



ENVISION. act. *GROW.*

9TH ANNUAL SOUTHERN
VT ECONOMY SUMMIT

MAY 12, 2026
MOUNT SNOW RESORT, VT

ENVISION. act.GROW.

HOSTED BY



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To access video, photos, and presentations from today's event visit sovermontzone.com/summit or contact Meg Staloff at mstaloff@brattleborodevelopment.com

WIFI

Network: Mount Snow Guest
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These organizations are equal opportunity employers. Funding for the Summit was made possible in part by the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative and by the State of Vermont through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development's annual Regional Development Corporation investment.

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS





TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
8:15am-9:00am	Checkin and Breakfast	Somerset Lobby
9:00am-10:15am	Opening and Keynote Presentation	Ballroom
Morning Sessions		
10:30am-11:45am	Creating, Accessing, and Using Data for Actionable Economic Development  	Ballroom
	Strategies to Ensure Rural America Thrives in the Age of A.I.  	Deerfield South
	Community Engagement for Big-Picture Change 	Deerfield North
	Leadership Succession and Shared Leadership Models That Work 	Raponda Central
	System Shifts for a Climate-Ready Business Future  	Raponda South
12:00pm-12:20pm	Emerging Leaders Recognition	Ballroom
12:30pm-1:30pm	Lunch and Networking	Ballroom
Afternoon Sessions		
1:40pm-2:55pm	STRIVE: Tapping into the power of the innovation ecosystem   	Harriman's
	Innovative Pre-development & Re-development to Achieve Revitalization at Scale  	Deerfield South
	Opening Up Economic Development Options for Your Town with Local Option Tax  	Deerfield North
	Community Project Roadmap: Starting from Where You Are & Getting Where You Want to Go 	Raponda Central
	Finding Strength in Scenarios: How Visualizing Future Uncertainty Can Unify and Empower Communities Towards Meaningful Change  	Raponda South




Scan code to view today's schedule, speakers, and sessions on your phone!



TRACK KEY

-  Address Critical Population Needs
-  Empower Business to Thrive Long Term
-  Foster Resilient Adaptable Communities
-  Promote Regional Economic Development Cooperation

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Late-Afternoon Sessions		
3:10pm-4:00pm	Helpdesk: Resource and TA Connections For Municipalities and Businesses  	Ballroom
	Empowering Small-Scale Developers to Build Housing  	Deerfield South
	Roundtable: Supporting Entrepreneurship through Regional Collaboration  	Deerfield North
	Roundtable: Arts and Culture: Connecting Businesses, Public Sector, and Cultural Organizations for Vibrant Communities  	Raponda Central
	Ready or Not: The Climate Challenge Game  	Raponda South
4:00pm-5:00pm	Closing Reception	Ballroom



Keynote: Sarah Waring, Executive Director of the Northern Border Regional Commission

Waring's work over the past decades has included creating public-private partnerships with state and philanthropic dollars as well as interagency agreements between federal agencies, and collaborative funder initiatives, to make it more possible for communities to accomplish their goals. Place-based economic development, driven by community coordination, is one of Waring's passions.

In her Keynote, she'll discuss the important role that Federal agencies play in supporting economic and community development in rural communities. She'll also explore the importance of having a regional perspective and how we, as community leaders, can continue to envision and work towards growth for our region in an economic and funding environment marked by instability and change.

MORNING SESSION DETAILS

Creating, Accessing, and Using Data for Actionable Economic Development

Powerful new tools give us access to more data than ever before. How can we collect and harness the available information (and work with partners) to offer insights into trends and possible leverage points for positive change, tell impactful stories, and bring more funding to our communities? Hear from data collectors, analysts, and users on how they wrangle information to create actionable economic development in rural places. *Sponsored by Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships.*

Room: Ballroom

Moderator: Emma Spett, Program Coordinator, Engagement Initiatives, Leahy Institute for Rural Partnerships/
UVM Office of Engagement

Speakers: » Drew Rosebush, Head of Data Analytics, Center on Rural Innovation (CORI)
» Alison Peoples, Economic Resilience Analytics Team Leader, Argonne National Laboratory
» Kate Trzaskos, Executive Director, Downtown Brattleboro Alliance

Strategies to Ensure Rural America Thrives in the Age of A.I.

CORI Founder and CEO Matt Dunne will explore how artificial intelligence is reshaping the economy, and what it will take to ensure rural communities are not left on the sidelines. Drawing on CORI's work across the Rural Innovation Network, Matt will share practical strategies for helping rural entrepreneurs, workers, and local leaders harness AI to strengthen businesses, create quality jobs, and build resilient economies. This session will move beyond hype to focus on implementation, equity, and the real opportunity for rural America to lead in the next era of innovation. *Sponsored by The Richards Group.*

Room: Deerfield South

Speaker: » Matt Dunne, Founder and CEO, Center on Rural Innovation (CORI)

Community Engagement for Big-Picture Change

What are the issues facing your community – the ones keeping you up at night and the ones niggling at the back of your mind? In this engaging workshop facilitated by Kevin Hively, start by identifying the biggest issues that our communities are facing, from immediate concerns to long term, existential threats. Then think through how you might frame solutions even for issues that are seemingly beyond your control, and learn best practices for designing community engagement that has the potential to build direction, reduce division, and lead to a big-picture, strategic approach. *Sponsored by DVFiber.*

