

**FRANKLIN COUNTY REGIONAL  
STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**Updated October 2005 – Active Through 2010**

**STRATEGY #1      BUILD WORKFORCE TO MAKE COMPETITIVE DIFFERENCE**

FCIDC will:

- Participate in the Business/Community Advisory Committee for Adult and Incumbent Worker technical programs at NW Technical Center. The purpose of this group is to identify the training needs of business, individuals and the community. Initiatives brought forth by this group include bringing VTC Nursing programs to St.Albans; the development of Industrial Electricity training; the Allen Bradley training contract and the VT Training Program Grant. The 2005 meeting will be held on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

FCIDC has:

- Assisted the following companies in obtaining State Training Program funds.
  - Franklin Foods, Inc.
  - American Rail Dispatching Center
  - Mylan Technologies, Inc.
  - Simport Plastics
  - Vermont Precision Tools, Inc.
  - Energizer
  - Franklin-Grand Isle Workforce Investment Board (WIB)
- Partnered with the WIB to coordinate meetings between company managers, school curriculum coordinators and superintendents to exchange ideas on how schools can better prepare students, that do not plan to attend college, for the workforce when they graduate from high school.
- Participated with the WIB to sponsor an annual Career Expos in St.Albans. High School junior and seniors, as well as adults are introduced to companies recruiting employees. The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Expo will be held March 31, 2005.
- Developed a WIB Training Center at the Multi-Tenant building in Swanton. Completion expected July 1, 2005. *Due to some unforeseen circumstances, the Training Center “fit-up” was delayed until January 2006.*
- In partnership with FCIDC and VT Technical College (VTC), the WIB developed an Industrial Maintenance Technician Training program in the new training center. Classes started September 20, 2005 serving 9 manufacturers and 17 employees. The idea originated with Adult and Incumbent Worker Advisory Board-
- The WIB is developing a program that will bring industry speakers, high school students and guidance counselors together to profile local employment and training opportunities.

## **STRATEGY #2      RETAIN VIBRANT BASE OF QUALITY JOBS**

FCIDC has:

- Developed a Wage & Benefit Survey and requests each area industry to complete it. Information received is held in strict confidence. FCIDC compiles data from each company into one report and distributes it back to the companies that participated. Companies find survey information beneficial to their individual planning process.
- Visited (and will continue to visit) area industries to offer any assistance needed. Most recently, January 2005, visits were made to Bertek, Inc. and VT Precision Tools, Inc.
- Sponsored annual Legislative Business Tours. Local Representatives and Senators, as well as representatives of the U.S. Senate and Congress have visited and toured the following industries and organizations in 2004:
  - Leader Evaporator
  - NW Technical Center
  - Peerless Clothing, U.S.A.
  - Quality Services Technology
  - American Rail Dispatch Center, Inc.
  - Cargill Nutrition Feeds, Inc.
- Toured the following industries in 2005:
  - PBM (formerly Wyeth Nutritionals)
  - Bertek Systems, Inc.
  - Simport Plastics
- Coordinated an annual CEO Roundtable to be held January 26, 2005. The purpose of the roundtable is to discuss, with CEO's, their challenges and opportunities. A Vermont Technical College (VTC) representative will attend to discuss the need for and possibility of developing a local VTC training site or at the very least – classes.

**STRATEGY #3      STRATEGIC RECRUITMENT FOR VIBRANT BASE OF QUALITY JOBS TO HELP DIVERSIFY REGIONAL ECONOMY.**

FCIDC has:

- Compiled a 3-ring binder that lists all incentive programs and technical assistance available through local, county and state sources. The binder is sent to companies inquiring about the area.
- Added pictures and descriptions of vacant industrial buildings to the FCIDC and the ThinkVT websites.
- NY offers many incentives to companies wanting to open or expand business in this area, which are difficult to compete with. One significant challenge is the cost of electricity which is 40% higher in VT than in NY. FCIDC has been able to work with other agencies and organizations, putting together packages to recruit two industries from Canada who chose VT over NY.
  - Simport Plastics has expanded their operation to Georgia, VT. To develop a competitive package, we worked closely with the VEDA; Town of Georgia; State of VT; VT Training Program; CVPS; VEPC; and GIDC.
  - Stedfast, Inc., a laminated protective wear manufacturer, also chose Swanton, VT over a NY location. The incentive package developed for them included VEDA; VT Training Program; VEPC; State of VT; EDA and Community Development. This project has since been put on hold due to product development difficulties.
- We are still at the point of responding to inquiries, but have yet to develop a recruiting program. That will be addressed in the near future.

