities, it is estimated that the shock to the residential real estate market will depress prices in the near- and long-term by anywhere from 10 to 15 percent, particularly in the Vernon, Bellows Falls and Brattleboro area markets.

BELLOWS FALLS  
OPERA  
HOUSE

VALLEY  
PROVISIONS  
LOCAL FOOD  
& SUNDRIES  
CAFÉ

FARMERS  
MARKET

TATTOO

**SeVEDS: AN EVOLVING ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP**

BABB DIRECTOR JACOB ROBERTS,  
CEDS COMMITTEE MEMBER RACHEL SELSKY,  
AND SEVEDS BOARD MEMBER FRANCIS “DUTCH” WALSH



SeVEDS emerged over a period of time from a regional discussion of Broadband and Cell coverage to a broader focus on economic development. The small group that originally gathered around those issues shared a feeling that the regional economy, broadly conceived, was deteriorating. Unable to capture this understanding in data or crisp language, they began to look for both people who shared the perception, and for data to explain the feeling. Finding people with a similar understanding turned out to be easier than anticipated as, with a little probing, we found town managers worried about their grand lists, which were flat to declining against rising costs; company HR directors with key unfilled and unfillable staff positions; hospitals unable to find enough physicians and nurses; colleges unable to hire enough faculty; and young adults feeling very out of place in a community adapted to older adults.

Fairpoint Communications invested in an economic development program known as ViTAL Economy, which used its experience and data resources to focus and shape our experience into urgency; giving voice to feelings that had been inchoate. From that, and now armed with a clear understanding of the urgency, the early participants in SeVEDS were able to communicate the situation to a wide range of people. Through these interactions, the group recruited individuals to a broad mission of invigorating the regional economy.

As time goes on, knowledge and confidence have deepened and the message has found enough resonance to the point now where economic development is a topic of general conversation. Local legislators for instance, who would never have talked about it because they were never asked and had no knowledge, now rush to be associated with SeVEDS's initiatives and projects. Towns have willingly contributed funds when asked, though they have yet to understand fully the long-term nature of the undertaking. Companies,

which were initially doubtful about the possibility of undertaking a real and relevant set of actions based on a data-driven plan, have become strong supporters.

Lest SeVEDS seem too complete, there are still doubters, and many who are only partially invested—many looking for “action today” not “plans today and action tomorrow.” The understanding that SeVEDS is motivated by, and an expression of, community needs throughout the region is not yet fully embraced. Yet this evolving partnership around economic development by the six regional colleges, the key towns’ Select Boards and Town Managers, large employers, the arts community, the Regional Commission, and many individuals (principally young professionals) continues to gain strength. SeVEDS continues to evolve in its self conception and ability to explain both itself and its mission.

In April 2013, SeVEDS board members and staff participated in an assessment of regional readiness for economic development, using a readiness assessment tool facilitated by ViTAL Economy. The objective of this assessment was to assist SeVEDS to recognize organizational strengths and weaknesses and to adapt best practices into the organization that will be of significant benefit throughout the entire region as they work to improve the community and economy.

See Appendix D for full assessment tool PDF

This assessment focuses on the following ten areas of CEDS best practices:

**Regional Collaboration** Creates meaningful and sustainable grass-roots collaboration across public, private, non-profit and traditional political boundaries

**Organization: SeVEDS**

**CED Organizational Assessment**

Best Practice Categories	Low 1	2	Medium 3	4	High 5
Regional Collaboration	2.5				
Leadership Excellence	2.75				
Change Management	1.75				
Balanced Approach	2.75				
Asset Based Approach	2.75				
Measureable Outcomes	3				
Innovation & Entrepreneurship	1.75				
Life Cycle Finance	2				
Regional Brand Promise	1.5				
Regional Transformation Mindset	2				

**Leadership Excellence** Empowers proactive leadership to take ownership of their economy—growing leaders with accountability, authority, legitimacy and transparency

**Change Management** Adopts the eight steps critical to managing change to enable the region to more effectively participate and compete in the global economy

**Balanced Approach** Integrates economic development, education and workforce development assets with the private sector to build effective knowledge-based, human capital and quality of place centers of excellence

**Asset-based Approach** Identifies, connects and leverages tangible and intangible assets to sustainably grow and transform the regional economy

