

Culture and Community: Strategy

The human connection is what makes a municipality a community: proper services, community engagement activities, recreational/community green space, infrastructure, and resources that are accessible to all can promote healthy community design. As communities develop over time, these resources may change, become threatened, or become essential services. Human services in this section include health services and health care, (e.g., mental health, substance treatment and recovery), childcare and youth programs, access to affordable food, recreation facilities, and cultural facilities such as museums and galleries. A map of resources discussed is found at the end of this chapter. The following policies must be considered to maintain or expand human services for a vibrant, thriving region, with the primary strategies:

All youth, young adults, and children deserve the opportunity to grow and develop in a safe, respected environment that normalizes healthy behaviors.

Children are an integral part of the development of Lamoille County. Examples of healthy behaviors that are important for children and youth include physical activity and balanced nutrition. Ensuring adequate support for children and families is important for LCPC.

Ensure health and wellness needs, services, and facilities are available, accessible, affordable, and sufficient for Lamoille County residents and visitors.

A healthy and educated workforce is vital for future growth and development of the region. Ensuring access to and support for wellness needs for the region's diverse populations will require inter-disciplinary partnership.

POLICIES & ACTION ITEMS

***Policy:** Strategies for maintaining our quality of life and creating economically vibrant and socially connected communities are the same strategies needed for creating healthy communities: pedestrian-friendly environments, access to public transit, parks and recreation, substance-free public spaces, green space, clean air, access to healthy foods, and health care services.*

Action Items:

- Encourage more accessibility by social service providers and municipalities to parents and guardians, particularly in understanding the availability of services and State assistance.
- Continue to participate in regional discussions and initiatives aimed at encouraging implementation of the Regional Plan and municipal plans,

and by providing demographic information as needed.

- Work with municipalities and regional partners to identify ways of incorporating health and wellness into youth daily activities, such as providing safe walking routes to schools and expanding recreational opportunities and after school activities.
- Encourage communities to utilize healthy community design principles, such as walkable and bikeable communities, access to healthy food, services, parks and recreation, and mixed-use development.
- Encourage communities to allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) in zoning bylaws.
- Support developing “healthy indicators” for Lamoille County towns and villages.
- Support substance free facilities, events, and spaces throughout the region.
- Encourage 3-4-50 commitments in collaboration with Healthy Lamoille Valley, focusing on physical activity, healthy nutrition, and decreasing tobacco use.
- Support efforts to create and expand access to mental health and substance prevention, treatment, and recovery in the region.
- As the region’s elderly population grows, ensure “Choices for Care” are available to assist people with everyday activities at home, in residential care, or in nursing facilities.
- Support services, facilities, and opportunities for the aging population to remain active members of the community.
- Collaborate with regional and local partners to ensure a variety of healthy activities and health care services are available throughout the region, with an emphasis on mental health, substance misuse prevention, and treatment.

Policy: *LCPC supports promoting health equity to assist communities/community groups that experience health inequities.*

Action Items:

- Work with municipalities and underrepresented groups to ensure all community members are engaged in the town decision making process.
- Provide resources displaying how municipalities and organizations can approach policies/programs that emphasize meeting the needs of underrepresented residents.
- Provide municipal training opportunities on the importance of addressing health equity in municipal planning documents and community projects. This includes promoting the Health Equity and Planning Toolkit and

Healthy Lamoille Valley's Community Planning Toolkit.

- Encourage community engagement to increase feelings of inclusion and belonging, particularly among youth, young adults, and marginalized communities. This could be supported by expanded volunteerism and citizen participation in regional activities.

Policy: *LCPC supports the availability of high-quality, affordable childcare providers and facilities throughout Lamoille County to meet the needs of families and employers and provide an enriching environment for the Region's children and youth.*

Action Items:

- Work with municipalities to address identified needs for child care facilities or services.
- Conduct a needs assessment along with an evaluation of suitability and availability of space in public buildings to be used as child care and youth facilities.
- Assist employers and child care facility operators with access to financing for child care facilities.
- Support initiatives to develop child care and youth facilities where a need has been proven.
- Support initiatives for enriching after school programs for all youth, including youth sports.
- Offer free child care at LCPC sponsored events, which may attract wider participation by parents and guardians. Encourage municipalities and other partners to do the same at their meetings and events.