Room: Deerfield North

Speaker: » Kevin Hively, Founder, Ninigret Partners

Leadership Succession and Shared Leadership Models That Work

This workshop is for anyone involved in succession planning or shared/distributed leadership at any kind of organization or business. You will leave the session with tools to use and more questions than you came with that can guide your work after the conference. We will spend time discussing the nuts and bolts of what makes a good succession plan (very similar to the elements involved in shared leadership), and time in smaller groups workshopping particular challenges you might be coming up against. Finally we will crowdsource resources to continue learning from after the conference. *Sponsored by Vermont Economic Development Authority.*

Room: Raponda Central

Speakers: » Annie Winkler, Programs and Operations Generalist, Vermont Employee Ownership Center (VEOC)

System Shifts for a Climate-Ready Business Future

Our built environment is transitioning to new energy technologies, creating opportunities not only in hardware, but in the systems, services, and businesses that will operate tomorrow's climate infrastructure. This panel highlights Vermont entrepreneurs advancing innovative service models in electrification and efficiency, from integrated deployment to performance-driven maintenance and software that helps buildings support grid stability. Together, these leaders show how the climate transition is driving new business models and strengthening Vermont's economic resilience. *Sponsored by Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center.*

Room: Raponda South

Moderator: Dani Delaini, Assistant Director and Head Instig8er, BDCC

Speakers: » Gabriel Erde-Cohen, Co-Owner / CEO, We Clean Heat Pumps
» Kevin Stapleton, Assistant Director, VT Dept. of Labor, Economic & Labor Market Information Division
» Morgan Casella, Managing Partner, Dynamic Organics
» Cara Robecheck, Deputy Director, Vermont Energy Action Network
» Erik Shifflett, Strategic Director, Southern Vermont Solar

AFTERNOON SESSION DETAILS

STRIVE: Tapping into the power of the innovation ecosystem

The Science and Technology Research Initiative for the Vermont Economy (NSF-STRIVE) is a new NSF-funded program that is focused on aligning academia and other stakeholders to help strengthen economic development initiatives across VT. This session explores how NSF-STRIVE is creating resources and establishing collaborations that strengthen Vermont's innovation ecosystem. Panelists will highlight how academic institutions can be the source of ideas and support networks that are essential to facilitating innovation and resiliency in rural economies. Join us to learn about how this model is creating a more connected knowledge economy that can be harnessed for local term economic growth. *Sponsored by The Science and Technology Research Initiative for the Vermont Economy (NSF-STRIVE)*

Room: Harriman's

Moderator: Neil Goldberg, Business Growth and Analytics Manager, BDCC

Speakers: » Adam Lalor, Vice President of Neurodiversity Research, Landmark College
» Jarod Waite, Associate Academic Dean for Science and Allied Health at the Community College of Vermont
» David Bond, Associate Director, Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) Faculty Member, Bennington College
» Chris Maggiolo, Deputy Executive Director, Black River Innovation Campus (BRIC)

Innovative Pre-development & Re-development to Achieve Revitalization at Scale

From defining what your community wants and where it can happen to laying the literal groundwork, paving the way for development at an impactful scale is no easy task. Learn about innovative ways to use local processes and state programs to make it easier to attract the development you want for your community, from the new CHIP program to using a housing committee to build momentum for a town-wide master plan. *Sponsored by Stevens & Associates.*

Room: Deerfield South

Moderators: Alex Farrell, Commissioner, VT Department of Housing and Community Development

Speakers: » Beth Gilles, Executive Director, Lake Champlain/Lake George Regional Planning Board
» Jessica Hartleben, Executive Director, Vermont Economic Progress Council
» Rob Gaiotti, Town Manager, Town of Dorset

Opening Up Economic Development Options for Your Town with Local Option Tax

What could your town accomplish with a flexible revenue stream? Whether used for supporting local economic development, working on site readiness for housing or other developments, or providing increased municipal services, Local Option Tax (LOT) is a powerful tool. It allows communities to capture revenue on sales (including online deliveries to your community, rooms and meals, and short term rentals) and use it for community needs. Come hear success stories and learn about best practices for successful messaging and implementation. *Sponsored by M&S Development.*

Room: Deerfield North

Moderator: Meg Staloff, SVEP Program Director, BDCC

Speakers: » Gretchen Havreluk, Economic Development Specialist, Town of Wilmington
» George Tucker, Jr., Select Board, Town of Ludlow
» Kathleen Ramsay, Municipal Operations Specialist, Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT)
» Rebecca Sameroff, Deputy Commissioner, Vermont Department of Taxes

Community Project Roadmap: Starting from Where You Are & Getting Where You Want to Go

Looking to achieve big things in your community? Before you start researching grant funding opportunities, there are ways to ensure success and prepare for the (often long) process of completing a community project. Hear from four professionals who help community groups and municipalities plan for and execute projects and leave with some concrete practices you can put into place right away to make sure your project is ready to move forward. Feel free to come with a project in mind to explore during the session! *Sponsored by M&T Bank.*

Room: Raponda Central

Speakers: » Sarah Lang, Capacity Coordinator, Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC)
» Maria Noth, REDI Program Manager, Vermont Housing & Conservation (VHCB)
» Alyssa Johnson, Community Visit Coordinator, Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD)
» Samantha Page, Regional Planner, Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC)



Scan code to view today's schedule, speakers, and sessions on your phone!



