

## Northern Forest Symposium

# A Vibrant and Entrepreneurial Region: Connecting Communities, Economy and Landscape November 4-6, 2015

### Community Revitalization Takeaways

*At the close of Day 1, after hearing four stories of community revitalization across the four Northern Forest states, participants were asked to write down one "takeaway" that stuck with them – for whatever reason. Here are their responses, organized by theme.*

<b>LEADERSHIP</b> (24 related comments)	Champions are a necessity. One individual can make all the difference. Energetic, visionary individuals can inspire and drive community action.
<b>ATTITUDE</b> (19)	A PMA (positive mental attitude) is essential to community revitalization.
<b>HUMAN CAPITAL</b> (9)	The Northern Forest is full of creative, energetic people who want to make a difference. Leverage this energy for community change.
<b>CONNECTIONS</b> (9)	Building networks both in and outside the physical boundaries of the community to address challenges.
<b>IDEAS</b> (8)	Being different can lead to success. Creativity is critical.
<b>COMMUNITY IDENTITY</b> (8)	Tap into the sense of community and place. Find out what people care about. Build the brand.
<b>THE POWER OF SMALL INVESTMENTS</b> (6)	A little bit of money can go a long way!
<b>PLAN FOR THE FUTURE</b> (6)	Don't wait for a crisis. Think long-term. Plan ahead!
<b>IT'S A PROCESS</b> (5)	Patience and perseverance matter.
<b>LOCAL ASSETS</b> (4)	All communities have assets. Find out what they are and build on them.
<b>ROLE OF YOUTH</b> (4)	Find ways to engage them in the community, whether they still live there or not!
<b>LINGERING QUESTIONS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The stories of community in all of these stories (6ers, first Fridays, Jack O Lanterns, 4th of July) inspire and connect to something that so many people seek. How can this be used to bring new people?</li> <li>• There is a common thread of personal commitment of time and money by a group of individuals. This is promising but also overwhelming. How do we transfer the energy of a few to galvanize a broader community?</li> <li>• How can (should we) scale these strategies? Is there a limit to these strategies? Will they no longer work if there is competition? Do we need a patchwork across the region? What do you do without that strong local leader?</li> <li>• What is the future of the forest products industry? Is there a positive future?</li> <li>• Jobs- as communities seek to revitalize themselves, what are the type of jobs and how many of them are needed? Where do they come from?</li> </ul>
<b>OTHER THOUGHTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to thrive, communities need both the jobs base and the innovative unique cultural ideas that put that community on the map – and attract visitors and residents.</li> <li>• Ownership is local</li> <li>• Inspired by the 6ers!</li> <li>• I'm most excited about identifying how an "OK Capital" type campaign can successfully fill can "at-risk capital" void in small town rural America.</li> <li>• I will be seeking out more information on the Hardwick Story: The food-coop stands at 40 years. They don't compete. Example: They don't sell flowers when there is a flower shop down the road. Something that my county needs to look deeply at.</li> </ul>

## Reflections from the Community Vitality Café

*The morning of Day 2, participants engaged in a series of conversations as part of a “Community Vitality Cafe.” They talked with each other about two different revitalization questions. Report-outs from the **first** conversation are here, organized by theme.*

### Conversation A: Which elements in the revitalization stories we heard yesterday made them “work”?

<b>LEADERSHIP &amp; POSITIVE ATTITUDE</b> (12 related report-outs)	Charismatic, committed leaders and a positive mental attitude make all the difference.
<b>LOCAL ASSETS (PEOPLE INCLUDED!)</b> (10)	Build on local assets and tap into local expertise and energy.
<b>OVERCOMING CHANGE</b> (8)	Change is difficult. How do we facilitate a process where change is embraced rather than resisted?
<b>CELEBRATE SMALL VICTORIES</b> (8)	This work takes time. Have fun and celebrate the small successes along the way!
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b> (5)	Listen to and engage the community so that they feel ownership of the process.
<b>COLLABORATE</b> (4)	Break down siloes and work together to create change.
<b>SUCCESSION PLANNING</b> (4)	Foster shared leadership so that when the key, passionate person or organization leaves, the movement continues.
<b>IT TAKES TIME</b> (3)	This work is long-term – keep at it and you’ll see change over time.
<b>SHARED LEARNING</b> (3)	We should come together as a region to learn from each other and share what’s working.
<b>THERE’S OPPORTUNITY IN CRISIS</b> (3)	Crisis can bring people together, but make sure to plan ahead so that you’re poised to turn that crisis into an opportunity.
<b>INVESTMENT</b> (2)	Money makes things happen! Find ways to attract capital.
<b>A COUPLE OF WAYS PARTICIPANTS THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES TO REVITALIZE COMMUNITIES:</b>	<p>We struggled with the chicken-and-egg idea. In the end, we came up with parallel tracks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track 1: Small initiatives that are authentic. People who are identifying the strengths in the community, having small successes, generating ideas, developing new leaders. Things the entire community can engage in on the level of economics, skill, and whether they’re local or from away (like 6ers). Everyone can participate and it builds local energy and ability to feel that new leaders are supported.</li> <li>• Track 2: The long-term view. Like in Littleton- there was a long-term visionary to help see big picture (but also a short-term person, more on track 1).</li> <li>• In the middle core: The passion, the storytelling, and importance of being connected to the history of the place. Tell stories and educate and bring people along as an overall what is unique about our community. They fit between the community level and big regional picture.</li> </ul> <p>We drew a picture like the Star of David:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First triangle: Mission, vision, and optimism (all related but different). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mission takes structure.</li> <li>○ One person can have optimism, but if that person leaves, mission can keep it going.</li> <li>○ Vision takes planning and patience.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Second triangle based on people, diversity and youth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ First, people, people, people.</li> <li>○ Diversity in NF may not be ethnic, but welcoming new perspectives.</li> <li>○ Then youth- differing definitions- k12, then millennials, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• At center of the star is place. Building on assets, accentuating what we have and not pretending to be something we’re not.</li> </ul>