**STRATEGY #4      PROMOTE INFRASTRUCTURE READINESS FOR  
HIGH PERFORMANCE FRANKLIN COUNTY ECONOMY**

- Several partners attended a Cell Service meeting in July 2004. Will Simonelli, a Wireless Telecommunications Consultant representing Unicel, was in attendance to discuss improving cell service throughout the county – specifically the eastern portion of Franklin County.
- VT League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) is revising telecom ordinances for towns. A follow up note from the Unicel representative suggested he would forward a request to VLCT – asking them to consider soliciting Unicel to add input on the revised telecommunications ordinance. We will watch that project closely.
- Tim was asked to take part in a coalition formed by the Vermont Partnership for Affordable Clean Energy. The coalition will be dedicated to promoting issues and policy solutions important to Vermont’s future energy supply.

Vermont Partnership for Affordable Clean Energy was formed to ensure Vermont remains a great place to live and work. Their mission is to advocate collaboratively for sensible solutions that ensure Vermont has reliable, affordable and clean energy now and in the future. Those solutions generally consist of emission-free power, renewable energy and conservation.

- To address this significant need for telecommunication infrastructure, Northern Enterprises, Inc., a non-profit, 501(c) 3 and a corporation of the Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont, Inc., will design and install a fiber optic network with a minimum of 144 fiber optic strands. This 400-mile network, North-Link, will utilize existing fiber where available and financially feasible for the six-county (Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, Orleans) District of the Economic Development Council of Northern Vermont, Inc. (EDCNV). North-Link will be constructed across all of Northern Vermont (boundaries of New York to New Hampshire). The design will include a ring-style architecture that will provide reliable service with no more than 15% of the total network constructed of lateral spurs off of the ring(s). This state-of-the-art fiber optic network will support open access for leasing to end users, i.e. Internet Service Providers (ISP). This Open Access Network provides a backbone for ISPs, allowing them to purchase low-cost access while building their market and customer base. ISPs will not have to invest in their own infrastructure allowing them to offer their services to the end user at a lower cost. Also, customers will benefit from competition among the ISPs. North-Link will offer the ISPs high technology and cost-effective transport for high-revenue last mile marketing and customers.
- Adelphia has expanded into Highgate.
- Unicel has installed another antenna in Highgate Springs. Announced in a letter from Unicel dated December 15, 2005 – A new cellular site along Route 78 in Highgate.

**STRATEGY #4 continued -**

- The Town of Swanton has designated two growth centers in the Municipal Plan, one in the vicinity of I-89, exit 20 and the other at I-89, exit 21. The Town of Swanton has also applied for a Municipal Planning Grant to be used to update the Swanton Zoning Bylaws to establish a Multi-Use District in the vicinity of I-89, exit 20 in preparation for the inevitable economic growth expected in that area of Swanton .

**STRATEGY #5**

**CREATE PERMIT-DEVELOPMENT REVIEW  
CLIMATE OF EFFICIENCY AND PREDICTABILITY**

- Tim is serving on a study group, whose purpose is to make recommendations for Ag Mitigation. Stakeholders consist of Regional Planning Commissions, Town Planners, Select Board Members, VT Ag Dept., RDC's, Legislators, and Environmental groups.
  
- All towns with planning and zoning will have adopted updated regulations on Sept. 1, 2005 as per 24 VSA Ch. 117 changes approved by legislature two years ago.

**STRATEGY #6**

**IMPROVE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE  
CAPITAL FOR REGIONAL BUSINESSES**

*NO ACTIVITY TO DATE*

## **STRATEGY #7      STRENGTHEN AFFORDABLE WORKFORCE HOUSING**

- Lake Champlain Housing Development Corp. (LCHDC) offers a full range of housing services to include:
  - Construction of new housing and rehabilitating existing buildings.
  - Create developments that house people with a range of income.
  - Retain ownership of properties to insure long-term affordability..
  - Serve as a public educator for affordable development. They offer Home Ownership classes, which include budget and credit counseling, homebuyer assistance and home repair loans.
  - Coordinate social and other support services for residents with special needs.
  - Provide responsible property management and maintenance services.
  - Offer low-interest loans for home repair through the Champlain Valley Rehab Loan Fund.
  
