



MEDIA RELEASE

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CONTACT:

Kevin Essington (860) 912-0628

or Ariana McBride (401)741-8923

Killingly, CT and Exeter, RI

Selected for Borderlands Village Innovation Pilot

PROVIDENCE, Rhode Island – Two rural towns along the Connecticut-Rhode Island border will soon be wrestling with the challenge of how to create new economic opportunities while protecting what makes them unique. The Borderlands Project has announced Killingly, CT and Exeter, RI as the two towns selected for the “Borderlands Village Innovation Pilot”. Beginning in January 2008, the Pilot will work with citizens of the two towns through a three-phase, 18-month project including visioning the future and taking action. The Pilot will bring together economists, designers, planners and others to assist the towns in this effort.

The Village Innovation Pilot is bringing together agencies and organizations from both states to collaborate around how to help these two towns achieve their visions. It has also formed partnerships with other leading organizations such as the Orton Family Foundation and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy to help guide the direction of the Pilot and provide key resources and expertise.

Through the Pilot, Exeter (RI) will engage residents and landowners in an examination of current and future growth, focusing on what is occurring along its major roadways, including Route 2. The Town will also look to protect its land and water resources, including the Queen River Watershed as well as identify opportunities for publically owned lands.

“The technical support made possible through this Pilot will allow Exeter to continue to grow while maintaining its rural and scenic character. We especially appreciate the opportunity for Exeter to develop a planning model from which our town, as well as other rural communities, will benefit”, said Calvin Ellis, Exeter Town Council President.

Killingly (CT) will work with town residents to create a shared vision for the Town’s future; how it will grow and what it will preserve. The Pilot will focus on the relationship between the villages of Danielson and Dayville, and will then apply what is learned to the Town’s other villages. The Town also hopes to examine patterns of its growth with the goal of developing innovative ways to protect the most rural lands in the eastern portion of the Town.

"The Town looks forward to working with the Borderlands Project and Exeter, RI as a means of working through our desire to maintain the community vision for both conservation and development", said Janice Thurlow, Chair, Killingly Town Council.

Both towns plan to put together a local committee focused on the Pilot in the coming months.

Although the towns will work through this process separately, they will be brought together regularly to learn from each other’s experiences as well as share with the larger Borderlands region, which includes twenty towns along the Connecticut-Rhode Island border.

The Pilot is an initiative of the Borderlands Project, which is a joint effort between the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council and The Nature Conservancy. This partnership focuses on creating opportunities for economic and community development in the twenty more rural towns along the CT-RI border while conserving and enhancing the natural amenities that make these communities desirable. The Borderlands are home to more than 200,000 people, many businesses and hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. It also contains some of the most ecologically important lands in the Northeast including unfragmented forest habitats and pristine watersheds.

“The Village Innovation Pilot allows us to test what we’ve been hearing as part of our Borderlands Project activities; that there is a critical link between traditional village centers and surrounding farms and forests. We need to develop ways to reinvent existing or planned village centers so that we protect their historic form but enhance their economic function. This requires that we conserve the more rural landscapes that define them”, said Kip Bergstrom, Executive Director of the RI Economic Policy Council.

The estimated value of the technical assistance to be provided through the Village Innovation Pilot is more than \$200,000. The Pilot is currently supported by the Orton Family Foundation, Northeast Utilities and other private donors, but additional funding is needed.

To become involved, or for more information go to the Borderlands Project website at:

www.borderlandsproject.org; or call (401)521-3120 ext. 101.