Policy: *LCPC supports cultivating an environment with a well-trained workforce that meets the needs of employers and employees for the present and future.*

Action Items

- Encourage local economic, social, and health assessments in an effort to determine how tourism and development can be better integrated as part of comprehensive economic strategies for residents and visitors in order to build awareness of and connections with existing programs that support these efforts.
- Work with strategic partners to ensure a range of services such as child and adult daycare and continuing education are available to support a productive, employable workforce.
- Collaborate with community partners, regional workforce organizations, educational facilities, local employers, and the business community to

evaluate workforce development needs, strategies, and trends. Efforts could include supporting healthy work environments.

Policy: *Increase access to, availability of, and affordability of, locally grown, healthy foods to residents of all income levels.*

Policy: *Regardless of age, ability, or income, ensure all Lamoille County residents and visitors will have access to healthy, affordable options for food that make the healthy choice the easy choice.*

Action Items:

- Encourage private and community gardening through volunteer organizations, Planned Unit Developments, and other regulatory and non-regulatory means.
- Assist farmers' markets in pursuing grant opportunities to participate in the EBT/Debit program.
- Assist municipalities with bylaw amendments that encourage, rather than prohibit, gardening opportunities.
- Support infrastructure and provide assistance to farmers' markets, healthy retailer initiatives, food co-operatives, and farm-to-school or farm-to-institution programs.
- Support food shelves, foodbanks, and organizations and facilities that offer free or reduced costs of food to residents in need.

Policy: *Cultural resources and facilities continue to be preserved, strengthened, and supported.*

Action Items:

- Continue to support and assist local and regional cultural facilities to exist and expand as necessary.
- Work with regional and local partners to identify types of and new locations for cultural facilities.
- Assist with grant opportunities to preserve, restore, and expand libraries, museums, and other cultural facilities.
- Assist libraries, museums, and historical societies with opportunities and resources to protect and preserve collections from theft, deterioration, damage, and "wear and tear".
- Libraries are critical in providing access to knowledge and information to the general public. To that end, LCPC supports efforts made by libraries to increase access to modern technology and equipment to be incorporated

into existing or new programs.

- Upon request, assist municipalities with identifying appropriate locations to support new cultural facilities and expanded amenities, such as parking, for existing facilities, while maintaining the historical character of buildings.
- Encourage communities to adopt age-friendly social inclusion initiatives.

Policy: *Efforts to grow the region's creative and arts-based economy are supported.*

Action Items:

- Develop measures to track and account for the impact of creative arts-based businesses and entrepreneurs in Lamoille County.
- As requested, assist municipalities with regulatory updates and planning to accommodate creative and arts-based businesses.
- Assist municipalities with improving cellular and broadband coverage to encourage creative arts-based businesses to locate in Lamoille County.

Culture and Community: Background and Inventory

Health and Wellness Facilities & Services

Health and wellness, as a singular concept, is defined as the state of optimal well-being, not simply the absence of illness, but improved quality of life resulting from enhanced physical, mental, and spiritual health. As Lamoille County's population continues to grow and change, factors that affect the quality-of-life residents have come to expect may change. It is important for residents to be able to access livable wage jobs, education and recreational resources, and health care options as a means to increase wellness.

Since the adoption of the 2015 Regional Plan the concept of health equity has gained greater attention and recognizes inequities in access to health and wellness opportunities in lower income/underrepresented communities. With this understanding, the Regional Planning Commissions partnered with the Vermont Department of Health on a health equity and planning toolkit that was finalized in January 2023. Health Equity is achieved when everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. This toolkit serves as a guide for communities to introduce the concept of health equity and incorporate it into municipal planning documents and bylaws. Within the toolkit, interested parties will find topics focused on transportation, housing, plans and bylaws, quality of place, and recreation. The Accompanying Resources Guide allows

individuals to pinpoint specific organizations/programs that can assist during a community's health equity journey. The Matrix Toolkit gives specific language that municipal officials can utilize in town plan development or consider while developing local bylaws.

As you read this chapter, please keep in mind that the Health Equity and Planning Toolkit offers additional information on upcoming subsections of this chapter. The toolkit and accompanying documents can be found at <https://www.lcpcvt.org/healthequitytoolkit>.

