



Economy: DRAFT Goals and Policies – 11/5/2014

Note: The Regional Plan Draft Review Committee discussed the comments received at the Oct. 14 Commission meeting on **Policy 4** and a majority of Committee members felt it was important to maintain one policy with strategies related to incubating small and micro businesses. Some minor changes were made to the language. It was proposed that, if necessary, the Commission could choose to vote on whether to keep the Policy as stated or to remove all references to “small and micro” businesses.

GOAL 1: FULL EMPLOYMENT¹ AND THE CREATION AND RETENTION OF HIGH QUALITY JOBS IN A DIVERSE RANGE OF OCCUPATIONS.

GOAL 2: BUSINESS RETENTION, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THAT ANTICIPATE AND MEET MARKET OPPORTUNITIES. *(Moved be presented in tandem with Goal 1)*

Policy 1: Promote career exploration and education planning for all young people and reduce barriers to participation in some form of post-secondary education or training.

- A. Promote sharing of best practices within the Region’s supervisory unions with regards to dual-enrollment, work-based learning internship and apprenticeship programs and assist with identifying resources and incentives for these efforts.
- B. Promote an annual regional Student Career Day/Job Fair event targeted to High School students for summer employment, job shadow opportunities and internships.
- C. Facilitate effort to identify partners and formalize network of STEM-related (science, technology, engineering and math) companies, high schools, educational institutions, Tech Centers, and Community College of Vermont (akin to Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. concept, applied to STEM sectors) to provide hands-on training and internships.
- D. Identify, inventory and support resources programs that place emphasis on sound management and mentorship for young workers, particularly at-risk youth, in partnership with service providers such as Washington County Youth

¹ The level of employment, or unemployment reate, which provides the maximum sustainable rate of economic growth and Gross Domestic Product without resulting in accelerating inflation. A Full Employment rate that is also just above the rate which will cause inflationary pressure is called the Non-Accelerating Inflation Rate of Unemployment (VT Dept. of Labor).

Services Bureau and ReSource/ReBuild.

- E. Support and engage with Young Professionals organizations to better understand professional development needs and barriers to workforce stability in younger workers.

Policy 2: Deliver training and life-long learning to retain and expand a robust workforce with skills to match needs for current and future available jobs.

- A. Support availability and awareness of training programs for underutilized workforce populations (e.g. dislocated, special needs and older workers) to attain skills to transition to new careers.
- B. Increase local delivery of information regarding regional workforce training resources (e.g. Front Porch Forum, employer groups/trade associations, municipal web sites).
- C. Promote partnerships with digital workforce training programs such as those piloted by the Vermont Digital Economy Project to increase access to workforce training opportunities, including those in more rural communities.
- D. Encourage and collaborate with the State to conduct or reference existing labor skills gap analyses, where available, to: i) improve workforce data availability, ii) identify the types of jobs that businesses need to fill, and iii) document anticipated skills shortages.

Policy 3: Focus retention, growth and development efforts on industries and businesses that are a good fit with the Region's existing economic base and support sustainable economic development.

- A. Increase collaboration between regional planning and economic development organizations, such as Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation, Capstone Community Action and Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce, in order to accomplish strategies identified in Policy 3. *(Moved from G to A)*
- B. Support and encourage expansion in sectors that are poised for growth, such as: health care, high tech manufacturing, software development and information technology, value added agriculture, higher education and recreation and tourism.
- C. Support education on sustainable business best practices, on topics such as recycling, use of environmentally friendly materials and processes, and implementing energy efficiency improvements.

- D. Explore opportunities to expand value added manufacturing networks (~~i.e. processing, storage, distribution, wholesale, retail, direct to consumer~~) and information exchanges.
- E. Develop and disseminate information on development incentives, techniques and resources for towns and local development groups.
- F. Provide a range of information regarding regulatory processes and available financial and technical resources and, where feasible, facilitate trainings for developers, entrepreneurs and business owners.
- G. Research cooperative development models (e.g. Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland, Cooperative Development Institute in Massachusetts, Cooperative Vermont in Burlington) and identify potential partnerships between the Region's cooperatives (the credit unions, food coops, and few worker-owned cooperatives) and other major "anchor" institutions (the State, educational institutions, etc.) to encourage more cooperative development in the Region.

Policy 4: Promote entrepreneurship and innovation in all business sectors. ~~and~~ Encourage small and micro business development.

