

# **Unexpected Brilliance**

**INVOLVING YOUR COMMUNITY**

*NEWPORT, VERMONT*



## *How do you feel?*



**AARP**  
Real Possibilities

Recently, I had surprising online experience that stopped me in my tracks. At first I thought it was funny. Then I thought it was brilliant. I was having problems with some software I purchased and found the FAQ section did not help me. So, I selected the Contact Us option and added my name, contact information and complaint... Then, came the surprise. I was asked, 'How Do You Feel?' My choices were: A) Annoyed, B) Frustrated, C) Angry. Well, 'A' didn't quite say it. 'C' was stronger than I felt. Yes, 'B', I was frustrated. And it felt so good to let them know that. Think About It.

*Turn over the rocks to collect the  
dots...*



Newport, Vermont, is located just south of the US border with Canada in the most remote rural area of Vermont often referred to as the 'Northeast Kingdom'. Newport chronically has had the highest unemployment rate in the state and that, in part, reflects the economic challenges in our area. In 2007, Newport was the last of 23 VT downtowns to receive 'Vermont Downtown' designation. And we decided we were no longer going to be last, Newport would now be 'first' in the state. So, in 2009, Newport received the 1<sup>st</sup> American Institute of Architects (AIA) grant for a Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT). They were instrumental in helping Newport recognize its assets and how to leverage and advance positive change from them. In 2010, the community met to decide on a logo to use for marketing and destination development and the result is, 'Newport. Genuine by Nature.' You can't argue with that when it comes to Newport's people as well as natural resources. Newport is the southern port of the other international lake in Vermont, Lake Memphremagog, and is surrounded by mountains and farm fields. Community Matters.

## *First in Vermont to adopt form-based code*



In 2010, leveraging the R/UDAT report's recommendation to adopt form-based code in Newport's downtown to encourage mixed-use buildings, Newport was the first municipality in Vermont to adopt form-based code. This happened because a diverse group of community members, including business owners, community advocates, developers, bankers, regional and local planners, met every Friday morning from January through July to develop the code through illustration and details. In July, the draft was moved to Newport's Planning Commission for review, testing and tweaking. The City Council was briefed several times and in early December 2010 they adopted form-based code. In 2012, the Northeast Kingdom Tasting Center was established on Main Street because it chose Newport due to its form-based code that allows for light-manufacturing in the basement (Eden Ice Cider's expanded cidery)... retail on the street-level main floor (Brown Dog Bistro, Eden Ice Cider Tasting Room, a butcher shop, a Vermont-maple products store and a bakery... and offices on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Community Matters.

*Connect the dots ...*



In 2011, continuing to leverage Newport’s assets such as being surrounded by working farms, a real connection turned into partnership between the farms and Newport’s downtown restaurants. Successful destination development resulted in connecting these agricultural and restaurant businesses in a meaningful way. “Newport has experienced a culinary renaissance sparked by the Newport. Fresh by Nature. campaign, which has transformed traditional downtown restaurants into dining venues focused on food-system sustainability.’ [Vermont’s Best Farm-to-Table Restaurants. AllAboutNewEngland.com]

