

NVDA NEWS

Regional Planning and Economic Development in the Northeast Kingdom



R/UDAT: Building a New Newport

Once-in-a-lifetime community visioning session with nationally recognized experts, March 18-23

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) has committed to bring a blue-ribbon Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) to Newport, Vermont for a community planning project.

Over the past 40 years, more than 140 towns and cities around the country have had the honor to participate in a R/UDAT (Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team project). This is the very first time a Vermont city or town has been selected for this honor. The Newport City Renaissance Corporation (NCRC) applied to the AIA for the RUDAT in early 2008.

The Newport City Renaissance Corporation, a private nonprofit organization, serves as a catalyst for change in the City's downtown economic and community development; changing the economic structure, design and promotion through active partners in the development of their community. The NCRC is the only organization focused exclusively on Newport City's economic development.

"The AIA is excited to be able to work with the City of Newport and the Newport City Renaissance Corporation as the representative of the Newport City R/UDAT Steering Committee in a Regional and Urban Design Assistance



Team community assistance project," said Joel Mills, Director of AIA's Center for Communities by Design.

The R/UDAT is a totally volunteer "Dream Team" of nationally recognized leaders in architecture, planning, and economic development, which collectively represents more than \$100,000 in professional services and technical assistance. They will convene in Newport for an intense five-day workshop to gather community input that will lay the foundation for creating a vision and recommendations for Newport. There are four topic areas of special interest:

- **DOWNTOWN:** Redevelop portions of Main Street to create a more inviting facade that will aid in attracting desired retail, professional office space, and food and entertainment establishments. Address relationship of side streets, including Coventry Street and Central Street, as well as Railroad Square to Main Street.

- **LAKEFRONT:** Improve public/private use of City-owned Gateway Center; Establish improved footpath connections between down-



R/UDAT: Building a New Newport

town and the lakefront complete with vendor spaces. Attract more US & Canadian boating interest.

► **WATERFRONT PLAZA & EAST SIDE RESTAURANT:** Redevelop shopping mall area to take better advantage of the lake, and improve vehicle and pedestrian connections between those 10 acres and downtown and Gardner Park.

► **GARDNER PARK:** Consider relocation of the Newport City barn currently located on Coventry Street to Gardner Park to serve as a multi-purpose facility for the public, and develop a plan to improve visitor appeal.

Newport City, which received Downtown Designation in late 2007, stands to capitalize on a number of unique assets, all of which will be taken into consideration by the R/UDAT project. The downtown is on an international waterway, Lake Memphremagog, one of the outstanding glacial lakes in America. It is practically equidistant to Jay Peak Resort and Burke Mountain, providing unrivaled access to a myriad of recreational opportunities that include golfing, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, mountain and road biking, snowmobiling, snowboarding, and alpine and cross-country skiing. Moreover, Newport's rich cultural history includes serving as a railroad hub for international visitors as well as business. Its creative economy includes visual and performing arts. Newport is only two hours southeast of Montreal and benefits from a rich relationship with the Quebecois.

The first few days of the RUDAT are devoted to community participation through a reception, forum and focus groups when area residents will articulate their vision for Newport's future. Saturday through Monday morning the RUDAT members will draw and write their report on the vision of Newport's future contributing their experience and expertise. The report is published during the day on Monday and is presented to the community at the high school's auditorium that evening. The report will include short-term plans that can be implemented within the next six months to a year, and long-term plans for implementation over the next five to 20 years. A RUDAT member will revisit Newport in September 2009 to check on the plan's progress.

Building a New Newport represents a significant investment of time and money for Newport leaders. The

Why Should You Attend *R/UDAT: Building a New Newport?*

Answer: Because you have a vested interest in Newport's future! Newport is a commercial and cultural destination for residents of many Northeast Kingdom communities. It's the County seat, as well as a key labor market that encompasses more than 20 towns. Whether it's where you live, work, shop, dine, or just play, Newport City is important to you. Here are the dates of the public sessions:

■ **Wednesday, March 18th 7-9pm -- R/UDAT Kickoff with Sugar on Snow Party at North Country Union High School Cafeteria:** Meet the R/UDAT members, learn what a R/UDAT is and how it works.