Health Providers

The primary healthcare providers servicing Lamoille County and the surrounding region are Copley Hospital and the Lamoille Health Partners, both headquartered in Morrisville. Copley Hospital is a 25-bed critical access facility that serves as an emergency care center, while providing in-patient and out-patient services, a family oriented birthing center, and physical therapy and rehabilitation services. Copley functions as part of the larger Vermont health care system, with the University of Vermont Medical Center in Burlington acting as the major tertiary referral hospital.

Copley also sponsors a Wellness Center for the community. The Wellness Center focuses on proactive prevention versus reactive treatment. Copley Hospital also operates Mansfield Orthopedics, the Health Center Building, the Women's Center, Copley Terrace, and Copley Woodlands (housing for elderly populations).

The Lamoille Health Partners, a federally qualified health center, also offers quality medical, dental, and behavioral health services to residents of Lamoille County, including the uninsured and under-insured. Their primary and specialty care practices include Morrisville Family Health Care, Stowe Family Practice, the Neurology Clinic, the Behavioral Health & Wellness Center, and the Community Dental Clinic. Lamoille Health Partners also offers Urgent Care Services in Morrisville and Stowe. Other local health service agencies include Lamoille Valley Mental Health Services, the Manor Nursing Home, the Lamoille Family Center, Johnson Health Center, Jenna's Promise, Diabetes Center of Lamoille County, Lamoille Home Health & Hospice, and the Vermont Department of Health (Morrisville District Office). For more information on health and human service providers within the community, residents are encouraged to dial 2-1-1 from their phones, or visit www.vermont211.org.

Local health and wellness services are available through the Cambridge offices of the Lamoille Health Partners, Tamarack Family Medicine, and many private practices and specialists in the region.

The Hardwick Area Health Center is a regional medical center which serves Wolcott and communities in Caledonia County. Staff at the Center include family practitioners, internists, and nurse practitioners. The Center provides an array of medical services, with the exception of obstetrics.

For more advanced medical care, the following hospitals are also visited by Lamoille County residents: UVM Medical Center (Burlington, VT), Central Vermont Medical Center (Berlin, VT), Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (Lebanon, NH), North Country Hospital (Newport, VT), Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital (St. Johnsbury, VT), Northwestern Medical Center (St. Albans, VT).

Private practitioners can be found in many communities for medical, dental, and eye care, as well as mental health counselors and physical therapists. Many communities have identified additional needs for better access to health care services, such as federally qualified health centers or pharmacies in their communities.

Vermont 2-1-1

Vermont 2-1-1 is a simple three-digit telephone number to dial for information about health and human service organizations in one's community. By dialing 2-1-1, Vermonters receive free access to community resources through information and referral. This access includes personal assistance by telephone or is online at www.vermont211.org through a searchable database of services. United Way of Lamoille Valley also keeps related up-to-date resources on their website, found at www.uwlamoille.org/get-help/covid-19-resources.

Community Wellness and Social Services

A number of regional organizations are active throughout the county. Many municipalities choose to fund these organizations through appropriations. Many of these services are critical to families in meeting day-to-day needs. Some are social organizations that provide enrichment opportunities to a diverse audience. Lamoille Health Collaborative is a partnership that offers such services to meet countywide needs (www.lamoillehealthpartners.org/lamoille-health-collaborative/). They support and facilitate development of a seamless continuum of care, which helps residents maximize their health status by receiving the right

care, from the right partner, at the right time. At present, the Lamoille Health Collaborative is funded by Lamoille Health Partners.

Youth Wellness

The availability of safe, quality child-raising is vital to Lamoille County's economy, wellness initiatives, educational development, workforce, and future. As the next generation, it is important that children receive adequate opportunities to develop, learn, and thrive. It was projected that Lamoille County's population of 10-14 year olds could increase as much as 16% by 2020. Since the adoption of the 2015 Regional Plan, the 10-14 year old age group has decreased. The availability of services and assistance to parents, grandparents, and guardians is critical. The Agency of Health Service's Department for Children and Families provides a number of opportunities and services for guardians, including pre-natal education on parenting. Healthy Lamoille Valley (HLV) also provides support to caregivers, to prevent and reduce substance misuse and encourage youth to make substance-free, healthy choices. HLV is a program of the nonprofit Lamoille Family Center, one of 15 Parent Child Centers across the state providing a network of care for children, families, and youth. While this section focuses on the availability of childcare, it is important to understand all that goes into nurturing child development, from birth through high school and beyond. Please refer to each municipalities Recreation Departments/Committees for youth sports and programming. Municipalities may find it beneficial to inventory youth programs in their jurisdiction and make information about them easily accessible to the public.