**Measurable Outcomes** Employs measurable benchmarks, goals and strategies which transform the region through measurable outcomes

**Innovation and Entrepreneurship** Builds innovation ecosystems that create a lasting regional climate of entrepreneurship, risk taking and innovation

**Life Cycle Finance** Provides access to a life cycle of equity and debt financing for regional public, private and non-profit ventures

**Regional Brand Promise** Defines, creates, communicates and delivers on a clear brand promise that promotes and sustains regional competitive advantages

**Regional Transformation Mindset** Sustains commitment to CEDS as a journey that is a marathon not a sprint, transformative not incremental

Being a relatively young organization, SeVEDS board members saw plenty of opportunity to establish best practices as they implement strategies outlined in this CEDS. It should be of particular note that SeVEDS has brought broad regional collaboration to a region that, by its own admission, lacks a history and culture of cooperation beyond individual village and town boundaries.



COMMON WEALTH DAIRY, GUILFORD



# GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES



Using the data that SeVEDS has outlined, this section will state four core goals and the six objectives that will help us reach those goals. Under each objective are a series of strategies intended to directly incorporate the region's challenges and opportunities and which provide themes for improving the region's economy. These goals, objectives and strategies are the metrics by which SeVEDS will measure success in the coming years and the intention is that they will be updated in 2018.

### Goal 1: Reverse population decline

- Increase population from 2011 baseline of 44,266 (estimated) to 46,266 by 2018.
- Increasing proportion of 25–44 year-olds from 21% to 25% of total population by 2018.
- Double the percentage of foreign-born residents in the region from 3.5% to 7% of total population by 2018.

### Goal 2: Increase the number of well-paying jobs

- 1,054 new jobs at \$46,340 and 702 new jobs at \$42,130 by 2018.  
(new regional average wage goal)
- Increase wages of 4,650 jobs by \$5,000 per year.
- Increase median annual income for associates/some college from \$27,869 to \$32,328.
- Increase median annual income for bachelor's degree from \$34,155 to \$40,597.

### Goal 3: Improving workforce quality

Increase associate degrees/some college and technical certificates among 18–24 year old age bracket by 2018.

### Goal 4: Raising household income relative to surrounding areas

- \$174M in new wages and \$470M in new GDP.
- Reach regional GDP of \$3.07B.
- Improve the ratio of net earned income to total income from .566 to .65.

## Objective 1: Act regionally.

**Strategy 1.1** Implement a regional, asset-based S.M.A.R.T CEDS and ecosystem, which expands public, private and non-profit collaboration with a common strategic vision that is annually updated.

**Action Plan 1.1.A** Expand representation and engagement of private sector in the SeVEDS initiatives and board.

**Action Plan 1.1.B** Institutionalize a culture of collaboration across boundaries by formalizing a Technical Working Group (TWG) as a regional Subject Matter Expert (SME) of economic and workforce development professionals and educators drawn from across the region in collaboration with BDCC and Windham Regional Planning Commission (WRC) staff. The TWG will bring together community, workforce development and planning practitioners in the region to share knowledge and opportunities to advance the pace of regional and local economic development.

**Action Plan 1.1.C** The Southeastern Vermont region will achieve a good to excellent rating for best practices in regional CEDS and collaboration by end of 2018.

**Strategy 1.2** Maintain a regional economic development planning organization, including funding, to update and guide implementation of the CEDS.

**Action Plan 1.2.A** Prepare and maintain 3-year budgets for operations and initiatives.

**Action Plan 1.2.B** Develop and implement a private fundraising campaign with a goal of raising \$250,000 in 2015 from the private sector.

**Action Plan 1.2.C** Commit public sector partners to multi-year investment commitment.

**Action Plan 1.2.D** In conjunction with WRC and BDCC, support towns incorporating the CEDS strategies as appropriate in their economic development planning.

**Strategy 1.3** Create redevelopment capacity in the Southeastern Vermont region.

**Action Plan 1.3.A** Research legal options for the creation of a SeVEDS redevelopment authority unrestricted by town or village boundaries.

**Action Plan 1.3.B** Conduct an inventory and assemble a database of distressed and/or vacant properties with redevelopment/re-use potential.

