

TOWN OF COVENTRY
ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGIC PLAN



MARCH, 2020

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I. Introduction

This economic and community development strategic plan raises the bar for Coventry. And, in many ways, it comes at the just the right time. Outside of Coventry, the Town's image is that it is nothing more than host for the State's only landfill, and the negative connotations associated with that. Therefore, Coventry's success depends upon overcoming that inaccurate picture. And, though it is easy to take for granted, the Town has been making steady progress in improving its prospects. Now is an opportune time for Coventry to consolidate its gains and intensify its pursuit of economic and community prosperity. Consider what this community has created in recent years:

This economic and community development strategic plan raises the bar for Coventry.

- **A high-quality elementary school and a school choice program** that is growing in enrollment and sending students to some of the best high schools in New England
- **A carefully and creatively negotiated host agreement with the Landfill** that serves the interests of all of Vermont, while providing Coventry residents with complete relief from municipal taxes, and a long-term revenue stream capable of supporting a wide array of initiatives to enrich community life, while the Town maintains careful stewardship of a multi-million dollar fund intended to cover municipal finances in perpetuity
- **A collection of physical assets with the potential to greatly enliven community life**, including a recently revitalized Community Center, a restored Ladybird Park on the Black River, an expanded Northeast Kingdom International Airport, and an emerging network of trails for hiking and riding, including one of Coventry's oldest and most distinctive assets: the Gool, Coventry's traditional scenic route for evening strolls.

Accomplishments such as these have laid the ground work for even greater success. Now, more than ever, the community is prepared for a sustained effort to bring a new generation of prosperity to Coventry and forge new, positive and more accurate image of the Town in the popular imagination. This economic and community development strategic plan is intended to provide the focus for this work. Building upon data analysis and extensive consultation with community members, it identifies key opportunities for the Town, defines a long-term vision for its growth and lays out a long-term action plan to tap into those opportunities and achieve the vision.

Big Opportunities for a Small Town

Too often, communities in the Northeast Kingdom are defined by their economic problems and challenges. Coventry can be characterized by the opportunities surrounding it. First and foremost is the outdoor recreation economy, the largest sector in the Kingdom's economy, one in which Coventry has long participated. Coventry also has two outside economic engines for such a small town: the Waste USA land fill (and its potential to support businesses

Too often, communities in the Northeast Kingdom are defined by their economic problems and challenges. Coventry can be characterized by the opportunities surrounding it

ranging from energy production to greenhouses) and the Northeast Kingdom International Airport, with a new 5,00-foot runway. This is on top of the existing business in town, including major construction materials companies, and a variety of small businesses. Each of these brings its own set of potential economic benefits, and this plan lays out an approach for Coventry to tap into all of them over a sustained period of time.

II. Overall Vision

The vision for the Coventry economic and community development strategic plan is to build a more prosperous community so that, within the next decade, residents of Coventry will be:

LIVING in a vital community that has the resources to support a high quality of life, including ample high-quality and affordable options for housing and outstanding education

WORKING in a local economy that has built upon its existing base of major construction-related enterprises and local services to grow businesses and jobs so young people who have grown up in the community can build a career and raise a family here while Coventry also attracts newcomers

PLAYING in a community with plentiful opportunities for recreation, cultural activities and community gatherings to strengthen Coventry's sense of community as well as attracting visitors to contribute to the local economy.

This plan will improve Coventry's economic competitiveness by enhancing the quality of community life in the short run and, over the long run, will make Coventry a better place for people to live, a better place for businesses to work and an exceptional place for residences and visitors to recreate and play.

The Vision for Coventry's Economic & Community Development



III. Strategic Approach: Focus on 4 Community Assets

Coventry is fortunate to have important assets it can use to realize its vision and take the community to the next level of success. The overall approach of Coventry's economic and community development strategy is to mobilize its own assets to make the Town more economically competitive by using Town spending as a lever to attract private, state or federal funding.