Child Care

Quality childcare makes good economic sense in preparing young children for success later in life. Quality childcare benefits families by preparing children for schooling and social interaction while enabling parents to work and provide income. It benefits employers by expanding the workforce and creating more reliable, productive employees. Furthermore, child care facilities are commercial operations and their existence expands local and regional economies.

Despite the economic and social good created by childcare services, Vermont appears to have a shortage of affordable, quality providers. The Agency of Human Services estimates that only 50-60% of capacity of regulated facilities meets the State's need.

Child Care Programs

There are resources available to assist parents and guardians in finding available childcare. The Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division oversees the childcare industry and allows registered home care providers to serve 10 children: six children under the age of six and four children of school age during the school year. Legally Exempt Providers are those adults who care for the children of no more than two families in addition to their own (this does not mean per day, it means in total) on a regular or continuous basis for less than 24 hours per day. By law, if someone is providing regular or continuous care for children of more than two families, they are required to be a Registered Child Care Provider.

Building Bright Futures, a program of the Vermont Department of Children and Families, operates an online childcare directory (see www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us).

Capstone Community Action (CCA) has an Early Learning Center in Morrisville, providing full day school year-long services to help pre-kindergarten age children and families. CCA also supports childcare partnerships and Early Head Start programs.

The Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) is Vermont's quality recognition system for childcare, preschool, and afterschool programs. Programs that participate in STARS are stepping ahead – going above and beyond state regulations to provide professional services that meet the needs of children and families. Parents and guardians can look to STARS as one indicator of quality when choosing childcare. There are 47 Lamoille County childcare facilities rated on the online STARS database.

Lamoille Family Center (LFC) also offers a variety of childcare programs and services including the Birth to Three Project, resource development, care referral, financial assistance, the LFC Child Care Center, playgroups, and the Child and Adult Food Care Program. Programs may provide mentors for families or specialists that work with professional childcare providers. Other LFC opportunities include literacy and childcare visits as well as trainings on childhood development, positive learning environments, active listening, nutrition, and Vermont Early Learning Standards.

Availability

Given that many residents commute outside their towns for employment, residents may also utilize childcare resources in neighboring communities. As

Lamoille County continues to grow, additional home and center-based childcare facilities may be needed. In particular, there is additional need for off-hour childcare for working parents. There is an unknown number of unregistered at-home childcare facilities.

Table 5-3 Child Care Providers by Town

	Number of registered providers – home based	Number of registered providers – facility based
Belvidere		1
Cambridge	1	4
Eden	3	2
Elmore	0	0
Hyde Park	4	2
Johnson	3	3
Morristown	5	11
Stowe	0	7
Waterville	1	
Wolcott	0	0

Source: Bright Futures Child Care Information System, Retrieved 4/10/23

Workforce Development

Essentially, workforce development means providing opportunities for education and training for high-quality jobs for everyone. The Vermont Workforce Development Council, a statewide initiative, aims to provide the following to all Vermonters: a well-rounded education, innovation and creativity with a passion for lifelong learning, and to have the personal and social skills to succeed in collaborative workplaces. Competition for jobs occurs at the local, regional, state, and national levels.

Vermont is a state that is susceptible to the “brain drain”: young adults are educated in Vermont but leave the state for higher salaries and more challenging employment opportunities. Retirees then move back to Vermont to enjoy the quieter life. This is noticeable in Vermont’s changing population, where the population of older citizens is increasing but overall population growth is declining. Attracting new young talent and workers to the state of Vermont can also be a challenge with the rising cost of housing and limited housing options.

Organizations such as the Lamoille Workforce Investment Board, Lamoille Chamber of Commerce, and GMTCC are focused on workforce development and investment throughout the county. Their current focus is on education at all age levels. For example, through encouragement of the Workforce Investment Board, GMTCC students are not only graded on academic performance but also on their

life skills, such as how they perform in mock interviews, courses in finances, how they dress, and their demeanor. These grades stay on their permanent transcripts and have been requested by prospective employers. In this way, students learn both the “hard” and “soft” skills.

