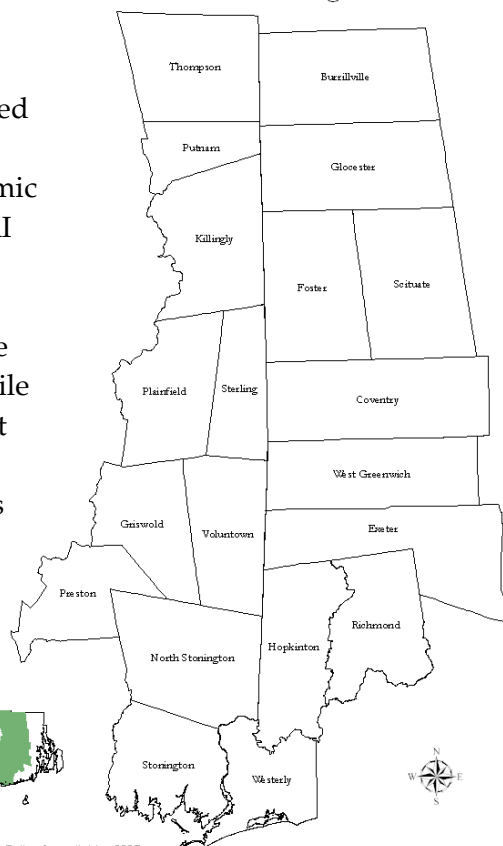




VILLAGE INNOVATION PILOT Description, January 2008

The Borderlands Region



Map produced by RI Economic Policy Council, May 2007

Background. The Borderlands Project is a partnership launched by the Rhode Island Economic Policy Council and The Nature Conservancy that focuses on creating opportunities for economic and community development in twenty towns along the CT-RI border while conserving and enhancing the natural amenities that make these communities unique. The Village Innovation Pilot (the Pilot) will provide assistance to two towns to explore and implement ways to enhance what makes them special while contending with future change. The Pilot was born out of past Borderlands activities, where local participants raised the question of whether it would be possible to protect rural lands by channeling future growth into existing or planned centers.

The Proposal. Through a competitive process, Killingly (CT) and Exeter (RI) were selected to undertake a community visioning process that will engage those who live, work and play in the community in planning for the future of their towns. Why do we live in this area? What connects us to this community? What can make living here better? Following the visioning, our work will explore options and implement actions for realizing their visions, including the possibility of establishing niches in an increasingly innovation driven economy and investigating how channeling growth into a village can both offset the consumption of critical rural lands and meet other important community goals. Although the Pilot developed from the question raised above, our expectation is that the outcomes of the visioning phase will guide the direction of the Pilot in each town.

By the Pilot's conclusion, the two towns will have defined their visions, conducted a robust public outreach and awareness effort, explored creative options and solutions, adopted innovative approaches and regulations, and begun to implement actions. Success, in the short-term, will be defined by outcomes such as new design standards, focused land protection initiatives, and/or new local growth policies. In the long-term, success may be demonstrated by outcomes such as new businesses, protection of farms and forests and village center(s) with a well-designed integration of land uses.

The Pilot will also result in a better understanding of the technical assistance needed by towns, exploration of innovative partnerships to meet these needs, and the identification of state level policy and financing changes necessary to encourage better patterns of land use. Finally, it will provide opportunities for other Borderlands towns to learn from the experiences of the two communities selected.

Resources & Timeline. The Pilot is estimated to cost approximately \$280,000 over its approximately two-year project period, including in-kind contributions from project partners. This timeframe includes an 18-month Pilot process as well as pre-pilot activities. The Pilot will be staffed by a Coordinator, supported by staff from The Nature Conservancy and Rhode Island Economic Policy Council, and have guidance from a bi-state Pilot Advisory Group comprised of key governmental and non-governmental partners and town representatives. It will also rely on the engagement of a Local Advisory Group in both Pilot towns. Please note that both the timeline and budget may be adjusted as the Pilot moves forward.

Evaluation. Evaluation will be an important activity at all stages of the Pilot. The lessons of the Pilot will be captured through a final report and evaluation will be continued one year after the Pilot. All Pilot information will be available online at www.borderlandsproject.org.

Funding. The Pilot is currently supported by the Orton Family Foundation, Northeast Utilities and other private donors, but additional funding is needed.

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