- LCHDC is presently constructing five (5) 2 or 3 bedroom single family homes, in St.Albans City, that will be finished in 2005. Prices will range from \$163,000 for a ranch home to \$168,000 for a cape home after obtaining a Burlington Community Land Trust grant for qualified buyers.
  
- Through the efforts of LCHDC and St.Albans City, and a CDBG loan, 20 units of workforce affordable housing is being developed on the upper floors over retail space on Main Street, St.Albans, VT.
  
- FCIDC continues to communicate with Leader Evaporator in the hopes that their site on Stowell Street will become workforce affordable housing once Leader relocates their business.
  - In October 2005 Leader Evaporator, Inc. purchased and moved to the former Vermont Fastener Building in the Swanton Industrial Park. VT Housing is moving through the process of developing the St.Albans Stowell Street property into affordable housing.
  
- Workforce housing should be positively impacted by the updated planning and zoning regulation changes in 24 VSA Ch. 117 approved by legislature two years ago.

**STRATEGY #8      MAINTAIN A QUALITY OF LIFE IN FRANKLIN COUNTY  
THAT ASSURES LONG-TERM ECONOMIC SUCCESS**

**Missisquoi Basin Watershed Planning Underway**

- The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's watershed planning process for the Missisquoi River Basin is underway. Watershed planning will take place in all of the state's 17 watersheds on a five-year rotational basis. The planning process is a collaborative process with residents of the watershed, municipal officials, state and federal agencies and various interest groups to address water quality issues in the watershed.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (VANR), the Agency of Agriculture, and their public and private partners are held public forums in early February 2005 to share ideas and concerns about water quality issues in the Missisquoi Bay basin, including all of the land that drains into the Missisquoi, Rock, and Pike Rivers. For more information, please contact Barry Gruessner, Vermont DEC Watershed Coordinator, at 802-524-5958 or [barry.gruessner@anr.state.vt.us](mailto:barry.gruessner@anr.state.vt.us).

**Stevens-Rugg Brooks Watershed Plan Completed**

- Developing a community understanding of the interrelationship between water quantity and water quality proved to be the strategic challenge of developing the Stevens and Rugg Brook Watershed Plan. Past efforts along these streams have focused on addresses flooding, erosion, or pollution problems without focusing on the relationship among them. The Stevens-Rugg Partnership created a Plan that met the needs of all partners and the streams so that watershed solutions could be implemented. The Plan is now available for distribution through the NRPC by calling 524-5958.

The Stevens-Rugg Plan documents the problems in the watershed and long and short-term solutions to these problems. One critical point made by the Plan is that the problems are watershed wide, and are not restricted to the floodplain corridor along the Brooks, although this is where the symptoms are most visible as flooding, reduced water quality, and sediment deposition. The Watershed Plan recommends a number of measures to address these problems which range from inexpensive solutions, such as land use regulation modifications, disconnection of roof drains, and development of riparian buffers, to more expensive solutions, such as a system of detention basins in the upper reaches of the watershed. A key component of the Plan is the recommendation that whatever solutions are chosen for implementation, they must be coordinated throughout the watershed and be a combination of small and large measures that result in a long-term, sustainable use of the watershed. Since the Plan's completion in October 2003, project participants have begun implementing more than 17 projects and activities from the Plan.

## Geomorphic Assessment Underway for Missisquoi River Basin

- The Northwest Regional Planning Commission received a grant in November 2003 to conduct a Phase 1 Geomorphic Assessment on portions of the Black Creek, Trout, Rock, Pike, and Missisquoi River Watersheds within Franklin County. The study area covers over 450 square miles and almost 1,000 stream segments or reaches will be assessed. The assessment is anticipated to be completed by May 2005.

*Fluvial geomorphology* is a science that seeks to explain the physical interrelationships of flowing water and sediment in the context of the landforms that surround them. Its goal is to describe the physical processes that shape stream channels, while considering the different landforms, geologic, and climatic settings in which stream systems exist. The use of this science has led to an understanding that structures and land uses placed near streams must not only withstand the forces of running water, but must also avoid changing the fluvial processes of a stream system, including the movement of sediment, in order for such structures and land uses to remain secure.