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Four community assets at the center of this focus include:

- **Coventry's Residents** who are the reason for undertaking this plan as well as the most important asset to ensure its success. Thus, they are a central focus of the Economic and Community Development Strategic Plan.
- **Coventry Village** as defined in its recently approved Village Center Designation
- **Opportunities in the Outdoor Recreation Economy** as documented in Existing conditions analysis and reflected in recent initiatives by the State and nearby City of Newport to foster increased activity to benefit residents and businesses in the area.
- **Catalytic Community Infrastructure** such as the airport, landfill, and others

This section outlines the specific steps Coventry will take to address each of these four areas of strategic focus. For each, the plan outlines a vision describing how that particular asset fits into the larger vision for Coventry's economic and community development, establishes an action plan that lays out objectives, means for accomplishing them, defines key mileposts to measure progress and identifies the commitments by the Town to this effort. NOTE: the responsible parties identified in the metrics are defined as follows:

- Town Administration means this is a responsibility that falls to the Select Board and/or the Town Administrator and others they may designate.
- Town means the municipality as a whole, acting on Town Meeting Day.
- Town Staff means the project requires the attention of full-time staff to coordinate the activity

The Importance of Leveraging Town Spending: The Town will target its investments in this effort to leverage additional resources from private investors, State programs (including benefits available through Coventry's recent Village Center designation) and other organizations and stakeholders. The Town investments are targeted in ways that will attract other funding. This approach is noted in almost all of the recommendations included in this plan.

A. Strategic Asset: Coventry's Residents

The Vision for Engaging Coventry Residents:

Coventry's residents will be better prepared to take advantage of the opportunities the Town offers for Living, Working and Playing. Community members will be better connected with each other and the local institutions that serve them, improving the community's quality of life. For example, the Town and School will coordinate programming more effectively so that residents can benefit from what each has to offer in terms of educational, cultural and community offerings. Internet accessibility will be improved so that Coventry residents and businesses can build stronger virtual connections to one another and to the rest of the world, enhancing cultural and economic opportunities. In addition, Coventry residents will have better access to the resources needed to prepare them for successful careers and to start businesses.

Coventry's residents will be better prepared to take advantage of the opportunities the Town offers for Living, Working and Playing.

Action Plan: Building better connections will be the essence of this effort. This will include improving the ability of the Town, School and other organizations to share information about programs and/or create joint offerings. It will also involve improving the ability of community facilities (e.g., the school building, the Community Center, the Church, etc.) to support programming for residents and visitors. At the same time, efforts will be made to better connect residents to programs that can improve their job prospects and career paths and improve broadband Internet access to connect residents to expanded opportunities for business, recreation and socializing.

Objective A-1. Improve recreational, educational and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors by improving coordination Between the School, the Town & other organizations in the Area

Recommended Actions:

Create an Annual Community Festival. An annual Town-wide celebration will bring the community together and make visitors aware of all Coventry has to offer. It will serve as a festive occasion for residents and an opportunity to market Coventry to outsiders.

Convene regular meetings with representatives of the School, parent groups, the Town and related organizations. These meetings will facilitate the sharing of information about activities and events each will be offering and how other organizations and the community has a whole may benefit from them. For example, if the school is hosting an artist-in-residence, it may be possible to hold a performance or other showing to which the general public is invited.

Create a regular calendar of events posted on the Website & at the Community Center. By regularly and consistently sharing this information, residents and visitors alike will become more familiar with the offerings in Coventry and therefore more likely to participate in them.

Expand programming at Community Center & Town Parks. As community organizations share more information and ideas for programming and a regular calendar of events is maintained, there will be opportunities for expanded programs at the Community Center, Ladybird Park, the ballfield and the Coventry Church building. This can be a combination of events intended primarily for residents, as well as some focused primarily on visitors to generate revenue for the Town.

Metrics for Objective A-1.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Create an Annual Community Festival	2020	2020	Town Staff
Convene regular meetings with representatives of the School, parent groups, the Town and related organizations	2020	2021	Town Staff
Create a regular calendar of events posted on the Website & at the Community Center	2021	2021	Town Staff
Expand programming at Community Center & Town Parks	2021	2023	Town Staff

Objective A-2. Enhance Community Facilities to better serve residents’ needs & provide opportunities for community gatherings.

Recommended Actions:

Ensure the ball field has adequate parking as well as spaces for both children and parents to gather. These facilities are important community gathering spaces and should be configured so that parents can watch over their children while socializing with other parents. This can be accomplished gradually through small improvements during regular maintenance of the parks.

Maintain the Post Office in Village. In every small town, the Post Office is a major destination for residents and creates opportunities for informal greetings and exchanges among community members. The Town will secure a long-term, high-quality space for the Post Office either at its current location or an alternative, appropriate space in the Village.

