

Berlin Community Profile

Building a better Berlin

October 2019

Final Report



Extension

The people
Love My Tribe

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension brings information and education into the communities of the Granite State to help make New Hampshire's individuals, businesses, and communities more successful and its natural resources healthy and productive. For 100 years, our specialists have been tailoring contemporary, practical education to regional needs, helping create a well-informed citizenry while strengthening key economic sectors.

Our Focus Areas:

Food & Agriculture



Natural Resources



4-H Youth & Families



Community & Economic Development



The Community Profile is a process by which communities take stock of where they are today and develop an action plan for how they want to operate in the future. The process provides a method for citizens to affirm community strengths, find collaborative approaches to meet challenges creatively, and manage change. One of the major outcomes of the Community Profile is increased citizen participation in the community.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you!

To all who made the Berlin Community Profile such a huge success.

BERLIN STEERING COMMITTEE & VOLUNTEERS

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Peter Higbee, co-chair	Paula Kinney	Derek Patry
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Dick Huot	Henry Noel	Pam Laflamme

ORGANIZATIONS

Berlin City Council
Berlin Industrial Development &
Park Authority
Berlin Middle-High School
Berlin Planning Board

EXTENSION STAFF

Sue Cagle
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Heidi Barker
Charlie French
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Stephen Meno
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The Community Profile model was developed in 2000 with the assistance of:

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension; University of Vermont Cooperative Extension; Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs; Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission; Tufts University, Center for Environmental Management, Consortium for Regional Sustainability; New Hampshire Charitable Foundation; Vermont Community Foundation; Sustainable Seattle; University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies; Community Innovations; The Upper Valley: 2001 & Beyond Steering Committee. The Community Profile model has been updated in 2015 to reflect changes in New Hampshire and new components on a vibrant community from the National Civic League.

Summary

The Berlin Steering Committee was formed in the spring of 2019 with the charge of planning the Community Profile event and engaging community members prior to the event. Initial committee volunteers met with University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension staff to learn about the Community Profile and discuss ways to attract additional volunteers representing a variety of community interests and perspectives, such as youth, seniors, business community, municipal officials, and others. The Community Profile event date was set for October 4-5, 2019. The Steering Committee met regularly through September to plan, prepare and market the event with UNH Cooperative Extension providing support. The Community Profile was funded by the City of Berlin.

The Steering Committee adopted a format using the components of a vibrant community as drawn from the National Civic League and adapted and modified by Extension. These components are important to a successful community. Components make a community work well now and sustain the cultural, economic and environmental health and vitality for the long-term future. The components are economic vitality; education and lifelong learning; housing, community spaces and infrastructure; leadership and community engagement; sense of community, history and culture; and quality of life: healthy living, natural resources and recreation.

The Berlin Community Profile was promoted throughout Berlin through Facebook, the municipal website, flyers, and community events, and a community hike. The Steering Committee arranged for the location; promoted the event; organized the food and beverages; and set up the sessions.

Some of the Steering Committee, including other Berlin community volunteers, received a two-hour training led by Extension on the basics of facilitation and recording or scribing and on the specific facilitation role for the Community Profile. Community members and volunteers from outside of the community were invited to participate in the training. The Community Profile small group discussions were facilitated by these trained volunteers. The Community Profile process included the following components:

- Vision developed by participants.
- Components of a successful community were presented.
- Four Key Issues: Small group facilitated discussion on 4 component areas where the groups brainstormed the strengths, challenges and desired future. (Friday evening)
- Two Key Themes: All participants worked to review the key issues from Friday's discussions and agreed on common themes. (Saturday morning)
- Priority Projects or Opportunities: Participants selected a theme they wanted to discuss in small groups where they defined the problem, identified solutions and selected 3 priority projects or opportunities in each group.
- Participants were given the opportunity to choose their priority projects, focusing on a place to start to take action.
- Action Groups: Participants were invited to participate in an action planning meeting set for October 23, 2019 @ 5pm, at the Berlin City Hall.



Outcome

- Berlin community members participated in the Friday or Saturday session, or both sessions
- Community members committed to working on two new action groups which will begin to implement the projects or opportunities identified at the profile
- Steering Committee members learned new leadership skills and put them into action by organizing the Community Profile
- Community members received training on facilitation skills which can be used in other community settings

The community issues, opportunities, and priorities for Berlin are detailed in this report. Berlin participants demonstrated a strong commitment to their community, creating a vision and working together to address opportunities and fulfill the vision.

Priority Projects and Solutions

The Community Profile process identified priority projects in Berlin, based on the input of all Profile participants. The following projects were identified as the top projects to focus on to get action started. Participants noted that many of the projects identified throughout the discussions were important and should be considered over time but these were seen as important first steps.

Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces

1. Downtown Association for Beautification/Façade Improvement Program
2. Tourism Management Plan
3. Business Attraction / Support Initiative Mentoring Program

Education & Community Services

1. Mapping Resources & Community Calendar
2. Develop & Utilize Public Spaces for Recreation & Adult Education/Activities & Themed Events
3. Volunteer Management

Action Groups

Potential Action Groups were identified based on the project and solutions identified during the Profile.

An action group meeting will be held **on October 17 at 5pm at the Berlin City Hall** for community members interested in working on projects identified at the Profile.



Publicity and Marketing

The Steering Committee for the Berlin Community Profile was responsible for the publicity, marketing and outreach for the event. All committee members were responsible for planning the outreach efforts, publicizing the event and promoting it to their neighbors, co-workers, family and friends in Berlin.