- A. Assess zoning and other regulatory barriers to entrepreneurship and small and micro business development, including home-based businesses and diversified agricultural enterprises.
- B. Continue to expand availability and improve the quality of broadband to enable telecommuting and home-based work opportunities, particularly in more rural areas of the Region.
- C. Identify policy and programmatic gaps and opportunities to expand access to capital for businesses, particularly knowledge-based.
- D. Work with ~~Capstone Community Action~~ partners to explore opportunities to develop a network (~~e.g. "Community Capital Exchange"~~) where local businesses and investors come together to identify capital needs, investment, and opportunities to apply commercial strategies to maximize improvements in social and environmental well-being, such as Capstone Community Action's Community Capital Exchange initiative.
- E. Encourage organizations or professional associations to provide networking and a unified voice to creative economy sectors (writers, web designers, etc.).
- F. Explore opportunities for regional innovation partnerships and/or technology transfer with employers, educational and research institutions and other ~~public~~

partners.

- G. Encourage online marketing training and technology use for small and micro businesses, including participation in Vermont Digital Economy Project trainings and use of aggregated web platforms such as the Vermont Food System Atlas or Made in Vermont.
- H. Increase collaboration with business development organizations to enhance delivery of technical assistance to the wide range of small and micro businesses and entrepreneurial enterprises serving the Region.

Policy 5: Implement the goals and policies presented in Environment and Natural Resources, Utilities and Facilities, Community Resources, Healthy Communities and Land Use elements of this Plan that enhance and optimize quality of place to attract and retain employers and residents.

These efforts to enhance and optimize quality of place include preservation of historic and cultural assets; maintaining the scenic qualities of our agricultural and forest lands, protection of natural resources and environmental quality, expansion of local food systems and healthy lifestyles, and increased access to recreational opportunities and amenities.

Policy 6: Ensure availability of commercial and industrial space to meet employment and business expansion needs.

- A. Assess capacity of commercial and industrial space using available data, including existing GIS information, and identify the various types of commercial and industrial space needs.
- B. Assist municipalities in promoting marketable sites and identifying assets, deficits and options available to meet industrial and commercial site development needs; for example, the potential for use of small wastewater treatment systems.
- C. Maintain inventory and support the reclamation and redevelopment of blighted, contaminated or potentially contaminated sites (i.e. “brownfields”). Continue to actively seek funds to facilitate this effort.
- D. ~~Direct~~ For uses that do not require a rural location, guide and assist commercial, industrial and institutional uses ~~that do not require a rural location in locating to~~ locate in downtowns, villages and adjacent industrial areas, or ~~at those locations in locating~~ in the fringe areas that have been significantly developed and are zoned for such purposes.

Policy 7: Implement the goals and policies presented in the Energy, Utilities and Facilities, and Transportation elements of this Plan to maintain and plan for adequate infrastructure, energy, telecommunications, and transportation systems to accommodate and support business growth and expansion.

These efforts to maintain and plan for adequate systems to support business growth and expansion include support of:

- A transportation system that efficiently transports goods and services and employees to their place of work;
- An efficient and stable energy system that provides for reduced costs, consumption and reliance on nonrenewable energy sources;
- State-of-the-art telecommunications/broadband infrastructure that would increase work options and reduce commuting and its impacts on the transportation infrastructure and the environment; and
- Water, wastewater and storm water management systems in locations that allow for appropriately-scaled commercial and industrial expansion, higher densities and co-location of jobs, housing and services.

Policy 8: Support the continued use and sustainability of our natural resources and associated industries.

- A. Encourage the continued productivity of viable mineral resources, ~~and~~
- B. ~~Facilitate~~ Facilitate the use of locally obtained materials for building and highway construction and maintenance. Assist municipalities in mapping the important, accessible resources.
- C. Ensure that resource extraction operations follow best management practices to minimize impacts to the local and surrounding environment and other land uses, and to allow for site restoration.
- D. Implement the goals and policies presented in the Strong & Diverse Economy and Natural Resources and Environment element of this Plan related to continued use, sustainability and protection of productive forests and prime agricultural soils.

GOAL 3: INCOMES SUFFICIENT TO MEET OR EXCEED BASIC NEEDS WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE AND TO ACHIEVE FINANCIAL SECURITY.

Policy 9: Support and encourage the business community and policy makers in developing strategies for the retention and creation of jobs that pay a livable wage².

- A. Research and develop case studies of businesses that are pursuing or have achieved a livable wage for employees as a goal, research and identify primary barriers to businesses being able to pay livable wages, and research impacts of livable wage policies and incentives on the economies of other places.

Policy 10: Implement the goals and policies presented in the Housing, Transportation, Utilities and Facilities, Community Resources, and Healthy Communities elements to expand access to resources that promote stability in the workforce, including workforce housing, transportation solutions, affordable child care, and medical and mental health care.

Policy 11: Support efforts to develop and disseminate information on career pathways and advancement opportunities for industry sectors poised for growth.

- A. Encourage employers to provide for training and education opportunities for employees of all ages to acquire, maintain, and improve the skills and knowledge necessary to advance.
- B. Support statewide initiatives such as the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) Equity Pipeline and other Statewide Consortia developing career pathways in priority sectors identified in the 2020 Statewide CEDS, such as health care and value-added agriculture.

