Examining the role of social capital in community development: How the creation of a land trust set a small town on the path to sustainability

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EXAMINING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: HOW THE CREATION OF A LAND TRUST SET A SMALL TOWN ON THE PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

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in

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DEDICATION

To Eloise Gompf, David Brandenberg and Silas Weeks, professors, mentors and friends.

A sustainable society is one that can persist over generations, one that is far-seeing enough, flexible enough and wise enough not to undermine either its physical or its social systems of support. Donella Meadows et. al.

The possibility of change depends on the existence of people who have the power to change. Wendall Berry

If we are aware, we can do something to change the course of things. Nhat Hanh
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Each member of my doctoral committee helped shape this work, and for that intellectual contribution and collaboration, I am deeply grateful. Their cross-disciplinary perspectives and insights were invaluable. Their patience was profound. Their questions were excellent. Their standards always high. Their commitment to participate fully in my doctoral studies was essential to my success.

As principal advisor and dissertation director Mimi Becker guided me thoughtfully and faithfully through this incredible experience. Her ability to listen deeply coupled with her knowledge provided a challenging and nurturing environment for inquiry and learning. Her attention to detail was exceptional. I will be ever thankful to have had the benefit of her mentoring and am inspired to do likewise.

My regards to the people of Rivervale who shared their story so that we might better learn how to develop communities more sustainably.

Finally a note of thanks to my wonderful family for their enduring encouragement.
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ABSTRACT

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: HOW THE CREATION OF A LAND TRUST SET A SMALL TOWN ON THE PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY

By
Lynda A. Brushett
University of New Hampshire, May 2004

Theoretical constructs of social capital and sustainable community development are examined through the lens of the lived experience of a small Vermont town. A case study of the community's land use planning history from the 1960's through to the present assesses the actions and relationships among individuals and institutions engaged in civic efforts to achieve environmental, economic, and social balance in development decision-making. The role of a land trust and its members as a community system changing variable—a self-organized institutional response to the concerns of citizens to the unsustainable development of their community—is evaluated. Findings describe the process whereby social capital is converted into civic action to direct a community's path towards a sustainable future and provides recommendations for supporting the process of change.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Decision-making that privileges expansion of economic capital to the detriment of environmental and social capital and that fails to recognize the interlinked complexity of community systems has lead to development choices which are not sustainable from an economic, social or ecological perspective. These development decisions have blurred the boundary between urban, suburban and rural areas, degraded ecosystems, eroded community networks, congested traffic, displaced people and raised public costs.

Sprawling growth in traditionally rural northern New England illustrates but one aspect of the problem:

* As New Hampshire’s population increased 60% from 1970 to 1998, the number of dwelling units increased by 95% (New Hampshire Office of State Planning 2000). And there is no end in sight. By 2020 New Hampshire’s population is projected to grow by more than 354,800; 85% of this growth will be concentrated in the southeastern 33% of the state. To accommodate this growth, land is being converted from forests and farming to development at the rate of 20,000 acres per year. (Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests 1999).

* Despite a 27,000 decline in Maine’s elementary and high school student population between 1970 and 1995, $338 million was spent on building new school capacity. In the same period school transportation costs increased from $8.7 million to $54 million (Maine State Planning Office 1997).

* Between 1982 and 1992, Vermont’s population grew by 9.8% while the amount of developed land increased 25.3%. Forty percent of the newly developed land was converted from farmland (Vermont Forum 1997).
Changing these trends requires communities to adopt a new development path, sustainable development, that respects all forms of community capital and embraces the dynamics of local/regional systems. This study looks at the role a local, town-based land trust can play in this change.

The research adds to our understanding of how social capital contributes to sustainable development by examining the experience of a Vermont town (Rivervale) and its locally based land trust (Rivervale Land Trust). Data from key informant interviews, town and land trust records, and newspaper accounts informs a case study of the interaction between institutions of municipal government, townspeople and a land trust over land use planning and development issues from 1960 to 2002. Research examines the process whereby social capital is invested by citizens in actions to change a community's path towards a sustainable future. Conclusions provide lessons for supporting a process of change, an issue of critical importance to practitioners and policy makers, to arrest trends such as those noted above.

The research is not designed to make causal inferences among land trusts, social capital and sustainable development, but rather to provide an in-depth examination of how community agency in the form of social capital held in a self-organizing community institution can facilitate a change to sustainability in a particular place. The purpose is to shed light on process: initiation, organization, implementation, institutionalization and provide insight into how a network of people and resources is mobilized and institutionalized to direct development efforts towards sustainability.