The Steering Committee developed marketing materials, posts for social media (including Facebook and Instagram), and a promotional flyer. The Profile was also publicized by articles in the Berlin Daily Sun. Steering committee members contacted groups in Berlin to make sure community members were aware of the Profile and encouraged to participate.

Facilitation of the Community Profile

Facilitation is an important component of the Community Profile. Trained facilitators are used in the small group discussions to help the group meet its objectives by guiding it through the Community Profile process. This allows the participants to focus on the issues they came to discuss. The facilitator is trained to provide neutral guidance and help the group arrive at decisions related to the topic discussed.

The Steering Committee and other community volunteers received a two-hour training led by University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension on the basics of facilitation and recording or scribing and on the specific facilitation role for the Community Profile.

Trained community volunteers and Extension staff facilitated and recorded the small group discussions (Friday evening and Saturday morning). The facilitators established the ground rules for participants; created a collaborative working environment; ensured everyone had the opportunity to participate, and brought closure to each topic so the process could move ahead. Scribes recorded all responses on easel paper for the group to see as the record for the discussion. All responses are documented in the following pages of this report.



Community Engagement

The Steering Committee was tasked with planning and implementing engagement activities in order to gather input from community members prior to the Community Profile event. Activities were planned to engage a broad and diverse representation of community residents. The committee distributed posters and created a post board for community events to capture what folks loved most about Berlin. A community hike of Mount Jasper was planned and attended by a handful of Berlin residents. Event information was also distributed through the Berlin Daily Sun, and online via Facebook, and the City website. An Instagram hashtag campaign was initiated, utilizing, #buildingabetterberlin.



Come out and help us start identifying opportunities for change, envision Berlin's vibrant future, & develop an action plan with your friends and neighbors!



Share your favorite places and things about Berlin!

Find us on Instagram
#buildingabetterberlin

Friday, October 4 5pm

Join us for a free community dinner and community planning session at Berlin High School in the cafeteria

Saturday, October 5 8:30am

Come back and help prioritize which ideas need action and should be part of our Master Plan in 2020. Coffee and doughnuts provided.

*Need a ride, childcare, more information?
email us at cityofberlinnh@gmail.com*

CITY OF BERLIN PLANNING DEPARTMENT & BOARD WORKING WITH UNH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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Berlin Poster & Post Board

Steering committee members displayed posters around the community and had an community engagement board at various events in order to gather input from a variety of different people. Community members were asked to share what they loved about Berlin. The following are comments from the community:

- It's home - even if you live away, you feel comfortable coming back. :-)
- It's Home
- ATV trails
- Family events
- Friendly - ATV - Family
- Quietest community I've ever lived in
- There are things to do up here.
- Friendly people
- ATV freedom
- Friendly people
- Everyone! Everything.
- My family and friends live in this city!
- Love the views
- Love the sense of community
- World peace :-)
- Love ATV friendly
- Friendly people
- Beautiful scenery
- Everything!
- Berlin is a friendly caring community
- Mountains



- My family history is here!
- It's home - #Roots
- The heart of the Berlin public school system
- It's home.
- Friendly people :-)
- The friends we all have in Berlin. Very caring.
- It's simply beautiful!
- People help people!
- Friendly people
- Culture
- Everything!
- Handicapped parking at Heritage
- ATM
- Need a new grocery store, produce and meat, "Roads".
- The people in the community
- Beautiful area - river, mountains, environment
- Berlin is our home, it is a beautiful place. Let's make it home once again.
- My ride to work.
- All the fun events.

Berlin Poster & Post Board continued

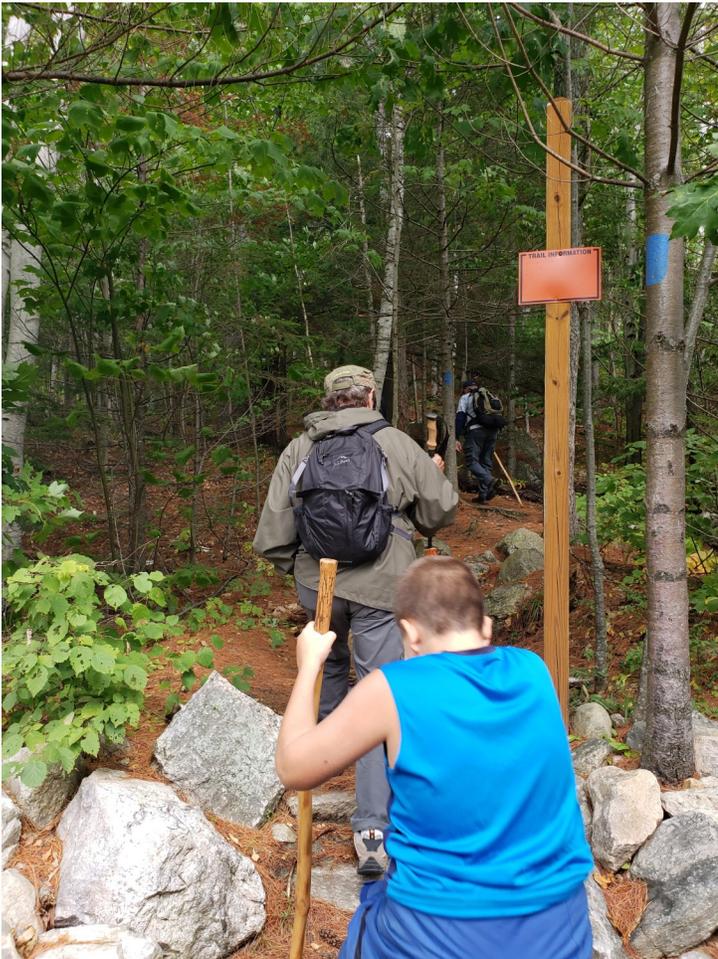
- I am new to the area, but so far, I like the natural beauty of the area, and the quieter pace. I believe the area needs to develop significantly, but I would want to preserve the ecology and environment.
- Community is very friendly and helpful and it's called home.
- Friends that we were raised with!
- Quiet
- People that care
- The people; #love my tribe
- This seminar is a very good opportunity to exchange and expand outdoor recreation. It stimulates the line of thinking by exchanging ideas. Nobody has a monopoly of bright ideas. Share them with others.
- Natural beauty
- Good place to be.
- Family & lifelong friends.
- Berlin's sense of community
- No long commutes.
- Less traffic
- WMCC!
- Safe to raise family
- Playground
- ATV
- Mountains
- People
- Diverse recreation
- Rocks color
- Church architecture
- Safe place to live!
- Economic development that's sustainable.
- Love Berlin - friendly - small knit
- Community pulls together when needed
- Scenery
- Sense of community - laid back - less hassle
- Hometown