**Action Plan 1.3.C** Conduct a market possibilities assessment for commercial and industrial real estate.

**Action Plan 1.3.D** In 2015, set goals for number of properties to be redeveloped and capital investment attraction.

**Strategy 1.4** Recognize and blend quality of place characteristics and concepts into the SeVEDS strategies.

**Action Plan 1.4.A** Establish a group of relevant regional stakeholders to review quality of place concepts and index methodologies to craft a set of appropriate regional metrics.

**Action Plan 1.4.B** Develop and conduct several community presentations describing the role and critical components of quality of place within the SeVEDS Strategy.

**Action Plan 1.4.C** Develop internal (within Windham Region) and external (out of Windham Region) marketing plan.

**Objective 2: Create an entrepreneurial environment and culture to enhance existing business and grow new business.**

**Strategy 2.1** Within three years, implement an

innovation ecosystem which provides tools and services to enhance the capacity for innovation within existing and new businesses. In addition, this ecosystem should foster entrepreneurship and the likelihood of success for new and existing entrepreneurs.

**Action Plan 2.1.A** In 2013, engage with existing entrepreneurs to determine the critical services and tools that enhance the likelihood of success for themselves and new entrepreneurs. Encourage their involvement with mentoring new entrepreneurs to utilize their expertise.

**Action Plan 2.1.B** Assess regional innovation and entrepreneurial climate based upon best practice criteria—elements found in the Innovation Index—such as facilities, governance, business services, access to capital, business networks, culture, R&D capacities, etc.

**Action Plan 2.1.C** Develop new capacity

based on the assessment in 2.1.A and 2.1.B.

**Action Plan 2.1.D:** Identify New England R&D centers and innovation entities that can link to the region’s targeted industry clusters and niche markets.

**Action Plan 2.1.E** Create a regional business incubator or accelerator.

**Action Plan 2.1.F** Conduct a robust business visitation and outreach program annually with the goal of assisting 50 existing businesses and 25 new or potential businesses each year.

**Strategy 2.2** Expand and enhance Windham County fixed broadband subscriptions and wireless access to global standards.

**Action Plan 2.2.A** Launch a network provider community of interest in 2014.

**Action Plan 2.2.B** Verify and benchmark existing broadband and wireless access and subscription rates in Windham County utilizing the Vermont Telecommunications Authority (VTA).

**Action Plan 2.2.C** Design a comprehensive broadband adoption and digital literacy initiative targeting residential, institutional, and commercial users.

**Action Plan 2.2.D** Work with telecom providers and the VTA to bridge last mile gaps between new and existing mid-mile broadband networks.

**Strategy 2.3** Leverage ultra-high speed broadband expansions.

**Action Plan 2.3.A** Convene a knowledge group to articulate the new capacity and opportunity.

**Action Plan 2.3.B** Design a comprehensive public education initiative targeting residential, institutional, and commercial users to promote the new capacity and opportunity.





**Action Plan 2.3.C** Ensure new capacity and opportunity is a part of entrepreneurial support programs and regional business marketing strategies.

### **Objective 3: Improve wage parity with the surrounding laborshed.<sup>2</sup>**

**Strategy 3.1** Increase employment opportunities for mid- and high-skilled labor

**Action Plan 3.1.A** Establish a healthcare cluster action team by June 2014.

**Action Plan 3.1.B** Establish a technology-driven manufacturing cluster action team by June 2014.

**Action Plan 3.1.C** Establish a green building products and services cluster action team by end of January 2014.

**Action Plan 3.1.D** Complete industry sector value chain and market analysis studies for the three targeted industry clusters by September 2015.

**Action Plan 3.1.E** Utilize existing assets to expand employment via a collaborative, synergistic relationship between the ski resort community and higher education assets to create a Chautauqua Institution<sup>3</sup> type educational tourism experience by summer 2015.

**Strategy 3.2** Expand contribution to the regional economy from the global economy by leveraging businesses with global connections seeking higher skilled workers in high wage jobs.

**Action Plan 3.2.A** Create a database of businesses with international relationships.

**Action Plan 3.2.B** Map international, linguistic, cultural, and technical knowledge assets.

**Action Plan 3.2.C** Create a global marketing plan that links with international trade marketing tools and programs to expand markets and attract new business to leverage regional assets.