Research results help development professionals, policy makers, funders, activists, educators and technical assistance providers better understand how to facilitate
an applied approach to sustainable development and how to support the work of community based institutions engaged in sustainable development. By illuminating how social capital vested in a community land trust becomes productive, the research makes an important contribution to our understanding of how the practice of community development relates to the goals of sustainable development.

**Context**

For the most part, development decisions—how to use community resources whether publicly or privately held—are made at the local, town or city, level. Even where a development decision is made by state or federal government, as in the case of transportation or utility infrastructure, local input remains key to the outcome. The locus of decision-making, the town or city, is an open, living structure consisting of interrelated and interdependent human systems functioning within a larger ecological system and within ever larger nested layers of human and ecological systems (Allen, T. et. al. 1987; King 1993; Rapport 1992; Smil 1993). For the most part, current decision-making practices, whether based in conformance to land use regulations or benefit cost analysis, do not take this structure into consideration, whether in terms of a specific political boundary or of its larger place e. g. ecosystem, trade area, etc. (Bratton 1992; Barr 1995; Goodland 1995; Lee 1993; Munn 1993; Norton 1992).

As a consequence local actions, as well by those taken at regional, state, national or international levels, are moving communities away from equilibrium, away from a stable and sustainable system, to dissipative ones which can be stabilized only by increasingly expensive material and energy in-flows—those demands for land and other
resources from within and outside the system needed to support community life: homes, businesses, schools, food, water, energy, transportation, waste, and more. The impact of these actions is lost and diminished ecological, social, economic and, ultimately and ironically, community capacity.

While in a dissipative state, the community system moves further and further from equilibrium becoming more difficult to maintain and more susceptible to aberrant behavior within its component parts. System theory posits that change will occur at a point where the feedback effect of a variable within the system's underlying microstructure is amplified by other interactions, causing the system to organize into a qualitatively different structure. The new configuration of the system is at once part of its history, reflecting changes made at various points in time, and something different offering new choices, new possibilities (Allen 1982; Allen 1988; Dyke 1988).

Sustainability addresses the complex interactions among economic, social and environmental systems and the ability to sustain existence on the earth for generations to come.

1 This study examines the role of a land trust and its members as the system changing variable: a self-organized institutional response to the environmental, 

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economic and social concerns of citizens to the unsustainable development of their community.

The premise of this research is that local and regional land trusts offer new and fertile ground for the study of how citizens develop the capacity to engage issues of sustainability in their communities. The number of these organizations increased 43% in the past ten years (1990 to 2000) and more than tripled the amount of land under their protection from 1.9 million to 6.2 million acres (Land Trust Alliance 2000). For the most part these organizations focus on saving properties of local or regional significance—farms, forests, shorelines, historic structures—from traditional forms of development focused on the expansion of economic capital. Can it also be said that the work of the land trust brings other forms of community capital into the development decision and in the process challenges citizens to learn the art of civic engagement: communication, collaboration, networking, resource development and joint problem solving? And, in the process, does the land trust provide a forum for public education and discourse around issues of community sustainability, offer a place where people can get involved in and connected to their community, bring together newcomers and natives, young people and old-timers and create new bonds of community? This research uses the land trust as a laboratory for observing how social capital is created and used to foster sustainable development.

Because of their distinctly community-based orientation (in contrast to large nationally-based trusts) these organizations interact with local government on matters related to development both as resource managers and as advocates for the inclusion of environmental and social concerns in public decision-making. Given increasing
development pressures, especially in rural communities adjacent to urban areas, and the limitations of local planning regulations to preserve large tracts of land from development, the land trust has the potential to be an important new institution for promoting development (economic capital) that protects natural resources (environmental capital) and builds community (social capital).

While much is known about land trust organizational and technical issues: how to set up boards, raise funds, negotiate real estate deals, assess taxes, create easements, manage land and so forth, very little is known about the role of land trusts in building community, their relation to system changes or their connection to sustainable development. The goal of this research is to describe the ways in which the land trust may facilitate community change towards sustainability and in so doing shed light on how social capital becomes a productive component of sustainable development. Through an in-depth examination of the relationship between a land trust, its members and the town during their collective experience of development issues over a fifteen year period, the research describes the actions and relationships among individuals and institutions engaged in the formation of a land trust, its projects and civic efforts to achieve environmental, economic, and social balance in development decision-making,

- assesses the role of a land trust and its members as a system changing variable—a self-organized institutional response to the concerns of citizens to the unsustainable development of their community,
- describes the process whereby social capital is converted into other forms of community capital in order to change a community’s path towards a sustainable future,
- clarifies the conceptual relationship between community development, sustainable development and social capital,
provides recommendations for strengthening the role of local land trusts in sustainable community development.