- The people and the art community. :-)
- People of Berlin are kind, resilient, caring and giving.
- Quality of life
- Working towards a vibrant downtown.
- The college.
- The view.
- All the events that are held in the area!
- People are awesome here. :-)
- Friendly people
- Culture
- Outdoor activities
- The people of MHDC :-)
- Great people
- Family centered
- Beautiful scenery
- Easy going

Berlin Poster & Post Board continued

- Easy going
- Family is here
- Small town
- People
- Outdoors
- Services (med)
- Community pulls together for each other
- I love the mountains, river, and all the events!
- My whole family is from here!
- Community spirit
- Doesn't smell anymore.
- Full of opportunity.
- It's economic resiliency even when things got tough!
- School system
- ATVing
- Sense of place
- Good people, beautiful county!!
- Like the people
- There's too many reasons!
- We love to ride the streets on our ATV. Always feel welcome. Fun, friendly people.
- The people are wonderful here!



- Trails
- Sense of community
- Great, helpful people
- Local events held by the Chamber
- I love the people. They are always friendly. Great city.
- Family life
- Mountains
- ATV
- Snow
- Work ethic

Agenda

Friday, October 4, 2019

5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

- 5:00 Sign In and Community Supper
- 5:30 Welcome:
 - Steering Committee Co-chairs
 - Community Profiles Process—Extension staff
 - Vision for Berlin
 - Where we've been, where we're going
- 6:00 Introduction to small group discussion and ground rules –Extension staff
 - Economic Vitality
 - Education and Lifelong Learning
 - Housing, Community Spaces and Infrastructure
 - Leadership & Community Engagement
 - Sense of Community, History & Culture
 - Quality of Life: Healthy Living, Natural Resources and Recreation
- 6:15 Small Group Discussions
- 7:30 Group Reports, Preview of Saturday
- 8:00 Adjourn



Saturday, October 5 2019

8:30 am – 12:00 pm

- 8:30 Sign In and Light Breakfast
- 8:45 Welcome
- 9:00 Review of key themes from Friday
 - Discussion and Voting Exercise
- 9:45 Small group discussion of key issues
- 11:25 Small groups report back
 - Next Steps
- 12:00 Adjourn



vision

Vision

Berlin 2019—What is Berlin’s vision for the future?

- Old Buildings - refurbished - history
- This place use to have livery with sleds and wagons
- There is a diversity of cultures, a long history of immigrants
- Mature community in transition = opportunity
- Accessibility - walkable main street
- People of Berlin have a passion for work—they are resilient
- People in Berlin are welcoming
- Berlin has a strong social network
- Potential big business coming to town - industrial indoor vegetable growing
- People are moving to Berlin - we're being found
- High-tech, remote work potential
- There is a lot of potential for young folks to settle - it is affordable
- We have an arts community—we should grow this community
- We have a timeshare community
- Education system positive - small schools
- Education system should seek partnerships, like advanced placement opportunities

The Vision

We spent a few minutes offering descriptions of what Berlin is, was and could be like in the future. Comments were captured by Extension scribes. Those comments are listed here. These comments also provided the backdrop to the engaging small group discussions that took place immediately after the conclusion of this visioning discussion.

“Building a better Berlin”



Vision

Vision

Berlin 2019—What is Berlin's vision for the future?

- We have/want community gardens - growing own veggies and sharing
- Parks, open areas - green space
- Natural beauty in every direction - any time of year
- There is 360 degrees of natural beauty
- There's a lot of outdoor recreation
- Can ride ATV's in community
- We need night attractions to downtown
- We can be known as place to work-live-play
- Want the liquidation of municipal-owned abandoned buildings
- Want more retail on Main Street so we can shop local
- We could use an art center / museum
- We could use a YMCA with a swimming pool
- We could use a Market Basket
- We want a Brew Pub
- We would like a movie house
- We need motels, B&Bs - places to stay in Gorham
- We should have more outdoor activities like shooting comps, camping excursions that build on our existing recreation economy
- We could use a Welcome Center to inform visitors of amenities
- We could use a strong community business group if not an Welcome Center—like a business "Ambassador Program"
- We need to build a diverse economy - not rely on any one industry



Berlin is a place with immense potential. From its rich history and culture, natural resources, recreation and beauty, affordable housing, resident industry, strong schools, arts, and a fairly open market for new businesses, entrepreneurs and remote working, the sky is the limit. Together, leaders, volunteers, organizations, businesses, and the municipality can build a better Berlin. This process offers a few starting points filled with passion and energy.