Metrics for Objective A-2.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Ensure the ballfield has adequate parking as well as spaces for both children and parents to gather	2022	2023	Town Highway Department
Maintain the Post Office in Village	2021	2023	Town Administration

Objective A-3. Expand Residents’ Abilities to access Career Training

Recommended Actions:

Raise resident awareness of the Coventry Town Foundation support for education and training.

The Town Foundation is known for the tuition assistance available to Town residents pursuing higher education. In addition, the Foundation has provided assistance to individuals seeking career and technical education, including skills-specific certificate programs. In addition to the college-related assistance provided by the Foundation, residents will be provided with information about these opportunities for skills training and career advancement

Convene informational sessions for Town residents about career training and other programs offered by the North Country Career Center, the Community College of Vermont, and other educational institutions. This will enable residents to become aware of the full career training offering that they can access from Coventry.

Metrics for Objective A-3.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Raise resident awareness of the Coventry Town Foundation support for education and training	2021	2021	Town Foundation
Convene informational sessions for Town residents about career training and other programs	2021	2021	Town Staff

Objective A-4. Participate in regional efforts to bring broadband to the area

Participate in a Communications Union District and other regional efforts. High speed Internet connections (i.e., 25 Megabits per second download speed/3 Megabits per second upload speed) are as important to today’s economy as Interstate highways were 50 years ago and the railroads were 100 years ago. While Coventry does not have a large enough user base to attract the attention of Broadband providers by itself, it can participate in regional efforts to build capacity. Participation in a communications union district (CUD), such as the newly formed may be one way for Coventry to bring enhanced broadband service to the Town. This would require authorization at Town Meeting.

Metrics for Objective A-4.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Participate in a Communications Union District and other regional efforts	2020	Town Meeting Day, 2020	Town

Commitments by the Town to Town Residents: Enhancing economic, cultural and recreational opportunities for residents involves considerable administrative capacity to coordinate activities among the Town, School and other organizations. This kind of work would be difficult to carry out through volunteers since it requires sustained attention to keep the participating organizations engaged and informed of opportunities for collaboration. Consequently, the major commitment to this effort by the Town would be assigning dedicated staff time to these efforts.

B. Strategic Asset: Coventry Village

The Vision for the Village:

The Village will be a catalyst for Living, Working and Playing in the Town. It will do this by serving as an attractive gateway to the entire Town. Residents and passersby on route 5 and 14 will be drawn to the Village for its attractive historic character and ongoing activities and events. It will also serve as a gathering place for residents visiting community institutions such as the school, community center, post office, etc.

The Village will be a catalyst
for Living, Working and
Playing in the Town.

Action Plan: The action plan for Coventry Village will involve several inter-related activities. The ongoing issue of flooding in the village needs to be addressed. Ice jams and floods are occurring with increasing frequency. This disrupts community life, adds to municipal expenses and creates an uncertainty for property owners interesting in investing in the Village. In addition, property owners in the Village need to be given incentives to revitalize properties in the face of such uncertainty.

As in the other initiatives in this plan, this will involve using Town resources to leverage other resources. In this case, the benefits associated with the Village Center Designation recently awarded to the Village by the Agency for Commerce and Community Development. This effort will also involve regular outreach to property owners in the Village (and also Town-wide) to make them aware of the programs involved with energy efficiency and economic revitalization that can help them save money while improving their properties.

At the same time, it is important to activate the Coventry Church building. It is an anchor presence in the Village and its current neglected appearance and complete under-utilization are a drain on the vitality of the Village. While it is premature to commit funding to fully revitalize the structure, some basic repairs and cosmetic improvements will contribute much to the Village.

Objective B-1. Create long-term solutions to mitigate the flood hazards facing the Village

Recommended Actions:

Completion of an Assessment of Flooding and Ice Jams on the Black River. The Town has secured funding to enable the US Army Corps of Engineers to assess the situation in the Town and recommend ways to mitigate flooding and ice jams.

Implement Long-term Mitigations to Flooding and Ice Jams. Based upon the results of this study and the recently completed Hazard Mitigation Study, the Town will seek funding to implement the study's recommendations. As part of this effort, the Town may look for ways in which the mitigations to flooding

and ice jams can be designed to add to the amenity value of the Black River, such as creation of riverfront trails, boat launches, etc.

Metrics for Objective B-1.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Completion of Flooding & Ice Jam Study	2021	2022	US Army Corps of Engineers
Implementation of Mitigations	2023	2023	Town Administration

Objective B-2. Create incentives for Village Revitalization that encourages redevelopment that strengthens the built fabric of the Village.

