

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF TOMORROW



7TH ANNUAL SOUTHERN VERMONT ECONOMY SUMMIT

MAY 21, 2024 @ MOUNT SNOW

MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF TOMORROW

HOSTED BY



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

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
7:45am-9:00am	Registration & Check-in	Somerset Ballroom Lobby
8:00am-9:00am	Breakfast	Somerset Ballroom
9:00am-9:05am	Summit Welcome by Hosts and Brattleboro Savings & Loan	
9:05am-9:35am	Keynote: "A National Perspective on Strategies for Rural"	
9:40am-10:15am	Plenary Panel: The SoVermont Zone CEDS	
Morning Breakout Sessions		
10:30am-11:45am	<i>2024 SoVT Zone CEDS – State of the Region (Workshop)</i>	Deerfield South
	<i>How Can Our Communities Meet the Climate Challenges of Tomorrow? (Panel)</i>	Deerfield North
	<i>Connecting the Dots: Leveraging the Food System for Rural Economic Development (Panel)</i>	Raponda West
	<i>Coalition Building for Systems Change (Panel)</i>	Raponda Central
	<i>Place-Based Economic Development: Building on Your Town's Unique Assets and Identity (Workshop)</i>	Raponda South
12:00-12:20	Emerging Leaders Recognition	Somerset Ballroom
12:30-1:30pm	Buffet Lunch & Networking	
Mid-Afternoon Breakout Sessions		
1:40pm-2:55pm	<i>Climate Adaptation as a Business Model: Seeing Change as Opportunity in Vermont's Outdoor Recreation Sector (Panel)</i>	Deerfield South
	<i>Add It Up: Unpacking the Potential of Rural Redevelopment (Panel)</i>	Deerfield North
	<i>Strength in Numbers: Collaborative, Place-Based Marketing (Panel)</i>	Raponda West
	<i>Help Wanted: How Southern Vermont is Opening the Doors to a Vital Workforce (Panel)</i>	Raponda Central
	<i>Finding Both/And Solutions to Your Community's Hard Questions (Workshop)</i>	Raponda South

TIME	EVENT	LOCATION
Afternoon Sessions: Taking Action from Today – Roundtables, Q&A, & Small Groups		
3:10-4:00pm	<i>Disaster and Climate Resilience: Funders Roundtable</i>	Deerfield South
	<i>Housing - Ideas and Connections for Action</i>	Deerfield North
	<i>Engaging with Vermont's Data Ecosystem</i>	Raponda West
	<i>Vermont Creative Network Gathering</i>	Raponda Central
	<i>Roundtable: Strengthening Local Leadership</i>	Raponda South
	<i>Legislative Update (TBD)</i>	Somerset Ballroom
	<i>Welcoming New Residents</i>	Somerset Lobby
4:00pm-5:00pm	Closing & Reception: Cash bar available with credit card payment only	Grand Summit Ballroom



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



Scan QR code to download the Whova event app & see agenda on your phone!

SPECIAL EVENTS

Keynote: “A National Perspective on Strategies for Rural”

Speaker: Chris Estes, Co-Director of Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group

Chris will bring us into a national conversation that is helping shape policy around rural economic and community development.

Based on Aspen CSG’s “asset-based and systems building approach to community and economic development,” Chris will bring us principles, recommendations and models that can inform and change the way we think about economic development in our region -- and in so doing help design future policies that better fit the needs of our rural communities.

Sponsored by MSK Engineering

Plenary Panel: The SoVermont Zone CEDS

How is our region making and measuring progress on critical issues such as broadband buildout, population growth, and workforce initiatives? Over the past 5 years, this work has been guided by the 2019 Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Hear from the Southern VT Zone CEDS leadership team how this region-wide effort is unfolding. We’ll look back at the successes of the past 5 years, and forward to what issues will focus our collective work for the upcoming 2024 CEDS!