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources has developed the *Vermont Stream Geomorphic Assessment Protocols* to assess stream conditions. Phase 1 of the Geomorphic Assessment Protocols uses topographic maps and aerial photos, existing studies, and field visits to examine stream bank stability and erosion. This phase helps to identify reaches that will meet the goals and issues of the region such as implementing bank stabilization or riparian buffers. Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the protocols build off the findings of Phase 1 and require more field and survey work. More information about the *Protocols* can be found at [www.vtwaterquality.org/riversgeo.htm](http://www.vtwaterquality.org/riversgeo.htm).

An important aspect of the Phase 1 Geomorphic Assessment is collecting local knowledge about the watershed. We are gathering data on the following stream features: stream bank erosion, dredging, berming, straightening, rip-rap, restoration sites, flood damage, ice-jams and debris jams. If you have information, you would like to share, please contact Bethany Haase at the NRPC office, (802) 524-5958 or [bhaase@nrpcvt.com](mailto:bhaase@nrpcvt.com).

## **DEC Upper Lake Champlain Watershed Planning Process Underway**

- The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation's watershed planning process for the Upper Lake Champlain Direct Watershed is underway. Watershed planning will take place in all of the state's 17 watersheds on a five-year rotational basis. The planning process is a collaborative process with residents of the watershed, municipal officials, state and federal agencies and various interest groups to address water quality issues in the watershed.

The Upper Lake Champlain watershed is the area that drains into Lake Champlain from Charlotte and continuing north to Highgate, but excludes the Missisquoi Bay watershed and the Lamoille and Winooski River watersheds. The following towns are located at least partially in the watershed: Highgate, Swanton, St. Albans Town and City, Fairfield, Fairfax, Westford, Milton, Colchester, Essex Town, Essex Junction, Burlington, Williston, South Burlington, Shelburne, St. George, Hinesburg, Charlotte and Ferrisburg and all the towns in the Islands.

As nonpoint sources of pollution have shifted to the center of water quality concerns during the past decade, voluntary redemption, on the part of both private and public landowners, has become a priority goal. The Department of Environmental Conservation believes that active public participation in the development of a watershed plan is essential to produce a plan that will effectively improve and protect water quality while reflecting the needs and priorities of Vermonters who live in the watershed. As part of the watershed plan, the Department and other partners in the watershed will also develop a proposal for the long-term management goals for all waters in the watershed, including rivers, lakes and ponds

This collaborative effort will eventually lead to a series of recommendations for improving water quality and uses and become a resource for any individual and group interested in working on watershed issues in the watershed. It will also guide the Agency of Natural Resources in its efforts to protect and improve lakes and rivers to the level required by the Vermont Water Quality Standards. For more information, please call Karen Bates, Watershed Coordinator for the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, at 879-2339.

## **DEC Continues Work on Lamoille River Watershed Plan**

- The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation is developing watershed plans for all of the state's 17 watersheds over the next 5 years in an effort to take a more holistic approach toward improving water quality across the state. The Lamoille River watershed planning effort is currently underway.

A watershed is comprised of all the land area that drains to a specific point. The Lamoille River Watershed is 706 square miles in size and includes major tributary streams. In Franklin County, the Lamoille River Watershed includes land and streams in the Towns of Georgia, Fairfax, and Fletcher. The Lamoille River itself generally runs from east to west beginning in Greensboro then through the Green Mountains and finally to its outlet in Sandbar State Park in Milton.

Watershed planning will rely heavily on public participation and local support throughout the process. The Lamoille River Watershed Council is comprised of representatives of landowners, municipalities, State and Federal officials, Regional Planning Commissions, and interested stakeholders. NRPC participates on the Council, along with Jane Sorenson, Fairfax Planning Commission member and co-owner of River Berry Farm.

A series of five public forums and several working landscape forums were held from July through September 2002 to hear the water quality concerns of Vermonters who live in the Lamoille River watershed. The forums identified three priority issues that need to be addressed in the watershed: stream instability, water quality, and development/sprawl. In future meetings, the Council will hear presentations and hold discussions on these issues. If you have any questions about the watershed planning effort or would like to be notified of Council meetings, please call Jim Ryan, Lamoille River Watershed Coordinator for the VT Department of Environmental Conservation, at (802) 241-3679.