AFTERNOON SESSION DETAILS *continued*

Finding Strength in Scenarios: How Visualizing Future Uncertainty Can Unify and Empower Communities Towards Meaningful Change

Scenario planning opens the door for communities to visualize change and engage with the future. It provides a robust, community-centered framework to discuss the forces impacting our community and strengthen a collective vision of a positive future in an uncertain world. This workshop will begin by exploring the theoretical framework of scenario planning as a governing and decision-making strategy. We will then dive deeper into scenario planning as a functional planning tool in Southern Vermont, using the recent Deerfield River Valley RISE project, a flood resilience plan conducted by the UMass Amherst Planning Studio in partnership with Windham Regional Commission, as a dynamic case study. *Sponsored by Green Mountain Power.*

Room: Raponda South

Moderator: Callie Fishburn, Regional Planner, BCRC

Speakers: » Seth Price, Masters Candidate in Regional Planning, UMass Amherst
» Liana Rice, Masters Candidate in Regional Planning, UMass Amherst
» Julia Opel, Masters Candidate in Regional Planning, UMass Amherst

LATE-AFTERNOON SESSION DETAILS

Helpdesk: Resource and TA Connections For Municipalities and Businesses

Technical assistance providers from SCORE, BDCC, SBA, Regional Planning Commissions, GMP, Efficiency VT, and VLCT Municipal Operations Team will be available for short walk-in consultations with business owners, entrepreneurs, and municipal leaders looking to have questions answered, or hoping to form a TA relationship for more in-depth help or assistance with a project. Sign up for a time slot throughout the day, or just stop by! *Sponsored by Vermont State University Road to Success.*

Room: Ballroom

Speakers: » Representatives, from SCORE, SBA, BDCC Business Services, VLCT Municipal Operations Support Team, Efficiency VT, Green Mountain Power

Ready or Not: The Climate Challenge Game

Explore disaster planning from a new angle: an interactive flood-resilient scenarios game. Consider different plausible futures and robust actions communities can take in response. Student leaders of the Deerfield River Valley RISE project will also be on hand to share their experiences working with four communities in Southern Vermont to adapt to increased flooding and build enduring capacity to take on tomorrow's challenges.

Room: Raponda South

Speakers: » Deerfield River Valley RISE project leaders, Masters Candidates in Regional Planning, UMass Amherst

Empowering Small-Scale Developers to Build Housing

Vermont is tackling its housing shortage by aligning state policy with on-the-ground development practice. This session brings together policymakers, community leaders, and small-scale developers to discuss recent housing projects, lessons from initiatives like Homes for All, how we can foster robust regional cooperation, and how municipalities, developers, and state programs are working together to get more done. Panelists will also reflect on what else is needed to support communities that want to be development-ready. *Sponsored by Vermont Community Loan Fund.*

Room: Deerfield South

Speakers: » Alex Farrell, Commissioner, VT Department of Housing and Community Development
» John Dunbar, President, Whitaker Properties, Inc.
» Josh Laughlin, Owner, Tavern Hill Woodworks
» Sue Coakley, Planning Commission Chair, Town of Putney

Roundtable: Supporting Entrepreneurship through Regional Collaboration

Myriad organizations exist to support our business ecosystem, and we can amplify their impact through strategic, collaborative regional networks. Come hear case studies of how these business support networks are making a difference, and participate in a roundtable discussion of how to create or strengthen such networks through your partnerships. *Sponsored by Merritt & Merritt.*

Room: Deerfield North

Moderator: Dani Delaini, Assistant Director and Head Instig8'r, BDCC

Speakers: » Gwen Pokalo Hart, NETI/VT Employee Ownership Center
» Mose Cassaro, RDF Ventured/gener8tor
» Will Jeffries, Accelerate VT Initiative

Roundtable: Arts and Culture: Connecting Businesses, Public Sector, and Cultural Organizations for Vibrant Communities

Come hear more about and get connected to the 2025 Collaborative Cultural Plan for Southeast Vermont — a visionary project undertaken by the towns of Brattleboro, Rockingham, and Wilmington, along with the Windham Regional Commission. The plan calls for a coalition of creative businesses, municipal entities, and cultural institutions to advance the strong economic impact of this sector in our region. You're invited to come hear about the plan, the growing momentum, and find your place in this effort. *Sponsored by Community College of Vermont.*

Room: Raponda Central

Speakers: » Members of the Southern VT Cultural Plan Steering Committee



THANK YOU

FOR INVESTING IN SOUTHERN VERMONT

The Summit is just one part of the work we do! Visit SoVermontzone.com to learn more about the SoVermont Zone, the partnerships it represents, and the Southern VT Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

SoVermontzone.com