Speakers:

- » Lindsey Riley, A/R360 Consultants, Vice President & Co-Founder
- » Fred Abousleman, A/R360 Consultants, President and Co-Founder
- » William Colvin, Bennington County Regional Commission, Executive Director
- » Adam Grinold, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, Executive Director

Emerging Leaders of Southern Vermont Awards Presentation

Read more about the 2024 Emerging Leaders at www.SoVermontZone.com/emerging-leaders

Presenter: Leigh Marthe, CCV, with leaders of the Shires Young Professionals and Southern VT Young Professionals

Sponsored by CCV

MORNING SESSION DETAILS

2024 SoVT Zone CEDS – State of the Region Workshop

No one knows more about the 'state of our region' than the folks who live, work and do business here every day! Come add your voice via this highly interactive workshop that will help us gauge our strength and opportunities as part of our updated SoVT Zone Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). *Sponsored by M&T Bank*

Room: Deerfield South

Speakers:

- » Lindsey Riley, A/R360 Consultants, Vice President & Co-Founder
- » Fred Abovsleman, A/R360 Consultants, President and Co-Founder

How Can Our Communities Meet the Climate Challenges of Tomorrow?

It's time for Southern Vermont to think about long term community resilience planning in a way that goes beyond reacting to the next flood or climate event. Let's dive into what's possible, including thinking about how working at a regional level can help your community. What does a whole-community vision that will guide a sustainable future for your community, and our region, look like? Learn about best practices, hear case studies from communities which have benefitted from this work, and learn about available resources now on the ground in Vermont. *Sponsored by VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development*

Room: Deerfield North

Moderator: Chris Estes, Co-Director of Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group

Panelists:

- » Chloe Schaefer, Cape Cod Commission, Chief Planner
- » Stephanie Smith, Vermont Emergency Management, State Hazard Mitigation Officer
- » Elizabeth Baxter, Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, Manager of Disaster Recovery & Economic Development Planning

Connecting the Dots: Leveraging the Food System for Rural Economic Development

From the fertile soils of SoVT to large urban markets, there is so much behind the food system that we often don't think about. This panel dives into how our local resources create value, and how we can leverage them to contribute to bigger regional food system development. Listen to stories and learn how to plug into the New England Feeding New England goal of 30% regional food production for regional consumption by 2030. *Sponsored by Vermont Economic Development Authority*

Room: Raponda West

Moderator: Richard Berkfield, Food Connects, Executive Director

Panelists:

- » Jake Claro, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Farm to Plate Director
- » Liz Ruffa, Merck Forest and Farmland Center, Advancement Director
- » McKenna Hayes, Food Connects, Food Hub Director

MORNING SESSION DETAILS *continued*

Coalition Building for Systems Change

Drawing the line from a local problem to a wide-scale solution takes (more than) a village. Let's hear from folks working in multiple sectors as they describe how they have gathered data, told stories, and built coalitions that are resulting in positive outcomes – sometimes in surprising ways. *Sponsored by VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development*

Room: Raponda Central

Moderator: Rachel Shields Ebersole, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, GROW Program Manager

Panelists:

- » Aly Richards, Let's Grow Kids, CEO
- » Susan Evans McClure, Vermont Arts Council, Executive Director
- » Cindy Jerome, Windham Aging; Cindy Jerome Consulting; Chair, HealthCare Workforce Committee; Consultant

Place-Based Economic Development: Building on Your Town's Unique Assets and Identity

Whether or not your town has a village center or main street with a business district, it plays a part in the regional economy. In this workshop, learn how WealthWorks, a holistic, community-led approach to economic development, can help your town work towards positive economic and community outcomes. Join Southern Vermont communities of all shapes and sizes in a hands-on workshop to help you evaluate your community's identity & assets and explore new opportunities. *Sponsored by VT Agency of Commerce & Community Development.*

Room: Raponda South

Speaker: Melissa Levy, Community Roots, LLC, Principal and Owner



Show your SoVT Pride with this locally manufactured Moleskine™ notebook!

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MID-AFTERNOON SESSION DETAILS

Climate Adaptation as a Business Model: Seeing Change as Opportunity in Vermont's Outdoor Recreation Sector

The outdoor recreation sector is a key driver of the Vermont economy, contributing \$1.9 billion and ranking Vermont second in the nation in contributions to GDP. To continue providing a competitive edge for Vermont and attracting people to work and grow businesses in our state, businesses are adapting to a changing climate. Hear from a panel of outdoor business leaders on how the impact of climate events has led to collaboration and innovation, as the industry forges a climate resilient future. *Sponsored by Efficiency Vermont*

Room: Deerfield South

Speakers:

- » Kelly Ault, Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance, Executive Director
- » Chuck Clerici, VEIC, Senior Account Manager
- » Tucker Kimball, Director of Public Relations, Orvis
- » Mariah Keagy, Trail Designer/Planner, Sinuosity Flowing Trails