Recommended Actions:

Implement a Village Improvement Program (VIP) to create incentives for Village Revitalization. The Town will create a Village Improvement Program to provide rebates to cover a portion of the costs involved with restoring and/or constructing residential structures in a manner consistent with the historic character of the Village. This effort would also enable owners of both residential and commercial properties to access other resources to reduce the costs associated with revitalizing properties in the Village. This is an example of Town investments being used to attract other sources of support. Full description of the program is provided in the appendices to this plan.

Create a regular series of meetings for property owners throughout the Town to learn about cost-savings programs. The Town will convene a series of meetings to inform property owners about sources of financial and technical assistance available to save money related to energy conservation, home improvements and other topics.

Create a capital improvements program for the Village. This plan would identify capital projects needed in the Village (e.g., new sidewalks, street trees, etc.) and establish cost estimates and a timetable for completing these projects. This could be funded through a Municipal Planning Grant available through the Agency for Commerce and Community Development.

Metrics for Objective B-2.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Creation of Village Improvement Program	2020	2021	Town Administration
Create schedule of meetings for Property Owners	2021	2021	Town Staff
Create a capital improvements program for the Village	2022	2023	Town Administration

Objective B-3. Stabilize and activate the Church as a community asset.

Recommended Actions:

Implement the Findings of the Preservation Trust’s Assessment of the Structure of the Coventry Church.

An assessment of the Church prepared through a grant by the Preservation Trust of Vermont in July of 2019 identified approximately \$100,000 in repairs that should be done “within a couple years to avoid greater problems developing.” These are in addition to painting and other minor cosmetic steps to maintain the building. The recommendations of this report will be implemented in 2020.

Create a limited Program for Recreational and Cultural Activities in the Church. At the community meeting held in July of 2019 and a community survey conducted at the same time, there was considerable interest in having the Church building serve as a community gathering space. While the Church lacks facilities for year-round programming (e.g., adequate restrooms and septic, full accessibility, etc.), it will be used for limited programming on a trial basis during the warmer months of 2020 to “pilot” appropriate programs for a fully refurbished Church.

During this time, the Town should seek grants funding for other improvements, including septic and handicapped accessibility. After a season or two of experience with the venue, the Town may wish to issue a Request for Proposals for an operator for the Church to see if there is an appropriate organization interested in programming the facility.

Metrics for Objective B-3.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Implement the Findings of the Preservation Trust’s report	2020	2021	Town Administration
Create a limited Program for Recreational and Cultural Activities in the Church.	2021	2022	Town Staff

Commitments by the Town to Enhance the Village: Carrying out this work will require some financial investment on the part of the Town to support the Village Improvement Program and the renovation of the Church. Staff resources will also be required for certain activities, such as coordinating presentations for property owners on the Village Improvement Program and the other programs available to property owners throughout the Town, as well as programming activities for the Church. In order to have an impact on the Village, these activities need to be held on a regular basis for an extended period of time (e.g., three to five years). While volunteers can be helpful in this effort, they cannot provide the regular attention to detail needed to launch and sustain these efforts.

C. Strategic Asset: Opportunities in the Outdoor Recreation Economy

The Vision for Opportunities in Outdoor Recreation:

By any measure, outdoor recreation is the dominant economic activity in the Northeast Kingdom and Orleans County. In many ways, it is the activity that enhances people's ability to live, work and play in the Town. Coventry will expand its participation in outdoor recreation to benefit residents and to create new economic opportunities in the Town.

Coventry will expand its participation in outdoor recreation to benefit residents and to create new economic opportunities in the Town.

This will involve developing and improving its own assets for outdoor recreation as well as working with partners such as the City of Newport, nearby towns, the Northeast Vermont Development Association and others to promote outdoor recreation activities that will attract visitors to the Town while also providing recreational opportunities for residents.

Action Plan: The thrust of this effort is to better connect Coventry and its assets to the growing outdoor recreation economy that surrounds it. This will involve preparing such assets as Ladybird Park for a possible canoe or kayak launch, the Gool and other existing trails for greater use while also developing events and activities to meet the demand for outdoor recreation by residents and visitors. Some events can be staged by Coventry alone. Others will be done by cooperating and cross promotion with Newport, nearby towns and other organizations. This effort will include recruiting vendors for events to enhance the experience and provide economic opportunity for local businesses.

