



Cabot Village: A Community Center in the New Rural Economy

A VILLAGE REVITALIZATION STRATEGY FOR CABOT, VT

The Village Revitalization Strategy establishes a long-term approach to enhance the quality of life in Cabot by enabling the community's existing businesses to expand the market for their products, as well as encouraging new producers and businesses to locate in Cabot. It also seeks to entice visitors to spend more time and money in the Village.

This plan contains a detailed implementation plan to realize this vision, but the precise steps taken and the order in which they are taken can and should be adjusted to fit the circumstances. In that sense, the plan is simply a framework by which the community can encourage and support the work that is already underway in Cabot. The important thing is to make a long-term commitment to the general approach outlined here.

You can learn more about this plan and share your comments at the Cabot Village Revitalization Forum on Tuesday, March 20, at 7:00 pm in Willey Building Auditorium.

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The interviews and analysis paint a picture of a community center that hosts small local businesses, artists and artisans and related activities, including education. It is the ability of Cabot to serve as a home for small-scale creative endeavors in business, arts and culture that distinguishes it from nearby communities. It is not a city like Montpelier or St. Johnsbury. It does not have the formal feel of Danville. Yet it is organized around a common, unlike Hardwick, Marshfield, Plainfield or East Montpelier. The Common, the School and the Willey Building provide a civic core for the Village. It still feels very much like the dairy-farming community that gave rise to Cabot Creamery. Indeed, in many ways, Cabot still serves as an important hub for a rural economy.

But the rural economy of the 21st Century has very different dynamics than that of a century ago. The Village was once where farmers picked up their supplies, dropped off their milk and other products, caught up on community events and joined with others in commemorating life's triumphs and tragedies. In the 21st Century, a rural hub has a different role to play. It serves as the gateway to the larger community for visitors and potential investors alike. As such, it must showcase the opportunities available in the community to residents, tourists, and those considering a relocation to the area. It must also provide connections to larger markets and facilitate face-to-face interactions among residents, business people, visitors and others.

The Strategy: Activate, Strengthen & Connect the Village's Assets

In order for the Village to attract tourists, businesses and artistic and cultural activity, those engaged in such activities must clearly see a reason for coming into the Village as a visitor, as a performer, as a business person, even as a resident. The Village Revitalization Strategy is aimed at identifying and supporting and raising the visibility of those aspects of the Village that enable it to maintain and strengthen its role as a rural center for entrepreneurs, artisans and artists. In particular, the approach focuses on increasing the visibility of those assets Cabot has that support its role as a rural center. Finally, the strategy involves improving Cabot's economic competitiveness by connecting those assets with one another and with resources and opportunities outside the community.



Tasks for Strategic Success

The following tactics are recommended to implement the Village Revitalization Strategy



Task 1. Enhance Cabot's Strengths as a Location for Artists, Artisans and Entrepreneurs

- Task 1-1. Create a systematic business retention & expansion effort.
- Task 1-2. Establish an Artisan/Artist Attraction program for the Village
- Task 1-3. Encourage creation of an artisan guild with training programs and mentoring
- Task 1-4. Create a Young Entrepreneurs Network.
- Task 1-5. Expand the presence of Cabot-made products in Cabot's retail and tourism venues.

Task 2. Strengthen Cabot's Ability to Attract Tourists

- Task 2-1. Consolidate/strengthen festivals & arts events
- Task 2-2. Create "experience trails" with Northeast Kingdom communities
- Task 2-3. Continue to create a system of recreational trails in and around Cabot.
- Task 2-4. Create wayfinding signage to establish a unified, stronger image for Cabot and its assets.
- Task 2-5. Coordinate Cabot's tourism activities with such major assets as the Cabot Creamery, Local Agri-tourism attractions, Molly Falls Pond State Park and Joe's Pond.
- Task 2-6. Encourage Residents to Provide Overnight Accommodations for Events.

Task 3. Continually Strengthen the Village Center

- Task 3-1. Revise the village zoning setbacks, lot coverage and parking provisions to conform to Cabot's traditional village configuration
- Task 3-2. Encourage creative, high-quality development projects in the Village.
- Task 3-3. Promote more housing within a walkable distance to the Village
- Task 3-4. Keep Cabot's "Civic Core" Intact.

Task 4. Build the Administrative Capacity to Support Village Revitalization

- Task 4-1. Develop sufficient administrative capacity to support economic activity throughout Cabot.
- Task 4-2. Focus the Cabot Community Investment Fund to Support the Village Revitalization Process & Economic Development
- Task 4-3. Maintain close alliances with the Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation and the Northeastern Vermont Development Association.
- Task 4-4. Establish Web Presence Promoting Cabot Village Revitalization Initiatives.

The Cabot Community Association is serving as a convener, catalyst and coordinator for this effort. Cabot is a community of doers. As acknowledged in the full report, there are already many worthwhile projects underway that will provide vital contributions to Cabot. This plan has been to find the best ways to recognize and support these efforts, while encouraging new initiatives to build further momentum for Cabot's continuing revitalization.

Cabot's ability to create working partnerships extends back to the first partnership among Cabot's farmers that helped shape the local community and revolutionize the agricultural economy in New England and beyond. This plan is put forth as a new platform on which to strengthen and build the next generation of partnerships to guide this quintessential Vermont community in the 21st Century.