Components of a Vibrant Community

After developing a vision for Berlin, Sue Cagle of Extension introduced us to the idea of discussing Berlin within the framework of components which can be used to profile a community. These topics, drawn from the work of the National Civic League and adapted by Extension, are important components of any successful community. These components make a community work well now and sustain the cultural, economic and environmental health and vitality for the long-term future.

1. Economic Vitality
2. Education and Lifelong Learning
3. Housing, Community Spaces and Infrastructure
4. Leadership & Community Engagement
5. Sense of Community, History & Culture
6. Quality of Life: Healthy Living, Natural Resources and Recreation

It is important to note, while the Berlin Community Profile had approximately 35 attendees, in order to maximize participation in the small group discussions, Extension allowed participants to choose which components were of most interest. Of the six possible, four component areas were chosen. While this method did not capture feedback from each component area, we often find vibrant and passionate discussions around areas of particular participant interest, can benefit community follow up action and engagement—the process does not stop at the end of the forum!

After considering a provided definition of their chosen component, participants were asked to focused on the following questions:

- What are the strengths of your community in this component area?
- What are the challenges of your community in this component area?
- What would you like to see for the future in this component area?

Each small group had a facilitator and scribe. Scribes captured comments and group discussion points on large format paper; these notes were later transcribed onto a computer. Those notes can be found in this Report, in the pages that follow. The component definitions provided to participants can also be found in the pages that follow,



Economic Vitality



Small Group Facilitator:

Jared Reynolds

Scribe:

Geoffrey Sewake

Group spokesperson:

Adam Hammill

Definition- Economic Vitality

A vibrant community includes access to a variety of environmentally friendly businesses, industries, and institutions that provide reasonable wages and benefits to workers, engage in family-friendly policies, provide workers with opportunities to develop marketable skills, and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

Strengths

- Longevity for a number of businesses
- Enlisting infrastructure - no need to build
- Robust natural resources - rec economy - clean river
- Geographic Gateway - lots of thru traffic - particularly Maine
- Mecca for snowmobiles, ATVs, river - econ engine
- Fully leased industrial park - growing
- Affordable housing
- People want to shop local - new restaurants
- Bilingual! Robust pop., not even just older French Canadians
- International tourism (particularly French Canadians) - 200 from Montreal - 200 from Boston
- Opportunity to embrace Canada
- Hub for medical business and services
- Perfect location for a "green" college, think green tech, policy - history of cleaning community, i.e. river
- People of community - comes together - help each other! - history of friendliness from French Canadians
- Strong and active Chamber of Commerce - activities, events, etc.
- Regional collaboration - Gorham, other
- High social mobility over other regions and places - Berlin cares for community - "Only moved from Berlin if you became a priest"
- Community responsibility - regular everyday folks care and contribute
- Hard to get investors - need to know people, hard for locals - still no money

Challenges

- Not a diverse economic base - must think out of the box for new sectors
- Main St needs revitalization
- No place for visitors to stay, eat, have fun
- No support for new entrepreneurs and businesses
- No online presence what so ever for businesses - need marketing for businesses and community
- Chamber has many listed businesses, but not even a link to a landing page or a "Yelp" - opportunity for college to fill space/help with marketing
- Want to buy local, but too expensive and customer service is poor
- Downtown missing critical mass
- Missing parking vital to Main St. - example of "bridge "project not moving forward
- Bed co no longer exists
- Vacant / under utilized lots - municipal challenges - poor codes - poor municipal and state support to improve
- Buildings not up to code - so far out of code, too expensive to improve and update
- Old biases from those out of community are inhibiting growth - need to rebrand
- No workforce - like contractors! - lower wages
- Landlocked - bad for industry
- No tax incentives - counter point: exists a 5 year graduated rate
- Need cultural and business amenities - e.g. museums, clubs, restaurants
- Even with graduated rate still too expensive to build
- State tax structure creates difficult local issues like local taxes
- Little to no help for new entrepreneurs - access to capital

Vision for the Future

- Trees on Main St. - between bridges - blueberry island view needs improvement
- River walk
- Attractive colors on Main St.
- Examples of success to support more businesses to open - clear expectations for opening a business - "support network" - online "step by step guide" - "mentorship program"
- Two-way traffic along Main St.
- Easy parking for RV's and trucks to patron businesses
- Concert venue on other side of river
- More events in general
- More diverse economy
- Not have a tax rate x2 the state average
- High speed broadband!
- Seasonal pop up businesses - use HS to teach skills
- Targeted business attraction

Housing, Community Spaces & Infrastructure



Small Group Facilitator:
Stephen Meno
Scribe:
Brendan Prusik
Group spokesperson:
Ben Belanger

Definition- Housing, Community Spaces & Infrastructure

The quality and availability of housing, neighborhoods, and community spaces is an important factor in a vibrant community. Housing encompasses the availability, affordability, and location of homes for sale and for rent. In a vibrant community, neighborhoods are welcoming and safe, and there are a variety of public spaces available for the community to gather.

In order for a community to function, it must have essential facilities, services and utilities – public facilities such as municipal buildings, schools, sidewalks, roads, libraries, a recycling center, and cemeteries; services and utilities such as police, fire, ambulance, highway maintenance, water and sewer. These key functions consume the majority of tax dollars and sharply influence the community’s quality of life. Broadband internet is a service that is an important part of modern life. High- speed internet connects community members to resources, and is also crucial for economic development.