**Action Plan 3.2.D** Define three global niche markets having value chain gaps that can be filled by regional assets (This is in addition to the clusters identified in Strategy 3.1 above).

**Action Plan 3.2.E** Identify workforce skill gaps that might be filled by international workers and create a worker recruitment plan.

**Action Plan 3.2.F** Identify potential needs of international workers and develop a plan to meet those needs.

**Action Plan 3.2.G** Develop an immigration attraction strategy focused on doubling the percentage of the foreign-born population in the region.

### **Objective 4: increase the size and quality of the workforce**

**Strategy 4.1** Develop a collaborative workforce center of excellence between providers and users of workforce development services that identifies and connects existing workforce development assets while also defining, defines future workforce requirements and gaps by September 2014.

**Action Plan 4.1.A** Inventory education and workforce training resources.

**Action Plan 4.1.B** Conduct a workforce inventory of the top 25–50 employers in order to project the number of new workers and the occupations needed given growth and turnover. Utilize this information to work with area K-12 schools, career technical centers and higher education to align education and training programs. Update this information every two years.

**Action Plan 4.1.C** Define 3–5 career pathways that will meet the needs of the priority industries defined in Strategy 4.2. career pathways are an integrated collection of programs and services intended to develop an individual's academic,

technical and employability skills; provide them with continuous education and training; and place them in high-demand, high-opportunity jobs.

**Action Plan 4.1.D** Expand technical educational opportunities in the region both secondary and post-secondary.

**Action Plan 4.1.E** Identify workforce development best practices appropriate to the region.

**Action Plan 4.1.F** Recommend and implement workforce development collaborative plan by December 2014.

**Strategy 4.2** Increase number of associate degrees/some college and technical certificates with a particular focus on the 18–24 year old age bracket.

**Action Plan 4.2.A** Utilize the hiring inventory to identify critical skill needs in key industry sectors.



G.S. PRECISION, BRATTLEBORO

**Action Plan 4.2.B** Work with the Windham Higher Education Cooperative (WHEC) to develop education programs that meet targeted industry needs with joint marketing for unique programs. The WHEC consists of Vermont Technical College, Community College of Vermont, Marlboro College, Landmark College, Union Institute and University and World Learning/SIT Graduate Institute.

**Action Plan 4.2.C** Work with universities to establish a University Center in Windham County.

**Action Plan 4.2.D** Partner with UMass and other post-secondary education institutions to offer degree and certificate programs virtually via broadband technology.

**Objective 5: Retain and attract younger talent through engagement linkages, lifestyle amenities, and meaningful career opportunities.<sup>4</sup>**

**Strategy 5.1** Develop a Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) strategy connecting the SeVEDS region to the New England Knowledge Corridor by January 2016.

**Strategy 5.2** Develop a livable communities strategy by December 2015.

**Strategy 5.3** Leverage tourism assets to attract and retain young resident families.

**Strategy 5.4** Develop a coordinated regional marketing plan to promote Southeastern Vermont as the best place to live and work.

**Action Plan 5.4.A** Implement Southern Vermont Sustainable Marketing Project by developing a brand for Southeastern Vermont

focused on recruitment of talent and engagement of visitors. Create a website for the region that displays career, economic and visitor opportunities and includes a “job board.”