Workforce development is not the responsibility of one organization. Community collaboration can identify the needs and strategies to develop new strategies and improve upon workforce development strategies already in place, while encouraging adaptation to changing economic trends. The needs of employers and employees must be considered. The workforce and employment opportunities have changed in recent years with the development of remote work environments. Including the expertise of retirees in transferring skill development to the next generation is an unexplored avenue in Lamoille County. Regional discussions have identified the following workforce opportunities:

- There is a need for adequately trained workers currently residing in the Region or willing to move to Lamoille County
- Improve Lamoille County workforce basic skills knowledge, such as computer proficiency
- More competitive salaries in Lamoille County to compete with neighboring regions
- Inter-regional communication regarding available training and educational opportunities, for example connecting local resorts to the hospitality training program at Vermont State University, Johnson or expanding hospitality training opportunities
- Support Prevention and Recovery Friendly Workplaces

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers play integral roles in communities at all times, but particularly when resources are strained. Volunteers take part in schools, local boards, municipal committees, the arts, sports, organize local events, and other community or social causes. Volunteering is a way to connect retirees and seniors to the community and to youth. RSVP, once an acronym for “Retired and Senior Volunteer Program”, maintains a list of prospective volunteers and matches them with available volunteering activities. RSVP volunteers can be found in elementary schools, hospitals, nursing homes, chambers of commerce, libraries and bookmobiles, meal sites, adult education, transportation programs, county law enforcement, and court systems. RSVP maintains an office in Morrisville with volunteering opportunities offered throughout Lamoille County and greater northeastern Vermont.

The same way that connecting retirees to youth can foster dialogue between the two sometimes conflicting populations, connecting youth to the broader community fosters greater inclusion. Often young people feel disenfranchised from the world. Providing youth with responsibilities for their community, school, church, or hobbies helps them develop into adults connected to their communities. AmeriCorps and Vermont's Medical Reserve Corps are two other community-based volunteer opportunities that can empower youth and foster inclusion. For more information, please visit www.servermont.vermont.gov/ and <https://www.healthvermont.gov/emergency/volunteering/oncall-vermont>.

Food Access

Food Security

The ability for people to access affordable food is referred to as "food access". Food access is influenced by travel time to shopping, availability of healthy food, product prices, and the relationship between food shopping, spending patterns, diet, and health. "Food security" is often tied to access. A community is food insecure when its residents do not have access to enough nutritious, quality, affordable food to lead an active, healthy life. It is important to consider food security and food access in order to increase the self-reliance of communities. According to the 2020 American Community Survey, 8.6% of Lamoille County households used the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as "food stamps"), and 12.4% of people live under the poverty threshold. Given those statistics, there is a demonstrated need for a coordinated effort to increase food security throughout Lamoille County.

There is a range of policies and programs dedicated to addressing food security, which includes:

- Food availability and affordability
- Direct food marketing
- Diet-related health problems
- Participation in and access to Federal nutrition assistance programs
- Ecologically sustainable agricultural production
- Economic viability of rural communities
- Economic opportunity and job security
- Community development
- WIC Program

Some communities have large supermarkets and grocery stores. For other communities, getting to major supermarkets can be a 20-40-minute drive. Small,

local markets and grocery stores supply much of the food stock for rural residents. While residents support and value existing local markets, there may be a need and demand within the communities for a larger selection of food products.

Many of the County's farms benefit from open fields within the floodplain, which contain some of the best and most fertile agricultural lands. Some farms have a retail store or farmstand on-site. Some towns and villages have farmers' markets held weekly throughout the summer and fall. Farmers' markets bring together local food producers and artisans in a central location. Markets often feature a diversity of food products including conventional, organic, and chemical-free produce, bread, meats, eggs, and cheese. Some farmers' markets accept SNAP benefits through the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) program. While this can be a major investment for a small farmers' market, it is worthwhile to increase access to the markets' offerings, especially given the high percentage of residents receiving SNAP benefits in some communities. Markets provide access to fresh food, provide a source of income for farmers and producers, and bring communities together. All of this contributes to the food security and health and wellbeing of Lamoille County towns and villages.

Food affordability and access to healthy food options

Integral to food security is food affordability. While there is no measure for how much a household should be spending on food like there is for housing, food affordability calculations are often based on how far a person has to go for food, size of the nearest grocery store(s), access to healthy food options, and household income. The USDA offers guides for spending using the thrifty plan based on family size. The current estimate for a family of four is \$226 a week.