# *Community Matters*

## Nourishing Relationships into Partnerships



ORTON FAMILY  
FOUNDATION



<http://video.vpt.org/video/2365167090/>

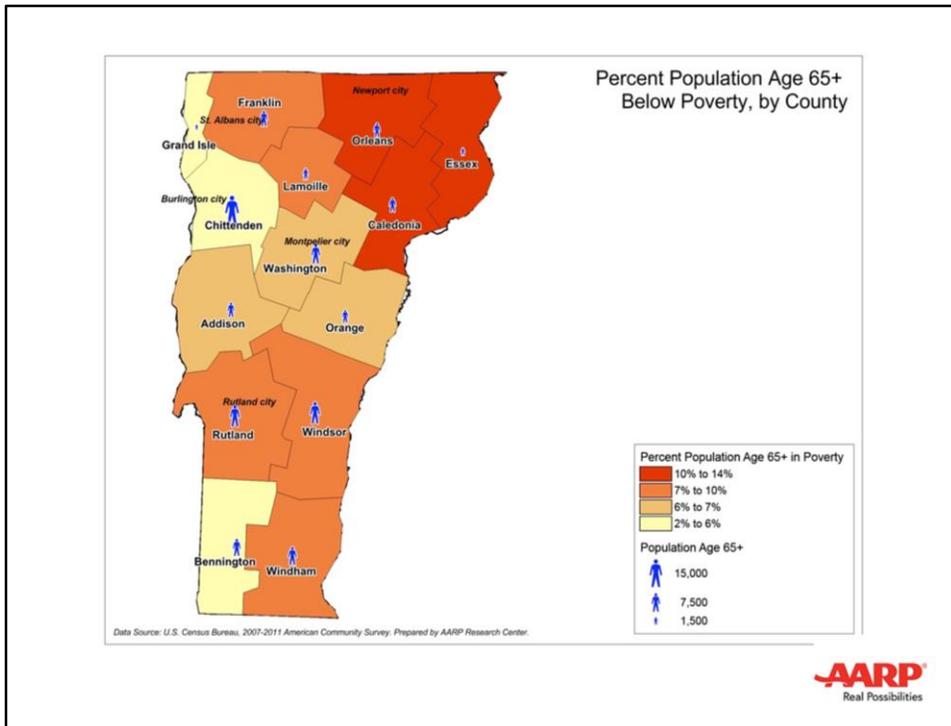


Newport. Genuine by Nature. signifies its community strength and sincere belief in Community Matters. This was realized and celebrated as a result of the AIA grant that was matched dollar-for-dollar by community members time and business contributions for a total of \$90K investment. The Orton Family Foundation recognized this progress and responded to a community request for addressing nourishment of Newport's Heart & Soul with its first CommunityMatters grant for a full-day community workshop that included 45 members of Newport's community including municipal government, advocates, business leaders and community leaders. And because of Newport's community involvement and commitment to addressing safe and complete streets, integrating community development with its economic development efforts, AARP Vermont selected Newport to invest in as its first Age-Friendly Community. A brilliant showcase of demonstration of an intergenerational community development project that demonstrates private-public partnership is Newport's Fresh Start Community Garden. Click on the link to Vermont Public Television's three-minute clip about this ground-breaking project that demonstrates proof of advancing positive community change. Community Matters.

*Assets-based Approach  
Community Development Integrated  
into Economic Development*



Engaging the people who live, work and play in Newport continues through the Newport. Active by Nature. initiative. This includes robust partnerships with the city's Recreation Department, Jay Peak Resort, local businesses and community groups working together to improve Newport as an active healthy destination. Newport has been fortunate to enjoy smart, progressive leadership from Mayor Paul Monette, City Manager John Ward and the Newport City Council that is open to exploring opportunities that enhance and expand Newport's economic development integrated with investment in Newport's community development.



Vermont is the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest state in the nation, following only Maine. The Northeast Kingdom of Vermont has the highest percent of population 65+ below poverty. With proposed investment of \$500+MM in economic development projects in and around Newport, there is a special opportunity to leverage assets to improve the lives of people of all ages. With a specific focus on Age-Friendly aspects that will improve the walkability and access to services, businesses and healthy activities, Newport will need to continue to work with municipal, community and business leaders.

*Newport is the first city in  
Vermont to be Accepted into the  
International  
Age-Friendly Cities &  
Comm network*



**Livable Communities**  
Great Places for All Ages™



In December of 2013, the Newport City Council approved a resolution supporting Newport's acceptance into the international Age-Friendly Cities and Communities Network. In January 2014, the first AARP Vermont Community Action Grants were awarded investing in community initiatives supporting community gardens, local program for at-risk women, local program for the visually impaired and local media efforts to better connect with challenged community members. Community \*Lessons Learned\*: Listening... Learning... Tenacity... Leads to Nourishing Relationships into Partnerships. \*Best Practices\*: Constant Consistent Communications between Municipal leaders, Community members and business leaders is required for successful economic and community development that can be enriched and sustained. How do You feel? Jazzed? Good. Onward ...

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