Strengths

- Housing is very affordable and available
- Values rising because folks are moving here
- ATV are bringing folks here
- Diverse community space availability (parks)
- Good relationship with WMCC - community space
- Developable land without lots of constraints
- Lots of conserved land permanent USFS
- Walkable downtown - even outside city center
- Trolley for transportation
- Friendly neighborhoods - "know everyone on my street" (stronger sense of community)
- Very good municipal water (sourced from Ammonoosuc!), sewer (new upgrades), 7-miles paved roads
- Full-time police, full-time fire, school
- AHEAD: Many improvements to develop affordable housing
- Great library
- Good cell phone and broadband service
- WMCC library and other spaces available for school kids
- Rec center
- Hockey rink
- Air B&B
- Good senior citizen's housing (county home and St. Vincent's)
- RR from Island Pond to Portland, ME through Berlin and is profitable
- City willing to facilitate real estate transfers that will add to vibrancy
- Lots of greenspaces
- Very rich history

Challenges

- Transportation - on demand needed if don't have own vehicle - medically necessary transportation
- Lack of highways to Berlin. Rt 2 is the E-W corridor - not paid attention by NH
- Roads to move goods are not adequate for new businesses to move here
- Maintenance of roads (neighborhoods)
- Maintenance equipment too expensive (snow)
- Lots of "underperforming" properties on Main St.
- Many properties controlled by one individual and not attractive. Lack of stimulus to make improvements.
- Empty historic buildings
- New building / redevelopment entrepreneurs not savvy to the reality of restoration - need to educate them - city can do this. They need local guidance.
- Lack of awareness of community college courses and resources
- YMCA - need one
- Food descent (high quality food at affordable prices)
- Men's League Softball

Vision for the Future

- More vibrant Main St.
- Night life
- Social opportunities
- Restaurants / coffee shops
- Brew pub is vibrant / profitable
- Hotel / motel (branded)
- Arts! Gallery, classes, music events
- Dorm housing for WMCC - repurpose some of the old existing buildings (perhaps 3rd party)
- More retail open on Sunday
- Things to do in town with visitors (walking tour, tour of morals on buildings, etc.) Draw tourists.
- Something to show-off Berlin history
- Sense of community projected by all
- Andro Valley Chamber focus on outdoor recreation - expand attractions not silo's in OHRV
- Increased partnerships with others who support alternative opportunities
- Better ways to communicate who we are. What can you do here - Welcome Center - Kiosk

Education & Lifelong Learning



Small Group Facilitator:

Heidi Barker

Scribe:

Jim Frohn

Group spokesperson:

Mitch Couture

Definition- Education & Lifelong Learning

Education is a lifelong endeavor, much more extensive than just the K-12 school system. Lifelong learning starts at home, continues through childhood and the teen years, and progresses throughout adult life. People of all ages need to develop new knowledge and skills in order to improve the quality of their own lives and those of their families, and to contribute more effectively to community life.

Lifelong learning allows citizens to respond to a changing economy and participate in increasingly complex community issues with greater knowledge and skill.

Strengths

- Public Transportation
 - Enable those unable to drive
- New School - Salve Regina
 - Diverse educational opportunities
- Skilled Population
 - Makers, self-sufficient, built-in teachers, subject matter experts
- Lots of Volunteers
 - Opportunity for volunteering senior population if interested
- Small Class Sizes
- CTE Programs
 - Running Start
- Career Tech Ed.
- Connection to WMCC
- Music Program in Schools
- Sports Program in Schools
- Special Education Programs
 - 42 Para Educators from across the country
- Good Infrastructure
 - Investment in school buildings and community college
- Berlin & Gorham & WMCC School Districts Working Together - Collaboration
 - Working together—collaboration
- Family moved from far away and was very impressed with school quality
- Garden Club
 - Farm to Table Dinners
- Affordable Concerts and Dances
 - Opportunities for learning through music and dance
- Park & Rec Dept
 - Youth and adult programs
- Catholic Charities
 - Budgeting assistance, finding resources for those in need
- Self-Help Groups
 - Nutrition, health resources
- Active School Board
- Active Homeschool Network

Challenges

- Opportunities for Seniors to attend/take courses
- School Buses
 - Need based; there's a charge for students >1 mile –state rule—nee more research
- Public Transportation Ends at 4:30pm
- Challenge for access for public space events - fees are an issue
- Need More Classrooms in District
- Diversity of Values / Differences in Values
- Diversity of Cultural Appreciation
- Funding
- Communications
- Lack of Promotion
 - It's hard to find out how to be engaged
- Meaningful Participation in Community for Adults
- "Tribalism"
 - Resistance to change—resistance to people from “away”
- Limited Support for Homeschoolers

Vision for the Future

- More Discretion of Educational Funding for Parents
 - Voucher system (happening now with the academy), tax credits, opportunities to try new things, case-by-case basis
- Don't Stifle New Approaches
- Don't Have the Presumption of Restraint
- More Partnerships - Networking Culture
 - Opportunity for input in lifelong learning, Eliminate "islands"
- More Support for Homeschoolers
- Funding Issues Resolved - Localized Control
- Tax Burden Reduced
- Affordable, Thriving Arts Culture
- Web Presence
 - Central focal point, Information Center, music, art opportunities, anything people want to learn about
- City of Berlin Website
 - Expand it
- Partner with Chamber of Commerce
- Apprentice Program for Incarcerated Adults

Quality of Life: Healthy Living, Natural Resources and Recreation



Small Group Facilitator:
Charlie French
Scribe:
Matthew King
Group spokesperson:
Den Derst

Definition- Quality of Life: Healthy Living, Natural Resources and Recreation

Parks, recreational activities, and natural resources enhance the quality of life for residents and contribute to creating healthy, safe communities. Recreational activities include sports, outdoor activities, and community facilities such as recreation centers, trails, swimming pools, public parks, basketball and tennis courts, and athletic fields. Natural resources including streams, rivers, trails, working farms, forests, clean air, wildlife, and undeveloped lands. Climate change and energy usage are major stressors on natural resources. A vibrant community recognizes the importance of protecting its natural resources.