Policy 12: Support projects identified in the 2020 Statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

GOAL 4: DYNAMIC AND RESILIENT DOWNTOWNS, VILLAGES AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS.

Policy 13: Find new uses and opportunities for vacant and under-utilized sites and buildings.

- A. Encourage and assist applications for Village Center designations in existing compact settlements not yet designated by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development.
- B. Assist participating municipalities in designation renewals and in utilizing technical assistance and incentives offered by State designation programs to preserve and reuse significant, economically viable, and historic structures.

² Defined in statute as the hourly wage required for a full-time worker to pay for one-half of the basic needs budget for a 2-person household, with no children, and employer-assisted health insurance, averaged for both urban and rural areas (VT Legis. Joint Fiscal Office).

- C. Support rezoning of village centers for mixed-use development, encompassing commercial, light manufacturing, artisan and residential uses at traditional village density.
- D. Assist municipalities in: planning for capital investments, identifying barriers to redevelopment or reuse, and planning for adaptive reuse of buildings.
- E. Support and prioritize assistance with community-identified priority/anchor revitalization projects in our downtowns, village centers and growth centers as they are identified.

Policy 14: Focus infrastructure investments in downtowns, village centers and growth centers and promote use of healthy community design principles in public investments and land use regulations.

- A. Promote incorporation of Healthy Community Design³ and Complete Streets⁴ principles into public infrastructure, redevelopment projects, land use regulations and community engagement efforts.
- B. Assist municipalities in pursuing resources to upgrade infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, bike paths, multi-use paths, bridges, rail, water, wastewater, and stormwater. Promoted shared services via inter-municipal agreements where appropriate.

Policy 15: Increase economic resilience by mitigation of and adaptation to extreme weather events and flooding.

- A. Encourage and assist employment centers with participation in FEMA's Community Rating System to enhance community-wide floodplain management efforts and reduce flood insurance premiums.
- B. Develop and implement outreach strategies targeted to business and residential property owners to raise awareness of flood risk and promote strategies and resources to reduce vulnerabilities.
- C. Work with communities to upgrade flood hazard bylaws and improve storm water mitigation strategies in order to minimize risks to homes, businesses and public infrastructure.

³ Healthy Community Design links traditional concepts of planning (land use, transportation, community facilities, parks and open spaces) with health themes (physical activity, public safety, access to nutritious food, air and water quality, mental health and social equity) (Vermont Dept. of Health).

⁴ Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities (Smart Growth America).

- D. Encourage communities to direct new commercial or industrial development to areas not at risk from erosion and inundation flood hazards, where feasible.
- E. Consider the benefit to local and regional economic resilience when prioritizing assistance with Hazard Mitigation Assistance grants.

Policy 16: Support coordinated and complementary efforts to market the Region’s unique, yet-connected downtowns and villages.

- A. Utilize results from Vermont Downtown Action Team retail market analyses to assist with marketing available commercial space, business recruitment and start-up support.
- B. Promote collaborative marketing with common themes among regional downtowns and villages, chambers of commerce, scenic byway committees and Vermont Tourism via region-wide events and tours (e.g. cycling; hiking; food, farm and brewery; covered bridges; stone arts; and fall foliage) targeted to both visitors and residents.
- C. Support formation and expand capacity of community-based or business associations focused on village vitality, marketing and enhancements.

GOAL 5: SUSTAINABLE AND VIABLE AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST LANDS.

Policy 17: Promote and expand asset-based recreation and tourism with an emphasis on year-round offerings.

- A. Support efforts to develop and update local and region-wide inventories of natural, historic, scenic, agricultural and recreational assets at the local level to support tourism and quality of life promotion.
- B. Investigate feasibility of a region-wide promotion effort similar to Newport’s “Fresh by Nature.”
- C. Identify gaps in offerings and support expansion of facilities to develop off-season activities, host multi-day events, conferences and weddings and various related support services.
- D. Work with municipalities to identify viable options for expanded commercial and public outdoor recreational facilities, including trail development and related infrastructure that are environmentally and culturally sustainable.

- E. Explore options and pursue resources to update VT TrailFinder web site.

Policy 18: Foster collaborative partnerships among regional food system stakeholders.

- A. Assist with identifying sustainable collaborative frameworks and funding sources to continue the work of the Central Vermont Food Systems Council.
- B. Collaboratively host an annual meeting focused on best-practice-partnerships among economic development, land use planning and conservation stakeholders to support local food systems.
- C. Promote representation of the agricultural and/or forestry sector on town and regional economic development committees/boards.
- D. Promote Handbook for Local Action in Sustainable Agriculture developed by the State and targeted to municipal officials, boards and staff and local volunteers.