Objective C-1. Improve Coventry's Ability to Provide Opportunities for Outdoor Recreation for Residents and Visitors

Recommended Actions:

Develop outdoor recreation and cultural activities coordinated with Newport's "Look to the Lake" initiative and other regional efforts. Coventry can leverage existing marketing efforts by partnering with organizations already established in outdoor recreation. The activities Coventry can bring to these partnerships include kayaking on the Black River, hiking and biking on the Gool,

even potentially sponsoring existing events already taking place in Coventry (e.g., the “Fly to the Pie” race).

Develop outdoor-recreation-related infrastructure. Coventry can become more attractive for outdoor recreation through such projects as the creation of a kayak/boat launch at Ladybird Park, formally designating and marking existing trails, along with further development of trails for hiking, biking, ATVs and snowmobiling. Coventry should seek support for this from the Northeastern Vermont Development Association which has been awarded funds for this purpose.

Metrics for Objective C-1.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Develop outdoor recreation and cultural activities coordinated with Newport’s “Look to the Lake” initiative and other regional efforts	2021	2022	Town Staff
Develop outdoor-recreation-related infrastructure	2021	2023	Town Administration

Commitments by the Town to Outdoor Recreation Opportunities: Enabling Coventry to more fully participate in the outdoor recreation economy will improve residents’ opportunities for living, working and playing in the community. The Town’s role will involve improving infrastructure related to outdoor recreation and expanding Coventry’s role in local and regional events and activities. Much of this work will involve securing grants to cover related costs and working closely with partner municipalities and organizations. This will require dedicated staff time to build the necessary relationships as well as to pursue grants and take on the related tasks of submitting expense reports and other documentation required to receive payments. Thus, if the Town is to seriously pursue outdoor recreation opportunities, it must have the administrative capacity to perform the tasks involved.

D. Strategic Asset: Catalytic Community Infrastructure

The Vision for Catalytic Community Infrastructure:

In order to fully realize its potential for long-term prosperity, Coventry will maintain and improve and effectively utilize community infrastructure that fosters economic and community development. This includes the Northeast Kingdom International Airport, town roads, infrastructure for water and sewer, and sites for businesses and housing. Each of these will occupy an important role in supporting the ability of Coventry residents to live, work and play in a prosperous community.

Coventry will maintain and improve and effectively utilize catalytic community infrastructure to that fosters economic and community development.

Action Plan: The Town will focus on four key pieces of infrastructure to foster growth. It will work closely with the NVDA and VTrans to promote economic activity at the Northeast Kingdom International Airport. It will work with Waste USA to pursue business development opportunities related to the landfill. It will also create incentives for commercial and/or industrial development on lands designated for those purposes in the Town Plan. Finally, it will continue to seek funding to support expanded municipal water and sewer infrastructure, particularly in the Village area.

Objective D-1. Improve the Physical Infrastructure of the Town to Grow Businesses and Jobs

Recommended Actions:

Encourage Economic Activity at the Airport. The Airport can provide economic opportunities through foreign trade, tourist activity associated with “fly-ins” employment in aircraft mechanics and maintenance as well as hospitality through the operation of a restaurant on site. The Town will cooperate with the State and the NVDA to pursue these opportunities. For example, the Town should support efforts to create an upgraded terminal at the airport.

Promote Foreign Trade. When foreign firms locate in a community, they create job opportunities for residents and become new customers for local businesses. Therefore, Coventry will work with the Northeastern Vermont Development Association to pursue opportunities that may arise to reinstate the Foreign Trade Zone at the airport or to create a bonded warehouse in or near the Airport.

Maximize the potential for Landfill-related development. The Town will work closely with Waste USA to encourage business development related to the landfill, including greenhouses or other operations that can benefit from proximity to the landfill and its capacity to generate methane and/or electricity.

Provide Incentives to develop sites to retain or attract commercial or industrial businesses. The Town will create a Town Improvement Program that will support commercial and industrial development for firms seeking to expand or relocate in Coventry by providing forgivable loans to fund “pre-approval” studies (e.g., market feasibility studies, site surveys, soil sampling, etc.) for commercial or industrial sites identified in the Town Plan. This program is described in the appendices to this report. This funding will be contingent on the applicant bringing other dollars (e.g., private, state or federal) to any project that receives Town funding.

