



Vermont Proposition

Recovery, Resilience, Renewal for Vermont

SHORT FORM SUMMARY

Working together, Vermonters can advance strategies, policies and investments to renew citizen engagement and advance justice, resilience, strong communities, healthy environment, and a sustainable economy that works for all.

Vermont is at a turning point in its history, requiring creativity, new engagement, new leadership—to renew and revitalize the state; to advance equity, fairness, and opportunities for all; to protect and enhance our environment and working landscape; and to build the sustainable economy necessary for a resilient future. Let's act together to build the best possible future for our families, communities and for all that we love in Vermont.

The Vermont Proposition, summarized in this document, has been built by the Vermont Council on Rural Development based on interviews with hundreds of individuals, written contributions from more than a thousand people, inputs from local, regional, and statewide COVID recovery convenings, ideas from partners, policy councils, and the tens of thousands of people who have engaged with us over the years to set and advance action to improve life in their communities. The Proposition is presented as a starting point to advance action in the next three years that will be essential for a strong and prosperous future over the next thirty.

The Proposition framework is designed to support policymaking, to prompt public and private action toward a common vision, to empower partnerships of community volunteers, voters, investors, consumers and donors, to support enterprises and initiatives that work toward common objectives for the best possible future for Vermont.

VCRD and partners in this effort will share the Proposition with the public and build an implementation framework and coalition to advance priorities through communication, advocacy and collective action. This coalition will include organizations, businesses and public/private partnerships, and Vermonters working together through a non-partisan **Partnership for the Future of Vermont**. All Vermonters are welcomed to join the effort. Convened and supported by VCRD, the Partnership will advance each of the Proposition elements below and be led by a **Future of Vermont Action Team**.

Elements of the Vermont Proposition

- 1. Vermont must ensure affordable high-speed broadband and cellular access for all Vermonters, while using digital tools to promote community connection and democracy, and to advance local commerce and economic opportunity.** It is time to rally state and federal resources, current providers, Communications Union Districts and utilities as public and private partners to provide universal and affordable broadband service to all homes and businesses in Vermont. At the same time, state, business and non-profit partners need to work together to systematically advance ways that we use the internet to boost local commerce, agriculture, arts, and democratic engagement to confront challenges presented by digital culture head on.
- 2. Vermont must combat racism, celebrate our diversity today, and welcome new Vermonters of color.** We need to advance a culture of inclusiveness and equity today and recognize the diversity of people

who call Vermont home—in public policy, in our communities, and in our hearts. We need to reach out to promote belonging and welcome newcomers to Vermont, especially people of color, as Vermonters on day one. This can be a foundation for the creative renewal of our economy and communities for the future.

3. **Vermont must advance creative solutions to climate change.** Creativity in answering the challenges of climate change will provide one of the greatest economic opportunities for Vermont. Producing more local energy, managing it in the smart grid, electrifying transportation and heating, advancing regenerative agriculture and forestry, innovating in recycling, and wise resource use are keys to our future. State policy and investment should systematically prevent carbon emissions while stimulating clean energy, infrastructure and green businesses enterprises. Vermont can lead in solutions, and attract and cultivate a new generation of entrepreneurs and purposive youth.
4. **Vermont must reduce economic disparities, address poverty, and promote opportunities for prosperity for all Vermonters.** With economic disparities at an historic level, and with resulting cultural and social divisions, it is time for this country, and for Vermont, to renew the commitment to addressing poverty. Fundamental to this is to ensure opportunities for health care and education for all, eliminating benefits cliffs that undermine opportunity for low income Vermonters, and seeding the development of equity, especially toward home ownership.
5. **Vermont must ensure all children have access to affordable, quality child care and education.** Vermont faces a childcare crisis with negative effects on the economy, communities, families, and our youngest Vermonters. We need to commit together to invest in high quality, affordable and reliable childcare as a foundation for healthy children who realize their best opportunities, for supporting families, and as a lever for attracting families to the state. We must also support the early education workforce to ensure they have what they need to provide quality care and attract and retain skilled providers.
6. **Vermont must ensure that students of all backgrounds and abilities learn and thrive in public schools that advance diverse opportunities for educational, civic and vocational success.** Public education is vital to the lives of our young people, our communities, and our future. To advance public education, Vermont must hold a deep statewide conversation and action planning discussion about the vision, values, and goals for public education and ensuring equity and opportunity for every Vermont child. A 21st Century education dialogue would bring Vermonters together with experts, leaders, providers, and youth to design a future where public education is deeply connected to community, with integrated supports for students, expanded and enriched learning opportunities, active family and community engagement, collaborative leadership and practices, and safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environments.
7. **Vermont must strengthen local business, entrepreneurship, investment, workforce and rural innovation.** We look to business leaders to mentor the next generation of entrepreneurs; for Vermont to systemically support coworking and incubation centers; to advance microlending and crowdfunding; for the state to use purchasing contracts to stimulate creative growth of small enterprises; to support and cultivate business ownership and entrepreneurship among historically underrepresented populations; to prepare youth for innovation and connecting to national and international remote work opportunities and make it easier for the next generation to afford to live in Vermont.
8. **Vermont must advance efficiency and foresight through state planning and regional coordination.** Co-locating state and regional services in regional centers can reduce costs, simplify communications and make state government more accessible, and equitably distributed throughout Vermont. Developing a coordinative state planning office can add up regional land use and economic development planning, plan and prepare for climate change and other future challenges, address population issues, housing and infrastructure in line with other state and community goals. It can add

capacity and help support Vermont's local leaders, as they prepare for challenges and seize opportunities to optimize the future of their communities.

9. **Vermont must conserve our lands and waters and advance our working landscape.** From the first Abenaki people to today's farmers and foresters, Vermonters have shaped and stewarded the land as a foundation of our well-being and resilience. Today, we must renew the protection of our air, waters, and land, and renew the enterprises that provide the foundation of Vermont's working landscape. Vermont must pursue the enormous opportunities to sustainably expand local food and forest production, focus on value-added products, and fashion new market opportunities beyond commodity economies to thrive, while ensuring food security and economic foundations for the future of rural families and communities.
10. **Vermonters must renew civic engagement and strengthen trust, civility, community connection, democratic decision-making, and empower new leaders.** Vermont's future strength will depend on the commitment and collective action of citizens working as neighbors to advance their communities. Our democracy depends on strong education in civics and practical opportunities for young people to grow leadership skills. Vermont needs to systemically open opportunities for leadership that include the full diversity of Vermonters, especially those that have been historically underrepresented or marginalized, and that engage the next generation and give them the skills and experience to succeed both in careers and in advancing the life of their communities and of Vermont.

Vermonters today face unprecedented challenges and opportunities. It is a time when we are called upon as citizens to address these challenges, and, in doing so, retell the story of Vermont, redesign goals for progress in the next generation, and line up together to optimize the best of this place and this community for the future.

Find the full text of the Vermont Proposition and join with us at www.futureofvermont.org