Farmers' markets and local retailers offer a selection of food, but some items are not necessarily affordable for all income types. It is important to recognize that not all residents live in areas of the County that are accessible to a farmers' market or grocery store. The sections below discuss ways to increase access to healthy food options.

There are a number of public and private programs for those who cannot afford food. Local food shelves are one of those programs. Food shelves offer limited hours weekly for eligible individuals to pick up food. They are often volunteer run. Some food shelves offer clothing for residents in need. Because they are volunteer run and often rely on donations, food shelves face tenuous arrangements. Given the small size of communities and the social stigma

attached to food shelf patrons, many residents will drive to neighboring communities to utilize a food shelf.

Many local churches and social groups offer free lunches to residents. Not only do lunches provide an option for residents in need, but they also provide a social gathering space for the community and are open to all. There are often no eligibility requirements to enjoy free lunches.

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program provides access to healthy foods, nutrition education, and health care support for income-eligible residents. Parents, grandparents, and foster parents may apply for children in their care. The WIC office in Morrisville serves all towns and villages in Lamoille County. For more information, please visit www.healthvermont.gov/local/morrisville/wic-morrisville.

The Vermont food stamps program is called 3SquaresVT. This program, for those who are eligible, works with participants to increase their food budgets and ensure “three square meals” are available for every household participating. In 2013, it became a requirement that a community service component be added to receive the benefits. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program provides staple items and nutrition assistance to qualifying individuals and households.

The Vermont Foodbank also sponsors four fresh food initiatives. The “gleaning program” harvests excess or unmarketable produce from farms and redistributes it throughout the state. “Pick for your Neighbor” is a partnership with tree fruit growers that allows citizens and companies to visit participating orchards to pick and purchase extra apples for donation to the Foodbank. The Foodbank also operates its own farm in Warren to grow produce for local food shelves. Lastly, the Foodbank organizes the Backpack Program for school-age youth. During the school year, bags of kid-friendly nonperishable vitamin fortified food from all five food groups are packed and distributed to participating schools.

The Vermont Agency of Education administers two meal programs for school children during the summer. The Seamless Summer Option has a free meal service for participating school food providers. The Summer Food Service Program serves public or private non-profit schools, local, municipal, county, tribal or state government, private non-profits, public or private non-profit camps, and private or non-profit universities or colleges. The Agency of Education offers more information about eligibility and the operation of these programs.

Healthy Retailers Practices

Ensuring farmers and local food and beverage producers are able to remain viable is a critical piece of food access. Financial, promotional, and distributional support are necessary for producers and institutions such as markets and stores. Having locally produced agricultural products available at local stores and grocers helps ensure local dollars stay in their communities and in Lamoille County. The Vermont Department of Health encourages retailers to incorporate healthy practices into their business models.

Voluntary healthy retailer practices focus on three key areas: tobacco, alcohol, and healthy foods. Practices include moving alcohol to the back of the store, separating it from sodas and other beverages, and reducing the amount of signage for tobacco and alcohol products. Raising signage to adult eye-level instead of at a child's eye level targets legal age drinkers rather than youth. Offering fruits and vegetables, and placing them in the front of the store, is another way to encourage healthier eating practices. Retailers can also work to promote the EBT program for qualifying products. The goal of these practices is to remind shoppers that healthy changes can be easy to make while allowing retailers to highlight healthy items they may already have in their store. Healthy Lamoille Valley (HLV) and Vermont Department of Health are poised to support voluntary healthy retailer practices. HLV has created resources available for retailers to use in their stores. For more information or support, please contact HLV or visit: www.healthylamoillevalley.org/hlv-coalition/.

Marketing Local Products

Direct marketing of locally produced food provides another option for increasing food access and security. Direct marketing occurs when local producers sell directly to the customer rather than going through a distributor or wholesaler. A farmers' market is an example of direct marketing. A Community Supported Agriculture model (CSA) is also a direct marketing tool. Under the CSA model, a customer purchases a "share" up front from a farm, and the farm then distributes a weekly box of produce to the customer. This model gives the farmer an assurance of income and ensures the customer receives a share of food throughout the growing season. CSAs have expanded to include winter shares, meat shares, egg shares, and shares of other food products. Salvation Farms based in Morrisville has a gleaning program that supports local farms and CSAs. Many farms offer a reduced rate for households under a certain income level.