**Action Plan 5.4.B** Coordinate stakeholder buy-in by the top 75 employers in Southeastern Vermont at 5K annually.

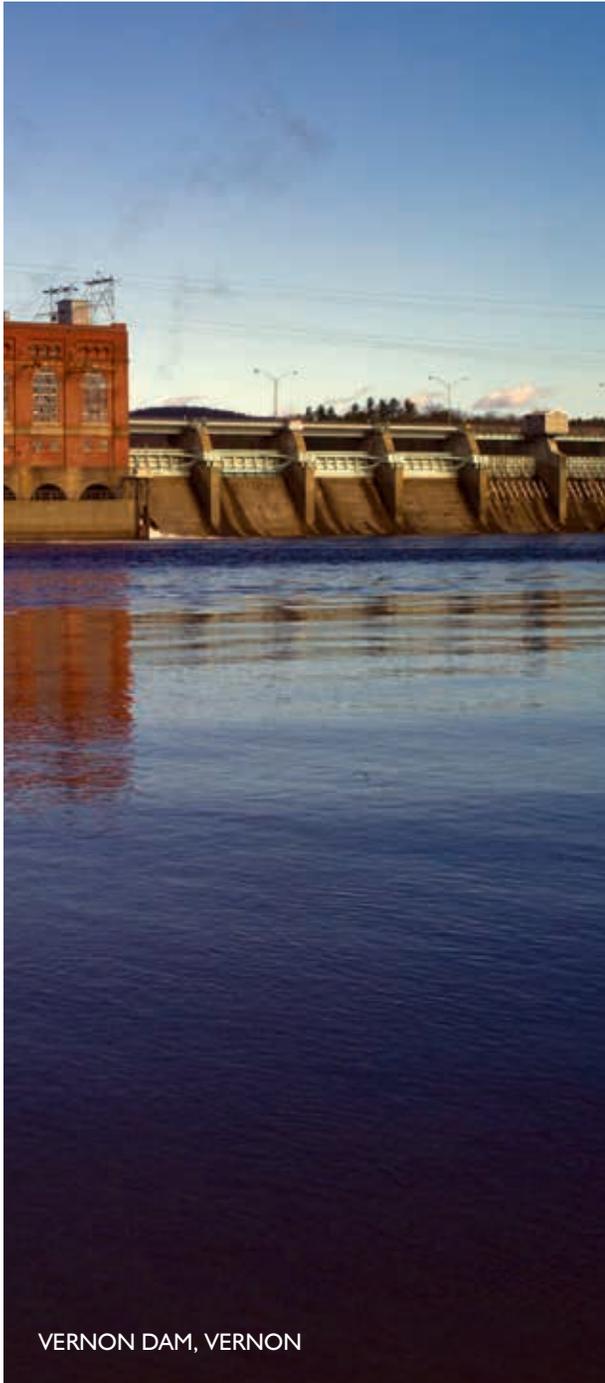
**Action Plan 5.4.C** Coordinate stakeholder buy-in by the 40 largest Southeastern Vermont tourism businesses and events at \$25,000 annually to fund an annual tourism marketing campaign.

**Strategy 5.5** Implement a Young Professionals Group (YPG) to support and attract 22–44 year old professionals and workers.

**Action Plan 5.5.A** Based on the young professionals survey conducted in 2013, identify interests, concerns, and needs of younger population.

**Action Plan 5.5.B** Engage a representative group of younger individuals (ideally 22–44 year olds) in the community to assess interests and the role of young professionals in the region’s economic future.

**Action Plan 5.5.C** As a result of Action Plan 5.5.A and 5.5.B, recommend a set of initiatives to be adopted in order to better support both the YPG and entrepreneurs in the regions such as: business seminars, speakers, business plan competitions, investment forums, social events, relocation support, mentoring, and referrals.



VERNON DAM, VERNON

## **Objective 6: Develop immediate, VY-specific workforce and site impact mitigation strategies prior to its 2014 closure.**

**Strategy 6.1** Plan for the loss of at least 600 high paying jobs due to the closure of Vermont Yankee.

**Action Plan 6.1.A** Work with VY and Entergy corporate leadership to inventory employee occupation mix and skills which can be redeployed into other targeted jobs and in the regional economy.

**Action Plan 6.1.B** Proactively engage and contract with state and federal agencies to provide post-VY employment transition planning and outplacement services.

**Action Plan 6.1.C** Work with Entergy, state, and federal legislative representatives to ensure that appropriate funds are made available for economic impact mitigation planning and project/initiative implementation.

**Action Plan 6.1.D** During 2014, develop relevant, implementable post-VY strategies and action plans for inclusion in the first CEDS update.

**Action Plan 6.1.E** Determine how many existing VY employees may have an interest in starting their own business. Provide appropriate entrepreneurial support.

**Strategy 6.2** Provide support for Windham Regional Commission's engagement in regulatory and non-regulatory closure and decommissioning activities. WRC has stated they intend to:

**Action Plan 6.2.A** Provide a regional voice in regulatory processes at the state and federal level.

**Action Plan 6.2.B** Coordinate with sister agencies in Massachusetts and New Hampshire in support of tri-state regional responses to the closure and decommissioning.