## Reflections from the Community Vitality Café

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### **Conversation B: What will it take for more leaders and residents in the region to change their thinking or approaches so that more communities get on a revitalization path?**

<b>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT</b> (11 related report-outs)	Find ways to nurture and invest in local leaders, especially “non-traditional” and young leaders.
<b>RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING</b> (6)	Create spaces for people to work and play together. It takes trust to make things happen.
<b>PEER-TO-PEER SHARING</b> (6)	Build cross-region relationships and networks where communities can share ideas and learn from one another.
<b>COMMUNITY VISIONING</b> (4)	Help communities develop a vision for their future and the tangible steps that will get them there.
<b>STORYTELLING</b> (3)	Use storytelling to move people to action.
<b>CONFLICT MANAGEMENT</b> (3)	Acknowledge that sometimes there will be disagreement. If something is highly controversial, temporarily step away from it and come back to it later.
<b>COMMUNITY GRIEVING</b> (3)	Communities in transition must grieve before they can accept change. Once that happens, they may be more open to new ideas.
<b>MAKING CONNECTIONS</b> (2)	Exposing people to new ideas and experiences can help change their perspective.
<b>PATIENT CAPITAL</b> (1)	Invest in new ideas.

## Working Landscape=Working Economy Takeaways

*At the end of Day 2, after hearing multiple stories of how initiatives across the region in different sectors have addressed how to balance working economy with working landscape, participants were asked to respond to two reflection questions. Responses to the first question are below, organized by theme.*

### Reflection Question 1: *What is one approach you heard in the “Balance” stories that you think could serve as a guide for others in our region?*

<b>CONVENE &amp; COMPROMISE</b> (15 related responses)	Bring together divergent interests early in the process and work with those stakeholders to determine the best path forward.
<b>BE STRATEGIC</b> (13)	Do the research, identify local assets (including people!), organize, and find ways to message your effort in ways that resonate with the community.
<b>KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE</b> (12)	Keep a positive attitude, frame crises as opportunities, and keep on keepin’ on.
<b>COLLABORATE</b> (11)	If we work together, we can get things done.
<b>ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY</b> (9)	Listen deeply and work closely with the community to find the best way forward.
<b>ENSURE COMMUNITY BENEFIT</b> (8)	Use decision-making processes and ownership structures that ensure the local community benefits from economic development activity. <i>(The Community Forest was cited a number of times as a great example of this.)</i>
<b>FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE</b> (7)	The Northern Forest landscape is used for many purposes, e.g., forestry, agriculture, tourism, recreation. We have to work together to find the right balance of uses.
<b>DON’T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF</b> (4)	This is hard work. Focus on what’s working and don’t let the naysayers get you down.
<b>CONNECT WITH NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES</b> (4)	Find out what’s working across the region and apply those ideas in your own place.
<b>SUPPORT NEW FARMERS &amp; FORESTERS</b> (4)	Use lease-to-own programs to increase access to land for new farmers and foresters and increase their chances of success through mentorship.
<b>FIND THE FUNDS</b> (3)	Money makes things happen. Use grant and institutional funds to leverage more dollars.

## Working Landscape=Working Economy Takeaways

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### **Reflection Question 2: *What one most critical tension or conflict surfaced in the stories that you think the region would most benefit by explicitly addressing as a region?***

<b>COMPETING LAND USES</b> (26 related responses)	How do we strike the right balance between land uses –maintaining the Region’s assets while building a thriving regional economy? Tensions include conservation vs. development, farm vs. forestry, non-motorized activities vs. motorized, etc. Is there a way to make room for all?
<b>RESISTANCE TO CHANGE</b> (25)	How do we address the ongoing tension between “long-term” residents and “new” residents, “locals” and “tourists,” and the “old way” of doing versus the “new way” of doing?
<b>REGIONAL COLLABORATION</b> (8)	How do communities across the region find ways to collaborate and complement one another rather than compete so that everyone benefits?
<b>ENERGY INDEPENDENCE</b> (8)	How do we transition the region to renewable energy sources? And how do we change energy policies and practices so that low-income people benefit rather than suffer?
<b>EQUITY</b> (5)	How do we ensure that low-income people are part of economic development action and benefit?
<b>LONG-TERM PLANNING</b> (4)	How do we plan for the future and make sure that development activities are connected to a larger vision?
<b>LAND OWNERSHIP</b> (4)	How do we address the tension between private land ownership and other uses for that land?
<b>LEADERSHIP</b> (4)	How do we develop strong community leaders who can navigate complex economic development processes?
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT</b> (4)	How do we find the funds and support for infrastructure development?
<b>YOUTH</b> (2)	How do we engage youth so that they become leaders and contribute to our communities in the long-term?
<b>DISTRUST IN FORESTRY SECTOR</b> (2)	How do we build trust in the forestry sector so that business-owners are more willing to work with government?