Direct marketing is also found in the Farm to School and Farm to Institution

model. These programs encourage farmers to sell products directly to schools or institutions, such as hospitals. Increasing the amount of locally grown produce available for sale at local retailers is also important. Efforts can be enhanced to achieve this by such organizations as the Healthy Retailers Initiative or the Lamoille Fit and Healthy Council.

Community and Backyard Gardening

While communities are limited in what they can do to influence dietary decisions by individual households, they can be instrumental in providing resources and opportunities to increase access to healthy, affordable food. One way is by encouraging the use of gardening, such as community gardening or “backyard” gardening. A community garden is simply a garden where two or more individuals grow plants. Community gardens can be located on private or public property and are often tied into existing organizations, such as schools, senior housing complexes, apartment or multi-family buildings, and religious organizations. Housing complexes may have small gardens for residents. Organizations such as food pantries and food shelves may use community gardening as both a learning tool and a food source. Farmers in some communities make space available for gardeners, for free or for a fee. Some barriers to community gardening include conflict with road crews, costs, and water access. Resources are available to communities through the Vermont Community Garden Network or American Community Gardening Association.

In rural farm communities, it is more common for households to each have their own garden or wild berry patch. Barriers to having a backyard garden include lack of space, lack of tools, and lack of knowledge about how to grow your own food. In villages, residential neighborhoods are generally densely compact, limiting yard space available for backyard gardens. Additionally, some villages have an increasing young, rental population who are often limited in terms of how they can use rental property. While some lots in these communities provide reasonable space for backyard gardens, other residents, especially those residing in the Village Core areas, may benefit from a local community garden plot. Currently, many towns in Lamoille County do not have a community garden. As towns and villages continue to explore green space opportunities, potential community garden space should be given consideration during the design and planning process of new residential developments and recreational facilities.

Organizations throughout the state, such as 4-H and the UVM Master Gardeners Program, provide training in growing and preserving food at home, which is one way to improve food security and self-sufficiency. Similarly, a community tool

set is an option for households, especially smaller households such as renters in the village, to share implements such as shovels, hoes, and rakes without a major investment. Gardening is a way to increase access to affordable, healthy foods.

Cultural Facilities

Cultural resources are those that develop, improve, and enrich the mind. Culture is manifested differently among people and regions. The wealth of cultural opportunities throughout Lamoille County continues to make it a tourist destination and a quality place to live and work. The region’s culture is made up of the talented individuals who are artists, musicians, writers, designers, photographers, and crafters who have migrated here or cultivated their craft. Providing a fertile, supportive environment for cultural activities to flourish is crucial for Lamoille County. A multitude of festivals, galleries, museums, theaters, and patron organizations enable these activities to thrive.

Libraries

Libraries in the region are owned by either a municipality and operated by an elected or appointed board, or they are owned by private organizations. There are a total of 11 libraries in the region. Seven of those libraries are municipal, with two of those being “community libraries”. Other libraries can be found at Copley Hospital, which houses a medical library, and two privately owned library facilities.

The county's libraries offer a variety of services including: normal circulation of materials (books, movies, audiobooks, CDs, periodicals, e-books), reference, selection and purchase of materials, culling of the collection, materials circulation, special programs, audio-visual equipment and collections, desktop and laptop computers, children’s programming, and in some cases, housing of locally important historical artifacts. Some libraries also participate in the state’s inter-library loan program, which allows patrons to borrow paper and digital media from other participating libraries across the state.



Libraries also serve as community gathering spaces, employment centers, and a place for creativity. Many local libraries offer recreational equipment like snowshoes and bikes. Many libraries also display artwork from local artists or offer discount passes to education programs (such as ECHO, the Leahy Center

for Lake Champlain in Burlington). Community space allows for physical activity, community meetings, or library special events. Libraries can also serve as community cooling centers during extreme heat events.

Additionally, as information technology and communications become ever more present in daily life, libraries provide services beyond the typical book. Computers at public libraries are used for daily life functions, often because they are Wi-Fi “hotspots”. As trends continue towards “going paperless”, everything from job applications to health care to access to basic resources now happens by using free computers at libraries.

Libraries in Lamoille County vary in accessibility. The Waterville Library is in the old elementary school where it is not ADA compliant nor is it open year-round. The Wolcott Library is located across from the Wolcott Town Office on Railroad Street. Centennial Library in Morristown and the Lanpher Library in Hyde Park both spent many years fundraising for improvements which have been completed in phased approaches as fundraising has allowed.