■ **Friday, March 20th 7-9pm -- Town Hall Meeting at North Country Union High School Cafeteria:** What are Newport's greatest assets? Challenges? Tell the R/UDAT members what's on your mind. This is your change to speak up and participate.

■ **Monday, March 23rd 7-9pm: -- R/UDAT Report Presentation at North Country Union High School Auditorium:** Learn more about the next steps and plans for implementing the R/UDAT recommendations.

municipality received a \$25,000 Municipal Planning Consortium Grant from the State of Vermont and has committed \$15,000 of its own money toward covering the expenses. A number of local community leaders and business owners have committed in-kind resources as well.

For more information on Newport's RUDAT and how you can participate please contact **Patricia Sears, Executive Director of the Newport City Renaissance Corporation** at 802 323.1056 or at patricia.sears@discovernewportvt.com

NVDA is planning the region's first major energy event on March 27th and 28th:



Lyndon State College

It's time to take charge of your energy future!

- Reduce your electric bills
- Decrease your dependence on fuel
- Take advantage of low interest loans for green building projects and energy improvements
- Secure easy rebates and Vermont tax credits
- Improve the resale value of your home

The NEK Renewable Energy Fair at Lyndon State College is *FREE* for all who are interested in renewable energy options for their homes, businesses and farms.

It begins at 7:00 pm on Friday evening, March 27th with an interactive panel discussion in the Alexander Twilight Theatre. Special guests will describe how the state can create a more sustainable and vibrant economy from clean, renewable energy sources. Paul Costello, Executive Director of Vermont Council on Rural Development, will moderate a discussion with industry leaders David Blittersdorf, CEO *Earth Turbines*, Chris Recchia, *Biomass Energy Resource Center*, and Robert Starr, CEO *Radiantec* on progress being made from innovative energy technology systems developed in Vermont. The public is invited to a networking reception following the program.

A full and informative day of exhibits, demonstrations and educational workshops will be offered on Saturday, March 28th starting at 9:00 am.

This timely event is for everyone concerned about Vermont's energy future. Come and learn about alternative energy options: Biomass, Solar, Small Wind, Hydroelectricity, Geothermal, Alternative Transportation – and talk to experts about how to save on energy improvements and green building projects with low interest loans, tax credits and Vermont rebates.

Questions? Visit www.nvda.net, or call Lorna Higgs, Project Manager, 802.748.5181 or 1.800.639.5011, lhiggs@nvda.net

NVDA

P.O. Box 630
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819

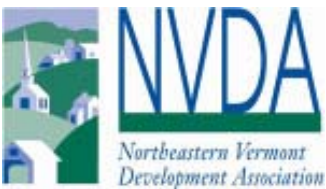
Special Edition: Two Great Events



March 18-23



March 27-28



Northeastern Vermont Development Association serves the three counties of the Northeast Kingdom -- Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans -- as the region's economic development and planning entity. NVDA is an equal opportunity lender, provider, and employer.

NVDA is changing the way its board approves town plans in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4350. NVDA will hold regional approval hearings around its regular board meeting dates:

March 26 June 25
September 10 December 10

Towns seeking regional approval of town plans (which is not mandatory, but recommended) should try to submit their requests at least 30 days in advance of one of the above dates. Please contact David Snedeker at 748-5181.

STAFF

SHANNON BEDOR
Administrative Assistant
shannon@nvda.net

JUDY BUTSON
Business Manager
judy.butson@nvda.net

BRIAN HANSON
Implementation Specialist
brian.hanson@nvda.net

LORNA HIGGS
Project Manager
lhiggs@nvda.net

TRACY MCINTYRE
GIS Specialist
tracymcintyre@nvda.net

ALISON MEADERS
Senior Planner
alison@nvda.net

DOUG MORTON
Transportation Planner
morton@nvda.net

STEVE PATTERSON
Executive Director
spatterson@nvda.net

MARY PAULL
Economic Development
Coordinator
nvdanort@sover.net

DAVID SNEDEKER
Planning Manager
dsnedeker@nvda.net

SPIKE WELLMAN
Economic Development
Specialist
spike@nvda.net

LAURIE ZILBAUER
Planner
lzilbauer@nvda.net