The overall wellness of a community is a reflection of the physical, social and emotional health of its citizens. This includes access to health care, as well as preventative measures such as healthy eating and active living. Through recreation programs and other healthy activities, community members improve their health and wellness, learn to compete and cooperate, build relationships, and become more involved in community life.

Strengths

- Sewer System
- Strong Electrical System
- Good Foundation; Strong Religious Entities
- Close Relationships (social fabric)
- Proximity to Nature
- Strong Work Ethic
- Lots of Outdoor Activities, Facilities such as Rec., Fields, Parks, etc.
- Logging
- Addressing Needs of Community Members
- Not as much Congestion
- Housing is Relatively Cheap
- Vacant Buildings for Business
- Hospital (AVH, Coos County)
- Improved Air Quality, River Quality
- Flow of Traffic Better
- Attraction to Community Events; Organizations Draw People to Them
- Heritage Park, Riverfire, Homecoming!
- Community Support
- Nansen Ski Jump, Skate Park
- Riverwalk

Challenges

- Cynicism; People Knocking Down Ideas/Being Negative/Focused on the Bad
- Navigating Negativity of Social Media
- Attitude Adjustment
- Lack of Coordination with Other Communities, especially Port Cities/Towns (example, Portsmouth)
- Lack of Convention Center
- Inconvenient Location
- Master Grants, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
- Retain the City's Youth in Different Ways
- Lack of Attractive Jobs
- Opioid Epidemic
- Losing a Sense of Family/Community
- Lack of Things to Do
- Income Potential
- Lack of Balance, Kids get into Trouble if there's Lack of Activities

5 Key Things/Issues

- Substance Abuse (Prevention)
- 2Community Garden / Access to Food (healthy living education)
- Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (education on topic, other resources)
- Setting/Opportunities for People to Gather (engage, community cleanup)
- Job Opportunity for Youth (pathfinder program), (broader range of transportation)

Vision for the Future

- Thriving Airport Community (long-term)
- Active Chamber of Commerce with Focus on Outdoors, Housed in Community Center (achievable now)
- Distributing Funds to More Useful Places (leveraging Fed. Resources); example, Food Chains. Recreation, Park Improvements (achievable now)
- Large, Local Community Garden (achievable now)
- Paper Company (achievable now)
- Community Outreach for Troubled Youth (13 - 16) (achievable now)
- More River Utilization
- Community Pool
- Community Block Party, Giving Possessions Away (achievable now)
- Community Space (long-term)
- More Gatherings! (achievable now)

Identified Needs

As a final task, each small group was asked to identify five key issues that need to be addressed by the community within their component area. These were brought back to the whole group and highlighted in three-minute summations presented by a member of each small group.

Group 1: Economic Vitality

Goal is Diversified Economy

1. Amenities (cultural, business, programs, etc.)
2. Downtown revitalization (incl. beautification)
3. Broadband
4. NEW Business support and networking (not established)
5. Branding and marketing for city and businesses

Group 2: Housing, Community Spaces & Infra-

1. Improve Main Street (Sunday beer!)
2. Local / regional transportation (variety of sources)
3. Celebrate rich history!
4. Develop connectivity and partnership with WMCC and others
5. Berlin-specific enhanced marketing

Group 3: Education & Lifelong Learning

Lots of positives in community! Goal is affordability and accessibility to educational opportunities

1. Communication, collaboration and networking
2. Pre-K - 12 education - education options
3. Adult education - senior volunteers, WMCC, correctional facility
4. Funding
5. Arts education - music, theatre, dance, sculpture, fine arts

Group 4: Leadership Quality of Life: Healthy Living, Natural Resources and Recreation

1. Substance abuse prevention
2. Setting / opportunities for people to gather and engage
3. Community garden / access to healthy food and living
4. Resources for entrepreneurs
5. Job opportunities for youth

Key Themes

Before going home on Friday evening small groups presented their list of five key issues to the larger group. Closing remarks were provided by Extension staff, and participants were bid goodnight. After the event, the key issues were reviewed by Extension staff who evaluated and refined the list to develop common themes. Six overarching themes were identified.

Six Key Themes

1. Business Resources & Support
2. Education & Community Services
3. Branding & Marketing
4. Amenities & Infrastructure
5. Community Partnerships
6. Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces

Saturday morning opened with Extension staff reviewing Friday evening's work, and introducing Saturday morning participants to the Key Themes. These Key Themes provided potential topics for Saturday's small group discussions.

The large group discussed these themes to determine where participants wanted to focus their conversations. They decided to focus on two themes. Those themes were: Education & Community Services; and Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces. The large group broke out into two small groups, one taking on Education & Community Services, and the other, Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces.



Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces

Small Group Facilitator:

Jared Reynolds

Scribe:

Penny Whitman

Group spokesperson:

Tiffany Hale

Brainstorming

Defining the theme/opportunity

- Used to have vibrant downtown that supplies residents with all they needed
- Main Street is hurting
- Who is our market? What can Main Street supply?
- How can we use Main St. to bring people together?
- Issues of attracting both residents and businesses to Main St.
- Need to make Main Street attractive
- How do we deal with old, tired buildings?
- Is Berlin friendly to new businesses?
- Need standards for Main Street buildings

Projects and Solutions

- Downtown community garden feasible plan
- Downtown transportation
- Dedicated space for families with children - recreation space
- Façade improvement grants
- Volunteer beautification committee
- Marketing campaign focusing on existing positives
- Bringing back farmers' market
- Explore use of 121 Main St. space for garden / recreation
- Wi-Fi on Main Street
- Welcome Center with meeting room
- Downtown recreation center
- Downtown association focuses on amenities for shoppers
- Parking - increase for events
- Increasing connectivity between heritage park and downtown and other spaces
- Management plan for recreation and tourism to protect natural resources
- Beautification committee - perhaps Coos County Botanical Garden Club
- New business support - mentorship - advocacy - incentive programs
- Entrepreneur Fair
- Food Coop
- More downtown events
- Local businesses serve local community and visitors

Saturday Morning Discussion

Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces

Small Group Facilitator:
Jared Reynolds
Scribe:
Penny Whitman
Group spokesperson:
Tiffany Hale

Projects and Solutions Continued

Saturday Morning Discussion

Downtown association for beautification/façade improvement program

Who do we need?

