**Rockingham Incremental Development Working Group (RIDWG)**

*December 15th, 3:30 pm, Zoom*

In Attendance: John Dunbar, Sue Westa, Paul Martorano, Kristin Fehrenbach,

Duane Case, Sarah Lang

Recording of Meeting: <https://youtu.be/v8-qWpt4bKs>

**RIDWG Opinion Poll Review**

* Review/Update RIDWG Mission
* Changes needed to make RIDWG successful
* Plan moving forward

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1AjKwEz-p8JIRCxedIAR5Xp04n7Xqj96itxZAhRqxDpE/edit?usp=sharing>

**General Opinions:**

* Survey Response: 12 people
* General response: yes, there is a mission, some people felt we were making progress, people made suggestions on improvement
* Group format suggestions: a resource sharing/learning group or a group that is very action/goal oriented
* Early on, we were coming up with ideas and checking off tasks

**Combining Capacity:**

* Many other organizations are doing similar work, doesn’t seem to be closely connected with RIDWG
  + Is there a way that these groups can be better connected, share resources, combine resources?
* Are we duplicating efforts? Can we provide more capacity as a larger group doing small improvements around town?
* A lot of interest going on of improving the town
  + Housing
  + Trails
  + Business development
* Liberty Mills/Chemco building- something going on, putting $$ into the building, some of the interests that have come up in RIDWG could work on improving the neighborhood around it
* Identifying projects happening and using RIDWG to help advance those projects
  + Old Terrace properties, Chris Procter
  + Beautifying downtown
  + Liberty Mills
* Instead of creating projects from scratch, glooming on to projects already happening

**Bettering Rockingham/Bellows Falls:**

* There are all these little things happening (little park, opera house/movie theatre, restaurants)
* The bigger goal of attracting new people to town
* What is the scope that this group can take on? How can incremental development contribute? - going beyond housing
  + Center of a collaborative effort
  + Piece of a bigger effort
* Highlighting the strength of the area
* Incremental development: a wider definition than building housing
* An umbrella organization working on bettering the town through incremental change, a central command
  + People might feel different on where our resources should go at any one time
  + Sharing information, flowing freely between projects
* Approaching a community minded project that is owned by a private owner

**Make an Impact:**

* Let’s pick something small, achievable and just get it done, to feel the momentum, make an impact- get us through the next 3-6 months
  + Parade of lights
  + Statue and park
  + Lots of positive momentum
* Combining energy, community bulletin board
* Survey of people’s ideas that they would love to happen?
  + VCRD Community Visit is a good compilation: <https://www.vtrural.org/sites/default/files/RockinghamCVReport.pdf>
* **Inc Dev as the build structure BUT also a broader definition of Inc Dev that is the food truck, the experience, painting the stairwell railings, parade of lights…**
* Creating a space or a landing place for all the projects that would be considered small improvements
* So many resources like the trails—how do we better utilize what we have?

**Umbrella Org:**

* Will we loose traction on the zoning improvements and small-scale housing developments if we decide to take the route of a bigger, wider reaching organization?
* Next steps?: bring lots of people together about the good things happening in town
* A second round of something like a VCRD visit: can we pull everything together again to hear what has happened?
  + Twice a year, everyone comes together to share updates on projects
  + Area Wide Plan happening- once report is published, there may be pieces of that plan that RIDWG can take on
* Engagement Model: community driven organization and decision making might make more sense than what happens when experts come in and brainstorm with community and then leave and do the work (Duane cited area wide plan and VCRD visit)
* We should do something and then get a reaction: did you like it or not?
* We are community members, we can do something, everyone doesn’t have to agree

**Projects to Focus on:**

* Possible Assignment: what can Rockingham/Bellows Falls use? What is a project that RIDWG can focus on?
  + Vacant lot where YMCA is: RIDWG could imagine and brainstorm what could happen here
  + Something smaller, bite size, more achievable? Done in a couple of months… showcase this feeling/love we all have for BF
  + Poll the BF businesses and ask what they think is missing: is it outdoor space for business, downtown to be more vibrant in the evening, close off Canal St to use for outdoor seating or a third space
  + Area of town to bring lighting to (has already made a good impact)- along the fence lines, over the bridge, vacant parking lot on island
  + BF garage project: construction site for a long time, can RIDWG bring positive attention to this site, do the workers need a spot to eat or hang out when they are on their break, kiosk with updates and timelines on the project, food trucks
  + Sanel auto parts building: is this a building that could be utilized to help with the construction site, or a farmers’ market in the winter? (like Brattleboro’s FM)
  + Graffiti museum in Liberty Mills building.

**Extra News:**

* Next Meeting: ARPA project suggestions from RIDGW January 26th
* Saxtons River got Municipal Planning Grant for the Main Street Arts building- should be some action around figuring out what to come of that building and that end of town (Post Office, horrible parking, kind of a rotary.. etc)
* Recently closed daycare- building in bad shape. Are there businesses in town or who might come into town that would need assistance in dealing with development?