Create a long-term plan for maintaining Coventry’s road network. The Town has a well-maintained network of paved and unpaved roads. This has been possible thanks to the extraordinary skill and dedication of its highway department. Over time, as retirements and turnover change the department, it is important that the Town has a systematic plan in place for maintaining its road network in a cost-efficient manner, identifying routes that may require paving and determining which roads can be maintained in an unpaved state. Part of this plan should recommend any improvements required to ensure there is adequate access to the Airport as it attracts more commercial and industrial activity and investment.

Pursue Expansion of Municipal Sewer & Water Infrastructure. In order to facilitate revitalization of the Village and economic growth in the Town, Coventry will continue to seek funding to support continued improvement of the municipal water system and the creation of a municipal sewer system.

Metrics for Objective D-1.			
Milestone	Priority/Time Frame	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Encourage Economic Activity at the Airport.	2020	Ongoing	Town Administration
Promote Foreign Trade	2020	Ongoing	Town Administration
Maximize the potential for Landfill-related development	2020	Ongoing	Town Administration
Provide Incentives to develop sites to retain or attract commercial or industrial businesses	2022	2023	Town Administration
Create a long-term plan for maintaining Coventry’s road network	2022	2023	Town Administration
Pursue Expansion of Municipal Sewer & Water Infrastructure	2023	Ongoing	Town Administration

Commitments by the Town to Catalytic Community Infrastructure: Improving community infrastructure will require the Town to work closely with such partners as the Airport, Waste USA and a variety of Federal and State agencies. Much of this effort will be concentrated in the Town Administrator’s office, particularly maintaining contact with funding sources to pursue grants and follow up on the compliance and reporting for grants received.

IV. Building the Administrative Capacity for Sustained Success

As this plan makes clear, the opportunities available to Coventry are significant, and the steps needed to realize those opportunities are reasonably simple and straightforward. But in virtually every case, the key to success is a focused and sustained effort.

To put it simply: Coventry can keep things the way they are without any extraordinary efforts. However, if the Town wants to advance as a local economy and municipality, and build a positive image to visitors and potential investors, it has to be able to take on tasks that require sustained attention to build relationships, pursue funding and carry out the reporting and oversight that comes with those efforts.

if the Town wants to advance as a local economy and municipality, it has to . . . build relationships, pursue funding and carry out the reporting and oversight that comes with those efforts.

This is particularly true when it comes to improving activities and facilities in the Village. In order to fully reach its potential for community prosperity, Coventry needs to have the staff capacity to see it through.

Community Development will Drive Economic Development: The importance of a Full-time Staff Position

Community development activities are the driver of economic development for Coventry. A central recommendation of this plan is to add a full-time staff position to the Town dedicated to pursuing opportunities related to Village revitalization, Outdoor Recreation and for Engaging Community Residents. A full-time position is required to ensure that activities in each of these areas are sustained on an ongoing basis so they begin to drive economic activity in each area.

Without the kind of continual attention possible through full-time staff, many of these initiatives may fall victim to delays, missed communications and/or failure to secure outside funding to sustain them.



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With a “Community Development Coordinator” position funded and staffed, the Town will be positioned to fully implement the initiatives for the Village, Residents and Outdoor Recreation, bringing new activity into Town and thereby stimulating the Town economy and adding to the quality of life for all of its residents. A sample job description for this position is included in the appendices to this report.

This position would be directly responsible for advancing the work in three of the four strategic focus areas: Town Residents, the Village, and Outdoor Recreation Opportunities. In the “metrics” table under each objective, a responsible party is identified for each milestone. Five of the milestones in the “Town Residents” section depend upon “Town Staff” for completion. The Community Development Coordinator would be the logical position to take these on. Similarly, two initiatives under the Village focus are and another under Outdoor Recreation are best assigned to the Community Development Coordinator.

A review of the “Commitments by the Town” for these three focus areas highlights the need for sustained staff support in each area. Note also that almost all these assignments are labor-intensive. They involve creating an ongoing set of meetings, events and activities that require extensive logistical support, well-developed relationships with partners and funders and an ability to provide follow-up on terms of compliance and reporting requirements. In short, creating the Community Development Coordinator position is the best way to ensure this plan will be implemented in a timely, effective manner.

Establishing a Town Economic Development Committee

An essential tool for the success of this plan would be the creation of an Economic Development Committee. This committee could meet quarterly and be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this plan, evaluating the applications for the Village Improvement Program (as described in the appendices to this report), as well as working with the Community Development Coordinator on outreach to such resources as the Northeastern Vermont Development Association.