Add It Up: Unpacking the Potential of Rural Redevelopment

Rural developers both large and small are creating innovative solutions to Vermont's housing crisis. In this session, the panel will look at some projects that illustrate diverse business models: incremental redevelopment of historic homes to breathe new life into neighborhoods, brand-new buildings that are reinvigorating downtowns, and ambitious plans to repurpose a former educational campus. That will be followed by a lively conversation on the math that's making great projects possible: complex funding stacks, tax credits, creative capital and public/private partnerships. We'll also dive into Act 250 updates, a new Housing Toolkit launched by the State, and more! *Sponsored by Downs, Rachlin, and Martin*

Room: Deerfield North

Moderator: Jennifer Stromsten, BDCC, Director of Programs

Panelists:

- » Zak Hale, Hale Resources, CFO/Partner
- » Dan Ridlehoover, M&S Development, Director of Project Development
- » John Dunbar, Whitaker Properties, Inc., Co-owner
- » Chloe Learey, Winston Prouty Center, Executive Director
- » Amy Tomasso, VT DHCD | Community Planning & Revitalization, Community Planning & Project Manager

Strength in Numbers: Collaborative, Place-Based Marketing

When it comes to marketing, there is strength in numbers. Learn about some best practices and powerful tools for collaborative marketing from Andrew Mendez-Spera, then hear from Southern Vermont coalitions who have put group marketing into practice at a local and regional scale. Together, they'll pass along tips for success, share what they have learned, and talk about how to work collaboratively to power your local business(es)!

Room: Raponda West

Speakers:

- » Andrew Mendez-Spera, Topsy Social, Chief Marketing Mixologist™
- » Gibbs Rehlen, VT 30 Collective, Co-Founder
- » Matthew Banks, VT 30 Collective, Founder
- » Tim Dolan, SoVT Deerfield Valley/Bi-town Marketing, Marketing Director
- » Matt Harrington, Southwestern Vermont Chamber, Executive Director

MID-AFTERNOON SESSION DETAILS *continued*

Help Wanted: How Southern Vermont is Opening the Doors to a Vital Workforce

What do AI tools, ELL advocacy, and regional welcome wagons have in common? They are all ways our region is getting creative about removing barriers so that we can build a vital workforce for the future. Come get inspiration from these innovative programs! *Sponsored by The Richards Group*

Room: Raconda Central

Moderator: Alex Beck, BDCC, Welcoming Communities Manager

Panelists:

- >> Matt Bentley, VT Adult Learning, Regional Director, Windham County
- >> Jack Rossiter Munley, ECDC, Branch Office Bennington, VT
- >> Rachel Shields Ebersole, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, GROW Program Manager
- >> Jack Spanierman, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, Workforce Education Specialist

Finding Both/And Solutions to Your Community's Hard Questions

If you have ever left a local meeting feeling discouraged about how the conversation went, you need to join Susan Clark for this workshop! Learn about why things often go wrong, and gain a powerful tool that can help groups work towards outcomes that honor diverging viewpoints. A must for anyone who has been wishing for more inclusive, productive, and empowered community dialogue. *Sponsored by M&T Bank.*

Room: Raconda South

Speaker: Susan Clark, Author, *Slow Democracy, All Those in Favor*

TAKE ACTION FROM TODAY'S IDEAS!

ROUNDTABLES & SMALL GROUPS

Sponsored by:



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of Vermont

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for Rural Partnerships

AFTERNOON SESSION DETAILS



Disaster and Climate Resilience: Funders Roundtable

Connect with funders who are 'on the ground' in Vermont with resources to help with community resilience planning.

Room: Deerfield South



Housing - Ideas and Connections for Action

Fired up about creating more housing in your community? Make valuable connections and meet folks who share that interest from around the state and region.

Room: Deerfield North



Engaging with Vermont's Data Ecosystem

Communities across Vermont are looking for new ways to integrate data resources into their planning and decision-making processes, and are also recognizing the challenges of navigating Vermont's data ecosystem. Come join UVM for an informal discussion, where you can give critical input into the development of innovative programming to support data use in communities across Vermont!

Room: Raconda West



Vermont Creative Network Gathering

A chance to connect with creative organizations, businesses, and individuals across Southern Vermont. Find out how this network is supporting our creative economy and how you can get involved.

Room: Raconda Central



Roundtable: Strengthening Local Leadership

What can we do individually and as a region to foster new leaders? Learn practical tips and strategies and hear from participants in the Southern VT Economy Project's recent SoVT Get on Board program.

