



Economic Development at the Local Level

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Vermont's town leaders understand that for their communities to thrive, Vermont must do better. But the reverse is also true. We tell Selectboard members, town Listers, and concerned citizens that Vermont simply can't "move the dials" without their help. To reach the Targets for economic growth, the coming years will require all hands on deck.

by Jennifer Stromsten

This spring the Vermont Futures Project worked with the local town officials who have a growing interest in economic development and the economic health of their communities. We presented the Vermont Futures Project economic data, what it means for towns trying to improve local economies and the lives of their residents, and improve the bottom line on municipal budgets.

We urged local leaders to become familiar with drivers in their local economy – not just what's visible like retail or largest employers. Many locally controlled factors can directly help, or hinder, the economy. Some of our suggestions for towns to promote healthy economic growth locally and statewide:

- Speak up about the importance of economic growth – like good jobs and a grand list that enables reinvestment to maintain quality and attractiveness.
- Be an “attractor” for workforce, tourists, and business.
- Collaborate with businesses and employers. Public private partnerships are powerful.
- Align schools and training resources with the needs of local employers.
- Create a positive business climate. Get to know employers and entrepreneurs.
- Take initiative, identify critical projects to champion and get started.

Vermont's town leaders understand that for their communities to thrive, Vermont must do better. But the reverse is also true. Vermont simply can't “move the dials” and reach the targets for economic growth without towns succeeding. In the coming years, we will all need work together to make progress on improving the economic health of Vermont.

To learn how you can get involved, please visit www.VTFuturesProject.org or email futures@vtfuturesproject.org