Identifying a Management Structure for the Coventry Fire District

Water and sewer infrastructure are essential if sustainable, resilient growth is to take place in and near the Village. It is therefore important that the Town work with the Coventry Fire District and identify a management structure that will be able to operate the system in an increasingly complex administrative and regulatory environment and could have the capacity to manage a municipal sewer system, should it be possible to create it.

V. Funding the Economic and Community Development Strategic Plan

Implementing this plan will require two major investments on the part of the Town:

- An economic development fund to support VIP, TIP and infrastructure.
- A Community Development Coordinator's office to serve as the primary staff support for the plan.

Each of these is described below in greater detail.

The Economic Development Fund, Total Expenses: \$100,000

Last year, the Town approved dedicating \$100,000 for projects related to economic development. It will be important to the success of that plan to maintain that commitment to an economic development fund for the Town. This may not require an annual appropriation of \$100,000. Rather it would be important to maintain the fund at \$100,000, replenishing it each year as funds are drawn out to support various efforts.

For the first year of the plan, the Economic Development Fund monies would be dedicated as follows:

- \$35,000 to fund rebates and grants associated with the Village Improvement Program and the Town Improvement Program.
- \$15,000 for infrastructure projects related to Outdoor Recreation (e.g., creation of a kayak/canoe launch at Ladybird Park)
- \$50,000 to begin the estimated \$100,000 of work required to maintain the Coventry Church.

As the work is completed on the Church and the need to fund that ends, the money freed up would be dedicated to the Village Improvement Program and the Town Improvement Program. These allocations would be revisited every year and adjusted accordingly. For example, if the VIP program attracts more projects than can be funded in a single year, the amount of money available for that could be increased the next year. On the other hand, if VIP does not garner many applicants, in subsequent years, more of the money in the economic development fund could be directed toward infrastructure improvements related to the Outdoor Recreation Economy.

The Office of Community Development, Total expenses including salary, fringe, office supplies, etc.: \$72,000

This amount represents the entire cost of the Community Development Office, including salary, fringe, equipment and other expenses. This would result in an operating budget between \$60,000 and \$65,000. The salary would be set to be competitive with comparable positions in the region, and the Coordinator required to create a five-year business plan for the office, with the expectation that, as it enters its fifth year, it would be bringing in grants and program revenues that equaled or exceeded the cost of the Office.

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By the end of its third year of operation, it should be clear if the effort is on target to meet the revenue generation goal. At the end of that third year, if the Town is satisfied with performance thus far, the Coordinator could be tasked with preparing new five-year business plan, adjusted to reflect experience of the previous three years. The table below provides an illustration of a projected five-year business plan for the office.

Revenues will come from several sources:

- Rental of facilities (e.g., the Community Center, the Church, etc.) for events. After five years, this is projected to involve up to 30 rentals per year at an average of \$60 per rental.
- Admissions to special events: This would be the amount collected by the Town net of expenses. After 5 years, this is projected to be 300 admissions per year at \$2 per admissions coming to the Town.
- Grants revenue would come from grants for recreational programs, facilities upgrades (e.g., funding for a kayak launch, church renovations, etc.), village revitalization projects, etc.). After five years, it is projected that the Office will bring in \$60,000 in grants.

Expenses are projected based on a starting salary of \$45,000. The projections show the Office with a net deficit of \$7,350 after five years.

Sample Projection of Expenses & Revenues for Community Development Office					
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
EXPENSES					
Salary	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 45,000
Fringe @ 25%	\$ 11,250	\$ 11,250	\$ 11,250	\$ 11,250	\$ 11,250
Supplies/Equipment	<u>\$ 15,000</u>	<u>\$ 15,000</u>	<u>\$ 15,000</u>	<u>\$ 15,000</u>	<u>\$ 15,000</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 71,250	\$ 71,250	\$ 71,250	\$ 71,250	\$ 71,250
REVENUES					
Facility Rentals	5	10	15	25	30
Rental Revenue (@ average rental of \$60)	\$ 300	\$ 600	\$ 900	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,800
Admissions to Special Events	25	100	200	250	300
Revenue from admissions from events (@ \$2.00 net costs)	\$ 50	\$ 200	\$ 400	\$ 500	\$ 600
Grants for Recreation programs, Facilities Improvements, etc.	\$ 0	\$ 20,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 60,000
Sponsorships		<u>\$ 500</u>	<u>\$ 1,000</u>	<u>\$ 1,500</u>	<u>\$ 1,500</u>
Total Revenues:	<u>\$ 350</u>	<u>\$ 21,300</u>	<u>\$ 37,300</u>	<u>\$ 53,500</u>	<u>\$ 63,900</u>
SURPLUS/DEFICIT:	\$ (70,900)	\$ (49,950)	\$ (33,950)	\$ (17,750)	\$ (7,350)
NON FINANCIAL METRICS					
Number of Community Events	12	15	18	22	25
Attendance by Residents	240	300	360	440	500