Room: Raconda South



Legislative Update: TBD

We're holding this space to hear from representatives from VLCT, who'll provide an update on legislation passed this session that is of interest to community leaders. (Check the Whova event app for updates).

Room: Somerset Ballroom



Welcoming New Residents

A meetup for folks who are new to the area and for those who want to help their towns welcome newcomers.

Room: Somerset Lobby

FEATURED PRESENTERS



Chris Estes, Co-Executive Director - Community Strategies Group, Aspen Institute

Keynote Speaker

Session: How Can Our Communities Meet the Climate Challenges of Tomorrow?

Chris Estes is a national rural development leader focused on equitable, sustainable, and holistic approaches to strengthening rural communities. Since joining the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group in 2021 and becoming the Co-Executive Director in 2022, Chris works to integrate the Rural Development Hubs model and Thrive Rural Framework to support, connect, and grow the field of equitable rural prosperity. This includes working in coalition and partnership with national organizations to shift thinking on how federal programs measure success in rural areas as well as increasing funding for regional capacity building.

Chris has strong policy expertise and practical experience at the community, state, and federal levels on poverty, housing, and community development. Chris was also the President/CEO of the National Housing Conference in Washington, DC, serving as a national thought leader on affordable housing and community development issues, including the intersection of housing with transportation, education, and health. Chris originally came to DC from North Carolina, where he led the North Carolina Housing Coalition and worked in early childhood issues and programs serving children and families.



Fred Abousleman, President and Co-Founder, A/R360 Consultants

Sessions: Plenary Panel: The SoVermont Zone CEDS; 2024 SoVT Zone CEDS – State of the Region Workshop

Fred has led complex organizations, including national trade associations, economic development districts, councils of governments, area agencies on aging, metropolitan planning organizations, and business lending offices. He has deep partnerships with corporations; nonprofit associations; organizations; universities; federal, state, and local governments; and foundations, and helped build their customer and membership bases for his entire career.



Kelly Ault, Executive Director, Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance

Session: Climate Adaptation as a Business Model

Kelly has served as the executive director for the Vermont Outdoor Business Alliance since 2019, as part of a close to 30-year career as a Vermont nonprofit executive in land conservation, sustainable forestry, nature-based tourism, early childhood and recreation economies.



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**Elizabeth Baxter, Manager of Disaster Recovery & Economic Development Planning
Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission**

Session: How Can Our Communities Meet the Climate Changes of Tomorrow?

Elizabeth Baxter is a dedicated public service professional. Throughout her career, she has worked at the state and local levels to strengthen the amount of investment and resources provided to communities, ensuring they remain resilient and vibrant for future generations. As the Manager of Disaster Recovery & Economic Planning at the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission in Dayton, Ohio, Elizabeth's goal is to create strong partnerships across jurisdictions and community agencies that promote a shared vision of coordination and collaboration, ultimately increasing the region's quality of life.



Richard Berkfield, Executive Director, Food Connects

Session: Connecting the Dots: Leveraging the Food System for Rural Economic Development

Richard Berkfield, a recent appointee to the Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture, has been driving food system change in the Brattleboro area since 2008. He has actively participated in the Vermont Farm to Plate Network and the Vermont Farm to School Network. Moreover, Richard co-founded four food hub networks, spanning from Maine to Georgia.



Susan Clark, Author, *Slow Democracy, All Those in Favor*

Session: Finding Both/And Solutions to Your Community's Hard Questions

Susan Clark is a writer and educator focusing on community sustainability and engagement. She is coauthor of *Slow Democracy: Rediscovering Community, Bringing Decision Making Back Home* (with Woden Teachout) and *All Those In Favor*, a book about Vermont town meetings (with Frank Bryan). Susan consults with communities across the northeast and leads trainings with local leaders and community groups on how to build inclusive, deliberative, empowered public participation. She is Middlesex town moderator. Her work can be found at www.slowdemocracy.org



Melissa Levy, Principal and Owner, Community Roots, LLC

Session: Place-Based Economic Development: Building on Your Town's Unique Assets and Identity

Melissa Levy has over 20 years of experience in small town community and economic development, including 12 years with Yellow Wood Associates and 5 years with the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO). She has worked with federal, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, foundations and citizens groups on a wide range of natural resource based issues, including agriculture, forestry, nature-based tourism, land conservation and more. Melissa earned a Master of Science in Natural Resource Planning from the University of Vermont and a Bachelor's in Environmental Studies from Binghamton University. Melissa serves as a member of the Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Council. Melissa lives in Hinesburg, Vermont where she serves on the Economic Development Commission and on the board of the Hinesburg Community Resource Center.