**Action Plan 6.2.C** Represent and advocate for local/regional government in national and federal decommissioning deliberations (Nuclear Regulatory Commission, federal legislation, federal rulemaking, NGOs, National Association of Development Organizations and National Association of Counties).

**Action Plan 6.2.D** Create and maintain an online regional decommissioning information center to keep the public informed about ongoing closure and decommissioning processes.

**Action Plan 6.2.E** Research and issue tracking related to the eventual closure and decommissioning, and legal, regulatory and policy issues related to the same.

**Strategy 6.3** Implement action items from post-VY task force report on mitigating job loss impacts and GDP impacts:

**Action Plan 6.3.A** Short-term options

- ◆ Expansion of assistance services for existing businesses.
- ◆ Marketing outreach designed to promote the area to visitors, potential homeowners and potential business investors.
- ◆ Application of state resources to a defined comprehensive mitigation plan.
- ◆ Prepare for the proposed location of a Vermont Technical College location in Brattleboro.
- ◆ Advocate for immediate decommissioning of VY following closure, rather than long-term SAFSTOR, so that there is mitigation in the form of decommissioning jobs and economic impact over a period of up to 10 years.

**Action Plan 6.3.B** Longer-term options

- ◆ Expansion of education services through state investment to create greater opportunities at Windham Regional Career Center, Vermont Technical College, Community College of Vermont, University of Vermont as well as the private institutions: Marlboro College, Marlboro Graduate School, Union Institute, World Learning/SIT Graduate Institute and Landmark College.
- ◆ Expansion of healthcare services and senior housing and assistance services.
- ◆ Support for startups including incubator space and services as well as support for specifically identified clusters like food, energy conservation, tourism, recreation.

**Action Plan 6.3.C** Mitigation of real estate valuation impacts

- ◆ Regional marketing efforts designed to attract young retirees, career changers.
- ◆ Homeowner tax credits designed to encourage investment in improving condition of existing housing stock.
- ◆ Create a commercial property inventory system in order to coordinate existing entities with inventory data and mutual marketing steps.

**Action Plan 6.3.D** Mitigation of human capital losses

- ◆ Reported by Entergy, WRC—TB—5, filed in docket 7440.
- ◆ Entergy pays a generation tax in lieu of a property tax.



SIT GRADUATE INSTITUTE, BRATTLEBORO

- ◆ Steps to attract and retain new and recent college graduates, including career services and entrepreneurship training.
- ◆ Steps to retain new and recent high school graduates not attending college, including training, internships and matching programs to connect students with employers.
- ◆ Promotion of Vermont and specifically Southeastern Vermont to immigrants and

immigrant communities with steps to include a partnership with World Learning/SIT and other existing entities with international outreach.

- ◆ Steps to engage retirees and second home owners.



**Action Plan 6.3.A** Mitigation of tax revenue losses

- ◆ Expansion of tax base with new businesses and residents.
- ◆ Consolidation of municipal services; exploration of regional or county-level services

**Endnotes**

- 1 ViTAL Economy's S.M.A.R.T. CEDS framework and principles to guide the development of CEDS.
- 2 A labor shed is defined as the area or region from which an employment center draws its commuting workers.
- 3 See Chautauqua Institution website [www.ciweb.org](http://www.ciweb.org)
- 4 Action Plans for Strategies 5.1–5.4 to be developed in by September 2014 for inclusion in first annual CEDS update to accommodate completion of the Southern Vermont Sustainable Marketing Project.
- 5 Background: On 26 August 2013, Entergy announced the date certain closure of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant in Vernon, setting the closure for October 2014. This announcement came just two weeks after the parent company won a protracted legal battle with the State of Vermont over relicensing of the generation facility. Even though the legal hurdle for continued licensed operation had been cleared and notwithstanding that the plant requires significant capital improvements for continued operations with a remaining expected lifespan of 20 more years, the company cited falling electrical rates and low natural gas prices as the primary factor in the decision to shut down this facility. In the history of nuclear energy in North America no nuclear power generation site has ever been returned to productive use following closure. SeVEDS must therefore plan for this date certain closure.