- Business owners - Chamber of Commerce (Jim)
- Gardening Club (Tiffany)
- City Leadership (Peter)
- Local Churches (Suzanne)
- High School Students (Schools—Tony)
- Sylvia
- ATV Club / Snowmobile

Tourism Management Plan

Who do we need?

- An unbiased champion

What exists now?

- AMC
- Ski Club
- ATV Club (presidential)
- Cycling Club
- Trails Bureau
- Borderlands
- Chamber
- Tillotson Fund

Business Attraction / Support Initiative Mentoring Program

- Local Businesses (Adam)
- Esp. New Business Owner (Peter)
- Potential Entrepreneurs
- Sylvia
- Assemble Makers' Space
- BIDPA rep.
- Pam
- W.M. Community College
- Code Enforcement (Jim)

Initial List

- Downtown Association (Beautification) Façade Improvement Program
- Tourism Management Plan
- Business Support Initiatives
- Welcome Center - downtown

Whose responsibility is unkempt storefronts and sidewalks?

- Main Street is Berlin's gathering place, hub.
- Main Street is attractive
- Local businesses serve local community and visitors

Final List

- Downtown association for beautification/ façade improvement program
- Tourism management plan
- Business Attraction / Support Initiative Mentoring Program

Education & Community Services

Small Group Facilitator:

Sue Cagle

Scribe:

Geoffrey Sewake

Group spokesperson:

Richard Cassidy

Brainstorming

- Broadening of volunteer base
 - Youth involvement (e.g. capstone projects)
 - Intergenerational
- Push community college in Berlin into 4-year college
- Shared understanding of the future
 - Better connected community
- A voice for the arts
 - Folks are aware

Projects and Solutions

- Communication
 - Mapping Resources & Community Calendar
 - Website
 - Students may support (HS & college) (mapping)
 - Sign board
 - Communication to / Organizational coordination
 - Hospital is a key partner for communication coordination
 - Connect to existing map resources (mapping)
 - Connect to state organizations like the Farm Bureau for food resources (mapping)
 - Develop & Utilize Public Spaces for Recreation & Adult Education/Activities & Themed Events
 - Businesses to support/execute programming (like a yoga or dance instructor)
 - Volunteers (intergenerational)
 - Recreation Department involved
 - Schools, library, municipality, other public spaces
 - What about utilizing public property for hunting grounds and activities
 - Clubs—hunting clubs and other clubs, perhaps 4-H, Scouts
 - Volunteer Management
 - RSVP & other local volunteer groups
 - TriCounty Cap
 - Churches
 - Public Services
 - "Explorer" Program
 - Hospitals, Schools
 - Banks
 - Businesses
 - Philanthropists
 - BETTER Communication - on & off line & traditional Media
 - Regional Collaboration
- Willing to coordinate website project**
- Justin Hale

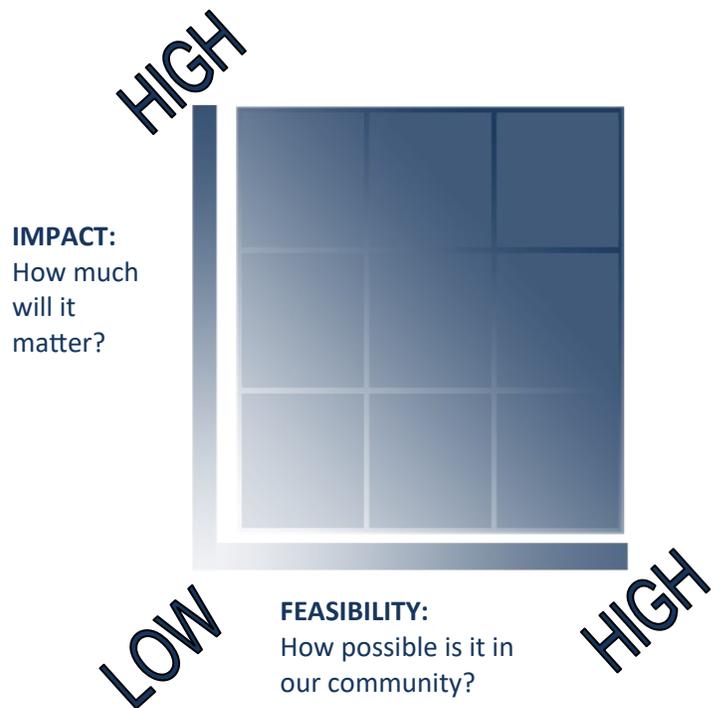
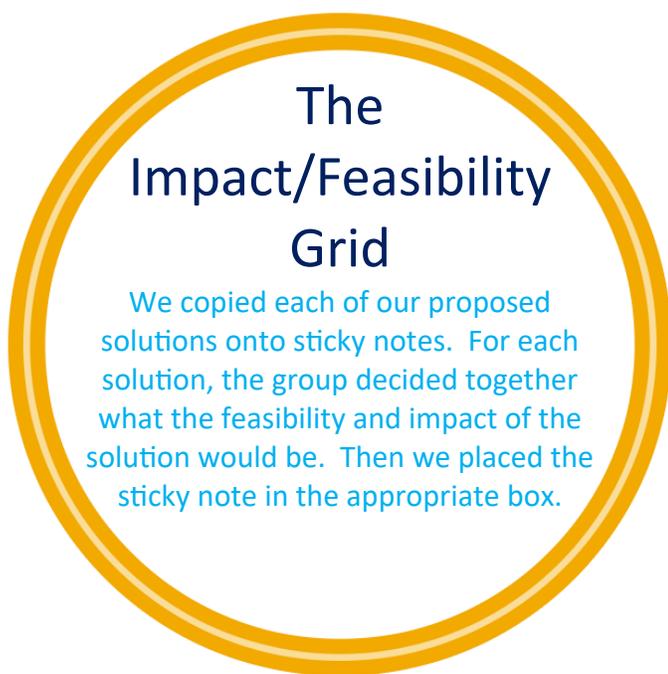
Saturday Morning Discussion