While specific funding varies in each town, it generally comes from investments of past endowments, annually from the municipality’s budget, or through grants for which the libraries specifically apply. For libraries to be eligible to receive state or federal grant money, they must be financially supported, at least in part, by their municipality.

Because of the role that libraries play in filling needs for citizen access to information and resources, LCPC supports and encourages library expansions, ADA accessibility, and increased visibility.

Museums, Galleries, and Cultural Facilities

There are a number of cultural facilities in the region, including museums and galleries. Not all are listed below. Many of the county’s eight historical societies operate their own facilities and many are non-profit organizations. Others, such as the Noyes House Museum, are owned by municipalities. They all care for their own collections. Historical societies often hold lectures and talks open to the public and preserve town history and photographs.

Some historical societies have adequate facilities to store and display artifacts while others are looking for ways to better preserve their collections. The Ski and Snowboard Museum is housed in the 1818 Old Town Hall in Stowe. The museum houses a collection of skis, snowboards, boots, bindings,

memorabilia, photographs, art, and library and archive materials, more than 10,000 items chronicling the evolution of winter sports in Vermont.

River Arts is a community arts organization based in Morrisville, formed in 1999 as the result of a community planning forum that set creating an intergenerational community arts center as a top priority. At that time, there were no arts programs available to most residents of Lamoille County. River Arts offers classes, workshops, exhibits, concerts, and other special events to the residents of Lamoille County for free or at affordable costs. River Arts offers youth programs, adult programs, an Elder Art Program, events, and galleries. In the future, River Arts may consider expanding their programming. The benefit this non-profit organization provides to the region makes it an example of a collaborative partnership to be supported.

Founded by artists in 1984, the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson is the largest international artists' and writers' Residency Program in the United States. The Center is spread across 30 historic buildings in Johnson and provides invaluable resources to the region.

Dibden Center for the Arts houses a 500-seat theater and an incubator for the Vermont State University, Johnson Performing Arts Department. Events range from local to nationally known performers. Performances are open to the community. The Center also houses the Julian Scott Memorial Gallery that hosts student, faculty, and touring art exhibits.

Performing arts space is formalized, such as the Spruce Peak Performing Arts Center, a 420-seat center in Stowe and the Hyde Park Opera House, a non-profit organization dedicated to the arts, and informal, using available facilities like schools, parks, and senior centers.

Art galleries feature locally and nationally known artists. Art exhibits can be found in formal galleries, restaurants, and post offices.

Public art installations range from decorative banners on light posts to bike racks to sculptures in parks and on streets. Public art helps create an inviting community and showcases local talent.

Arts and the Creative Economy

The arts help to define many of Lamoille County's towns and villages. Not only do they help define regional character, they also provide local employment and

bring visitors to the region's village centers who may frequent other businesses. As the number of studios and art galleries grow, so will the demand for local sources of supplies.

In addition to the arts, the "Creative Economy" includes film and new media, software and game development, publishing, advertising and marketing, and high-tech manufacturing arts. The creative economy provides clean, well-paying, skilled jobs. Provided high-speed internet is available, many Creative Economy firms can "locate anywhere". In a 2013 survey conducted by the Vermont Office of the Creative Economy, 65% of businesses in the sector stated that Vermont's "clean, natural environment and working landscape" was a key factor in determining where to locate. Other important factors included Vermont being an "environmentally conscious state", a past history and residence in Vermont, and proximity to family and friends. One-third of businesses also indicated a desire to locate in a compact, walkable, "authentic" community or downtown. Lamoille County's natural beauty, authentic historic character, wealth of recreational assets, growing art community, and proximity to the Burlington and Montpelier areas place Lamoille County in an attractive location for businesses operating in the Creative Economy.

Creative Economy firms in Lamoille County range in size from one person advertising studios to a publishing company with several dozen employees. Locating additional firms in Village Centers represents opportunities to create "economic anchors" for other businesses that rely on a local customer base (such as local retailers and restaurants). Larger Creative Economy firms (and other professional offices) may be able to locate in larger Victorian homes located in Village Centers, providing property owners with an alternative to conversion of these properties into multi-unit rental housing. Still other Creative Economy endeavors require little infrastructure. Some arts-based industries may be appropriate uses for properties going through a brownfields remediation.