VI. Coventry's Commitment to Future Generations

This plan has focused on a long-term approach to enhance the Town's capacity to enable residents to live, work and play in Coventry. This is possible because Coventry has marshalled the financial resources to support these efforts through careful stewardship of the revenues it receives through the host agreement for the Landfill.

Part of this stewardship involves the creation of an investment fund to serve as an endowment to meet future municipal expenses in perpetuity, long after the landfill ends its useful life. During a future crisis, there may be calls to use some of this fund in response. However, the current generation of Town residents has a fiduciary responsibility to manage that fund so that the advantages Town residents enjoy today can be passed on to their children and grandchildren.

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This is an important part of building a path to prosperity for the Town and its residents, past and future.

VII. Comprehensive Work Plan

The activity required to implement this plan is considerable, and at first, may seem daunting. However, success depends upon setting priorities so that, during any one year, the work load is manageable and. Organized in this way, over the course of three to five years virtually the entire work plan can be accomplished. The table below provides a complete work plan for the economic and community development strategic plan, defining the tasks to be undertaken each year from 2020 to 2023. This is intended as a sample approach to be used by the Town in developing an implementation plan for this strategy.

TOWN OF COVENTRY ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN, MARCH, 2020

Sample Comprehensive Work Plan for Economic & Community Development Strategic Plan		
Milestone	Completion Date	Responsible Party
TASKS STARTING IN 2020 (8 tasks)		
Milestone	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Create an Annual Community Festival	2020	Town Staff
Convene regular meetings with representatives of the School, parent groups, the Town and related organizations	2021	Town Staff
Participate in a Communications Union District and other regional efforts	Town Meeting Day, 2020	Town
Creation of Village Improvement Program	2021	Town Select Board
Implement the Findings of the Preservation Trust's report	2021	Town Select Board
Encourage Economic Activity at the Airport.	Ongoing	Town Administration
Promote Foreign Trade	Ongoing	Town Administration
Maximize the potential for Landfill-related development	Ongoing	Town Administration
TASKS STARTING IN 2021 (10 tasks)		
Milestone	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Create a regular calendar of events posted on the Website & at the Community Center	2021	Town Staff
Expand programming at Community Center & Town Parks	2023	Town Staff
Maintain the Post Office in Village	2023	Town Administration
Raise resident awareness of the Coventry Town Foundation support for education and training	2021	Town Foundation
Convene informational sessions for Town residents about career training and other programs	2021	Town Staff

TOWN OF COVENTRY ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN, MARCH, 2020

Sample Comprehensive Work Plan for Economic & Community Development Strategic Plan		
Milestone	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Completion of Flooding & Ice Jam Study	2022	US Army Corps of Engineers
Create schedule of meetings for Property Owners	2021	Town Staff
Create a limited Program for Recreational and Cultural Activities in the Church.	2022	Town Staff
Develop outdoor recreation and cultural activities coordinated with Newport's "Look to the Lake" initiative and other regional efforts	2022	Town Staff
Develop outdoor-recreation-related infrastructure	2023	Town Administration
TASKS STARTING IN 2022 (4 tasks)		
Milestone	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Ensure the ballfield has adequate parking as well as spaces for both children and parents to gather	2023	Town Highway Department
Create a capital improvements program for the Village	2023	Town Select Board
Provide Incentives to develop sites to retain or attract commercial or industrial businesses	2023	Town Administration
Create a long-term plan for maintaining Coventry's road network	2023	Town Administration
TASKS STARTING IN 2023 (2 tasks)		
Milestone	Completion Date	Responsible Party
Implementation of Solutions of Flooding & Ice Jam Study	2023	Town Administration
Pursue Expansion of Municipal Sewer & Water Infrastructure	Ongoing	Town Administration

VIII. Appendices

Description of the Planning Process

Description of Village Improvement Program

Description of Town Improvement Program

Sample Job Description, Community Development Coordinator

Results of Community Outreach Regarding the Re-Use of the Coventry Church

Existing Conditions Analysis