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

AND EVALUATION:

Project Identification and Evaluation

The task of each group was to think about problems that existed in each topic area and then to brainstorm possible solutions/answers to the issue identified. We did that by thinking out loud for half an hour or so about “problems” and “goals.” Then we suggested solutions, from practical to fanciful to idealistic. The next step was to evaluate the potential of each possible solution/project using the impact/feasibility grid.



Based on the grid, each group chose three solutions and wrote them up as proposals on their easel to be presented to the large group. Some groups chose only proposals with high impact/feasibility ratings, while others chose projects from a variety of ratings. Small projects, which were highly feasible but of low impact, were favored by those who wanted to start small and accomplish something quickly. Long term, difficult projects had advocates who were willing to commit to longer struggles with high rewards.

Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces

Impact/Feasibility Grid

Saturday Morning Discussion

(1) High Impact / High Feasibility

- Recreation and tourism management plan
- Downtown events
- Beautification committee
- Façade improvement grant
- Façade volunteer program

(2) High Impact / Moderate Feasibility

- New businesses mentorship and advocacy
- Business services and education center/support
- Community garden
- Food co-op

(3) Moderate Impact / High Feasibility

- Landscaping and flower pots
- Welcome center

(4) High Impact / Low Feasibility

N/A

(5) Moderate Impact / Moderate Feasibility

- Leveraging recreation and recreational spaces

- Increasing connectivity between spaces and downtown
- Increased parking
- Entrepreneur fair
- Wifi on Main Street

(6) Low Impact / High Feasibility

N/A

(7) Moderate Impact / Low Feasibility

- Farmers market

(8) Low Impact / Moderate Feasibility

N/A

(9) Low Impact / Low Feasibility

Improve downtown transportation

Impact/Feasibility Grid

Saturday Morning Discussion

(1) High Impact / High Feasibility

- Advertise need of area to attract folks with skills (recruiting program)
- Mapping local food resources so locals can buy local
- Berlin co-op
- A place (letterboard) in a very public place to direct people to online calendar and other resources

(2) High Impact / Moderate Feasibility

- Community calendar for events
- Develop and publicize adult programs in public spaces
- More senior educational opportunities— not credit programs typically offered at colleges

(3) Moderate Impact / High Feasibility

- Photo scavenger hunt
- Vegetable expo, like the biggest pumpkin
- Community ongoing invitation to show support for ideas (like an online poll or forum or something similar offline)
- “Berlin Bucks” to show community support for ideas and things

- Get the state to post Berlin events on its activity map

(4) High Impact / Low Feasibility

- Advertising coordinating volunteer for opportunities and events
- Incentive/sponsorship program and awards/badges for civics/volunteerism

(5) Moderate Impact / Moderate Feasibility

- Adult education opportunities— communicate these opportunities better
- Beaux ball events (themed events)
- Annual arts expo
- Local crowdsourcing platform (on- or off-line) to support projects and businesses
- Garden tour

(6) Low Impact / High Feasibility

N/A

(7) Moderate Impact / Low Feasibility

N/A

(8) Low Impact / Moderate Feasibility

N/A

(9) Low Impact / Low Feasibility

N/A

Our Projects & Solutions

After the Impact / Feasibility Grid exercise, the small groups were asked to choose their top three goals or opportunities. The small groups wrote these down and presented them to the large group.

Three Projects or Solutions: Each small group on Saturday morning returned with their top three projects (below) to propose to the larger group.

Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces

1. Downtown Association for Beautification/Façade Improvement Program
2. Tourism Management Plan
3. Business Attraction / Support Initiative Mentoring Program

Education & Community Services

1. Mapping Resources & Community Calendar
2. Develop & Utilize Public Spaces for Recreation & Adult Education / Activities & Themed Events
3. Volunteer Management

SMALL GROUPS

Small group participants were encouraged to share contact information, and come to the action group meeting on October 23, 2019 @ 5pm at the Berlin City Hall. At this meeting, volunteers will go through a process to identify next steps and carry forward their ideas identified in the Community Profile Process.

Vibrant Main Street & Community Spaces

Bob Berard Suzanne Wasileski
Dennis Delisle Jim Wheeler
Greg S. Estrella
Tiffany Hale
Peter Higbee
Fernando Maximo
Anthony Valliere

Education & Community Services

Richard Cassidy
Mitch Couture
Justin Hale
Laura Jackson
Ben Mayerson
Andrew Paine
Kathy Trumbull