A photograph of two young girls in a market setting. The girl on the left has long, wavy brown hair and is wearing a colorful, patterned sleeveless top. The girl on the right has long, wavy blonde hair with a purple hair clip and is wearing a dark blue sleeveless top with a colorful geometric pattern. They are both smiling and looking at each other. In the background, there are trees and a man playing a guitar. A semi-transparent orange banner is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

## **STRATEGIC PROJECTS, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES**

## Vital Projects:

- 1 Create job board for employers in Windham and Bennington counties (connects to Southern Vermont Sustainable Marketing Program)—**SeVEDS Workforce Development**
- 2 Assess existing key elements of innovation ecosystem, determine missing elements, research models for missing elements and develop metrics for evaluating success—**Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**
- 3 Build a more sustainable childcare system through innovative shared practices to increase overall program quality and earnings, workforce development for childcare workers—**Windham Child Care Association**
- 4 Build a rapid prototyping facility at existing shop for prefab high performance building envelopes and resilient mechanical systems—**Ironwood Brand, PreCraft, STIX**
- 5 Extend electric, water and sewer to new industrial sites off of Exit 1 in Brattleboro—**Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**
- 6 Scope and sequence project to build workforce pathways—**SeVEDS Workforce Development Committee**

- 7 Southern Vermont Sustainable Marketing Project for employers and tourism entities, a mechanism for collaborative recruitment and tourism marketing—**Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**
- 8 Legal creation of Wilmington Downtown Commercial Redevelopment Project whose purpose is to purchase 10 vacant buildings in downtown and renovate—**Wilmington Works**
- 9 Define regional organization structure of redevelopment organization, conduct market study, conduct regional inventory of vacant commercial and industrial sites—**Windham County Redevelopment Group**
- 10 Leverage broadband including measuring demand for last mile investments to increase utilization and market region's high capacity—**Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**
- 11 Southeastern Vermont machine apprenticeship program—**SeVEDS Workforce Development Committee**
- 12 Windham Region Village Water and Wastewater Need Assessment and Feasibility Plan—**Windham Regional Commission**

This section identifies a number of regional projects, programs and activities that are designed to implement the goals and objectives of the CEDS. The overarching purpose in identifying vital projects is to publically acknowledge the important actions the region can support which will make demonstrable progress towards our regional economic development objectives.

A scoring criteria developed by SeVEDS was employed by the project selection committee. (See *Appendix F: CEDS Project Review Sheet and SeVEDS Request for Projects*). The project selection committee is comprised of a small group individuals representing the region who are seen as fair, impartial and practical, and are firmly established in their respective fields of expertise were chosen by SeVEDS to review, score and rank the 52 project submissions received. This committee consists of:

**Brent Betit**, Landmark College Senior Vice President

**Sky Foulkes**, Stratton Resort General Manager

**Tommy Harmon**, Sonnax Industries CEO

**Orly Munzing**, Strolling of the Heifers  
Executive Director

**Jill Zachery**, ROV Technologies CFO





STROLLING OF THE HEIFERS, BRATTLEBORO

#### Additional projects submitted for inclusion in the CEDS:

- Integrated workforce development system for the sustainable building and design sector in Windham County—**EON**
- Green Island Project—**Sustainable Valley Group**
- Bring Governors Career Ready Certificate to Windham County—**SeVEDS Workforce Development Committee**
- Downtown arts campus—environmental cleanup of two contaminated buildings, construction of a second theater, conference center and outdoor amphitheater, low income housing, gap year professional theater training—**New England Youth Theater**
- Feasibility study to determine if adequate facilities exist for expansion of Vermont Maple Cream Liqueur manufacturing facility—**Vermont Distillers**
- Perform analysis on viability of green building products and services cluster development—**SeVEDS**
- Job Readiness Program—**SEVCA**
- Construction of 80,000 sq.ft. base lodge utilizing local contractors—**The Hermitage Club**
- Windham region residential real estate market analysis—**Windham Regional Commission**
- Southeastern Vermont food and agricultural information center at the Robert H. Gibson River Garden, 157 Main Street, Brattleboro—**Strolling of the Heifers**
- Significant conversion of heating systems from heating oil to regionally produced pellet fuel to build pellet fuel distribution infrastructure—**FutureMetrics and Northeast Center for Social Issues Studies**
- Implement the Southeastern Vermont Initiative for Art Enterprises in order to enhance technical assistance available to small and emerging for-profit arts businesses broadly represented in NAICS codes 711110, 711120, 711130, 711190, 711510 that are located within Windham County, Vermont, with the primary service area of Brattleboro and Bellows Falls.—**Arts Council of Windham County, Inc.**
- Expanding regional tourism product offerings—**SeVEDS Workforce Development Committee and Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**
- Improve existing facility for year-round root crop storage facility—**High Meadows Farm and Greenhouses, LLC**
- Regional marketing of the HeART and Culture of Southern Vermont, Official Artisan Center of Southern Vermont facility to promote tourism, Development of SoVT Artisan Trail—**Arts Council of Windham County and Primetime Concepts**
- Biz network Route 30/West River Valley—**Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**
- Windham Voices—bring together sectors of the community to engage in civil and substantive conversations about the state of the regional economy—**SeVEDS Workforce Development Committee and Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation**