### **Phase 1 Geomorphic Assessment of the Lamoille River**

- The Northwest Regional Planning Commission is currently conducting a Phase 1 Stream Geomorphic Assessment along the main stem of the Lamoille River in Franklin County to determine geomorphic reaches and reference stream types based on valley land forms and their geology. Predictions of channel condition, stage of channel evolution and reach sensitivity will then be made based on evaluations of watershed and river corridor land use and channel and floodplain modifications. The Assessment will be conducted with adherence to the quality assurance procedures outlined in the ANR Stream Geomorphic Assessment Protocols. Three other Regional Planning Commissions (RPC) - Chittenden County RPC, Lamoille County RPC and Northeast Vermont Development Association - are completing this assessment of other portions of the river.

## **Geomorphic Assessment of the Tyler Branch**

- The Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), in partnership with the Lake Champlain Committee and Missisquoi River Basin Association, conducted a Phase I geomorphic assessment of the Tyler Branch watershed. The Tyler Branch, a major tributary of the Missisquoi River, drains over 60 acres of land in Franklin County.

This project followed the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' Stream Geomorphic Assessment Phase I Handbook and aims to collect scientifically sound data that can be used for watershed planning and detailed characterization of aquatic habitat, erosion, and flood hazards.

GIS plays a critical role in the geomorphic assessment. The NRPC utilized Spatial Analyst to delineate the Tyler Branch watershed and its three main sub-watersheds. The Stream Geomorphic Assessment Tool (SGAT), an ArcView extension, was used to define stream reaches and examine soils data, geology, and current land use for each stream segment. GIS analysis along with field observations was evaluated to identify impacted stream segments and prioritize conservation efforts.

## **Phase 2 Geomorphic Assessment of The Branch**

- The Missisquoi River Basin Association has received funding to complete a Phase 2 Geomorphic Assessment on ten reaches of The Branch, a tributary of the Tyler Branch. This stream flows through both Bakersfield and Enosburgh. This study builds upon the initial results of the Phase 1 Geomorphic Assessment which was completed in 2002. Field work for this project is scheduled for spring 2005.

## **2004 Town of Georgia- Stream Buffer Analysis**

- The Town of Georgia (CC/PC/SB representatives) have worked with and contracted with the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) to complete a Stream Buffer Analysis and develop draft zoning provisions.

Applying protocols established in the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' *Stream Geomorphic Assessment Phase I Handbook*, the analysis completed a 'Phase I Geomorphic Assessment' within the three main watersheds in the Town of Georgia: Mill River, Stonebridge Brook and Deer Brook. Currently stream setbacks of 50 feet are established and in force on all named streams and some unnamed streams; while a portion of Deer Brook in the Industrial Park has a 200 foot setback. Phase I includes the delineation of watershed boundaries and individual reach breaks; recording and mapping factors influencing watershed inputs such as land use/land cover, infrastructure components (culverts, bridges, etc) and any existing buffers.

## **2004 Town of Georgia- Stream Buffer Analysis (continued)**

The completion of a geomorphic assessment on the streams in Georgia has provided baseline data which supports existing buffers and from which to develop regulations that will insure streams and rivers within Georgia are provided with an adequate amount of protection for water quality, habitat and recreational values. The main stem of Mill River, Stonebridge Brook and Deer Brook are on the impaired waters list. Data collected through the assessment helps to support better management and development decisions in regards to the water resources in town. The public outreach and education component of this process will provide a chance to gain input from the residents of the Town of Georgia for regulations and to provide them with information about the various values of the water resources in town.

### **Agriculture Run-off Experiment Addressed**

- Tim Camisa has developed a system that is presently in operation at a St. Albans Town farm owned by Mitch Montagne. The system separates the solids from the liquid, then removes the phosphorous before it is discharged.

### **Friends of Missisquoi Bay and Missisquoi River Basin Assoc.**

- Friends of Missisquoi Bay and the Missisquoi River Basin Association are leading efforts on multiple fronts to improve water quality in our rivers and lakes.

### **Town of Highgate Geomorphic Assessment**

- Town of Highgate is sponsoring a grant to undergo a geomorphic assessment of the Rock River in Highgate and Franklin.

### **Northern Forest Canoe Trail**

- Northern VT RC&D has assisted in the establishment of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail across our area.

### **4-Season Rail Trails**

- Rail has been removed from the LaMoille Valley Railroad corridor in preparation for the establishment of a four-seasons recreation trail.