Susan Evans McClure, Executive Director, Vermont Arts Council

Session: Coalition Building for Systems Change

Susan Evans McClure is the Executive Director of the Vermont Arts Council, where she works with the board and staff to build a more creative state for everyone. She leads the administrative team and works to foster external partnerships with artists, cultural organizations, and communities across Vermont. She is the contact for state advocacy efforts.

Susan's work and academic background explores the cross sections of theatre and history, in performance spaces and museums.

Prior to joining the council, she served as Executive Director at Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in Vergennes, Vermont. Before that, she was Director of Programs and Audience Development at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, where she led a team responsible for inspiring national conversations on the importance of the arts and humanities to civic life.

Susan holds an Ed.M. in Arts in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a B.A. in Theater from McGill University.



Andrew Mendez-Spera, Chief Marketing Mixologist™, Topsy Social

Session: Strength in Numbers: Collaborative, Place-Based Marketing

Andrew Mendez-Spera, the visionary behind award-winning marketing and creative agency Topsy Social, has distinguished himself in the marketing and branding field well beyond his foundational role as Chief Marketing Mixologist™. Since its inception in 2016, Topsy Social has been propelled by Andrew's innovative leadership, leveraging customer experiences to drive business growth and setting new benchmarks for success in the industry.

His strategies are built on the premise that genuine brand experiences not only foster loyalty but also drive sustainable business growth. Andrew's methodology is a reflection of his belief in the power of marketing as a transformative experience for businesses and organizations.



Aly Richards, CEO, Let's Grow Kids

Session: Coalition Building for Systems Change

Aly draws on her experience in state and national politics and her leadership in education policy to spearhead Let's Grow Kids' mission. Prior to joining the organization in 2015, Aly served as the deputy chief of staff for Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin where she led several efforts to support early childhood education, including winning competitive federal grants totaling \$70 million and supporting the passage of universal prekindergarten. Aly currently serves as a Trustee of University of Vermont Medical Center and the Vermont Council on Rural Development and was recently named a Changemaker for Children by Save the Children. Aly grew up in Newbury, VT and now lives in Montpelier with her husband, James Pepper, twin babies Beau and Wesley and dog, Bella.



Lindsey Riley, Vice President & Co-Founder, A/R360 Consultants

Session: Plenary Panel: The SoVermont Zone CEDS; 2024 SoVT Zone CEDS – State of the Region Workshop

Lindsey has managed the communication, marketing, and large projects for multiple complex organizations, including a financial services organization, national trade associations, economic development districts, councils of governments, area agencies on aging, metropolitan planning organizations, and business lending offices. She has deep partnerships with large and small corporations; nonprofit associations; universities; federal, state, regional, and local governments; and foundations. Throughout her career, Lindsey has focused on building business, membership, and customer success through innovative communication and marketing projects and programs unique to each organization.



Chloe Schaefer, Chief Planner, Cape Cod Commission

Session: How Can Our Communities Meet the Climate Challenges of Tomorrow?

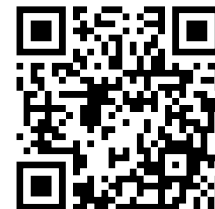
As Chief Planner, Chloe oversees the planning and community design department of the Cape Cod Commission. She helped develop, and supports implementation of, the Cape Cod Climate Action Plan, the Regional Policy Plan, and the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. She also supports other regional initiatives and plans and provides technical planning assistance to the Cape's communities, including with local planning efforts, data analysis, and graphics and visualizations. She joined the Cape Cod Commission in 2016 as a Community Design Planner. She has a Master's of City Planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Stephanie Smith, State Hazard Mitigation Officer, Vermont Emergency Management

Session: How Can Our Communities Meet the Climate Challenges of Tomorrow?

Stephanie joined the Recovery and Mitigation Section of VEM as the Hazard Mitigation Planner in June 2016 and became the State Hazard Mitigation Officer in February 2020. Stephanie manages the Hazard Mitigation Team, including management of FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs and the Flood Resilient Communities Fund (FRCF), as well as coordination of State Hazard Mitigation Plan development and implementation. She holds a Master's in Urban Planning and Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago.



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