LANDMARK COLLEGE, PUTNEY

- Resource Circles: Creating Wellness in Windham County—**Vermont Wellness Education, L3C**
- Next Stage Arts Project renovation of 15 Kimball Hill—**Putney Historical Society**
- West River Community Kitchen and Food Storage Initiative—**West River Community Project**
- Additional cell tower—**Stratton Mountain Resort**
- Plant expansion—**The Winston Prouty Center**
- Dover Master Landscape Plan—**Town of Dover**
- Upgrade 3 base lodges—**Stratton Mountain Resort**

- Upgrade the Inn at Stratton Mountain—**Stratton Mountain Resort**
- Wilmington Water District Merger/Acquisition and Expand Wilmington Wastewater District—**Town of Wilmington**
- Preliminary research and development of large scale community solar photovoltaic project—**Tad Montgomery & Associates**
- Arts, Ag, Healing Summit—**Arts Council of Windham County**
- Convert three-screen movie theater in Dover into a multi artistic use center—**Memorial Hall Center for the Arts**

- Re-use of Melrose Terrace in West Brattleboro as workforce housing—**Brattleboro Housing Authority**
- Feasibility study to determine on logistics and opportunities in SoVT to relocate to accommodate significant growth—**Southern Vermont Natural History Museum**
- Upgrade Snowbowl lift to high speed quad—**Stratton Mountain Resort**
- Twin Valley High School Building Feasibility Project phase 2; implement findings of phase 1 feasibility study to repurpose 52,000 sq.ft. school building—**Town of Wilmington**
- Continued restoration of Bullock building as multi use community center in downtown Readsboro—**Readsboro Hometown Redevelopment, Inc.**
- Add 66 units of employee housing—**Stratton Mountain Resort**
- Permanent facility for recovery center in downtown Brattleboro—**Turning Point**
- Walkway Project connecting downtown to Landmark College and workforce housing—**Town of Putney**
- Green building and building research on— incentivizing use of window quilts and repair of old windows—**Tad Montgomery & Associates**
- Generate economic activity from forest products through culinary and medicinal mushrooms—**Tad Montgomery & Associates**
- County-wide Home Energy Conservation Initiative—**Tad Montgomery & Associates**



## APPENDIX

## SeVEDS Appendix List

**Appendix A**—Building Jobs in Windham County for 50 Years, ([www.brattleborodevelopment.com/about/newsletter/Spec-50th-Summer04.pdf](http://www.brattleborodevelopment.com/about/newsletter/Spec-50th-Summer04.pdf)), included by reference.

**Appendix B**—The Windham Regional Plan, ([www.windhamregionalplan.wordpress.com/2012/07/31/more-about-the-regional-plan/](http://www.windhamregionalplan.wordpress.com/2012/07/31/more-about-the-regional-plan/)), included and adopted as part of the CEDS by reference.

**Appendix C**—Windham County Economic Profile  
<http://seveds.com/economic-profile/>

**Appendix D**—SeVEDS CED Best Practice Assessment  
<http://seveds.com/seveds-assessment/>

**Appendix E**—SeVEDS FY 14 Final Plan  
<http://seveds.com/presentations/>

**Appendix F**—CEDS Project Review Sheet and SeVEDS Request for Projects  
<http://seveds.com/ceds-projects/>

**Appendix G**—CEDS Process  
<http://seveds.com/windham-region-comprehensive-economic-development-strategy-ceds/>