Background

Development is the purposeful, deliberate pursuance of change in support of a particular societal vision (Burkey 1993; Friere 1972). As applied in most communities, the modern development vision is growth in economic activity; growth pursued without respect to system constraints (Barr 1995; Costanza 1991; Daly 1991, 1994; Ekins 1992; Goodland 1995; Meadows, et.al.1972).

Sustainable development redefines the term to mean the changes made by people in the present to improve their quality of life [development] which do not adversely affect their future nor that of succeeding generations [sustainable]. The concept assumes the ability to strike a balance between present day actions and future consequences which can not be conclusively known, such that the future is not compromised.

Community development is a problem solving process, an involved conscious, planned approach to societal needs whereby people initiate and cause change in their community (Sanders 1958; Bennett 1969; Biddle and Biddle 1965; Dave 1978). While community can be defined in terms of interest affiliations (as in the AIDS community or the Hispanic community) for our purposes here a community is defined in a geographically bounded context, i.e. a town or municipality. Community development theory acknowledges that people are capable of rational behavior, learn though interaction and experience and are capable of making decisions to shape their environment (Briand 1999; Littrell 1973; Nozick 1993).
Sustainable community development is at once a process and a result. It describes how human beings should approach change in their communities and what community change should accomplish. It assumes people can figure out how to live fairly with one another. It encompasses a vision of human society and its relationship to the biophysical world that is as much a conversation about values and philosophy, as it is about science and economics. In its weakest sense sustainable development is an anthropocentric concept challenging humans to live in harmony with each other within limits imposed by the natural world, as augmented by human technology and ecological management schemes. In its strongest sense it challenges humans to be one with each other and the natural world, to value humanity and the environment because they are, not only for what they provide.

Sustainable community development makes explicit the understanding that human-made systems—social and economic—function within an encompassing ecological system. Sustainable community development recognizes the importance of linkages and feedback—that development decisions made in any one domain or layer of the system will affect other domains, now and into the future. It means addressing “the whole picture at once” (Nozick 1993: 19) rather than narrowly focusing on parts. It means development of self-organizing communities able to sustain themselves over generations, and the support of self-organizing institutions capable of effecting change within community systems.

For development to be sustainable three basic interconnected systems need to be considered: social, economic and environmental. The social system is the reason for development; the economic system is the engine of development; the environment is the
biophysical context of development. The challenge for decision-makers—businesses, organizations, government, individuals—and community development practitioners is to understand as completely as possible the essential linkages among these basic systems and to appreciate that decisions made in one system have consequences in the others. This is what Boulding refers to as Integrative Power, learning by individuals and institutions that enable people to change the current development vision to a sustainable one (Boulding 1991).

Once understood, the development challenge then becomes one of integrating learning into action through civic engagement, the community’s ability to mobilize resources to improve the quality of life in a sustainable manner. The source of this ability is found in the community’s social capital, “the sum of shared knowledge, agreements, relationships and institutions that enable any community to communicate and collaborate within itself and with other communities…[and] increase the value of other resources by making it more feasible to bring them together in valuable uses” (Ferguson and John 1994: 2).

**Research Summary**

While perhaps not using the language of system dynamics or development in a formal way, how do individuals who join together in a local land trust engage sustainable development? How is the capital resident in members social networks used to change the meaning and practice of development in their community? What feedback mechanism in the community system triggers this change? Is it a response to a perceived threat or loss to identity, sense of place, community, history, culture? all of these factors? another
factor? Whatever the motivating source, the land trust organizational process usually results in an institution capable of being the active, public voice for bringing environmental and social issues into the development discussion and the formal organization whose civic skills make that voice heard in community decision-making. How does this process evolve? How does the land trust affect the host community, its institutions, its governance and its development policies? How might the institution and the process be supported?

The case study examines this process as it unfolded in a small New England town located within 20 minutes of a major urbanizing area. The context for examining the community's progress towards sustainable development is an historical review of attitudes and actions of townspeople and town government towards land use planning and regulation. Following an introduction to the community and its pre-1950 history, the study follows the development of town's first land use regulations in the late sixties through to 2002. Focus is placed on the parallel development of a land trust and the town from 1985 to the present in terms of development attitudes, policies, initiatives and institutional change. Research examines the evolution of development policy and assesses the contribution of the land trust to that process, the role of social capital and the influence of the civic infrastructure.

Information is gathered from interviews with community members, land trust members and town officials, from newspaper accounts, town and land trust records, land use regulations, master plan documents and other community data. Relationships among individuals and institutions engaged in civic efforts to affect the development of the community, as well as actions and outcomes are analyzed. The civic infrastructure is
examined for responsiveness to citizen input, ability to deal with diverse ideas and
groups, extent of internal and external networks, willingness to mobilize needed
resources, accessibility and institutional credibility. The research compares community
indicators of sustainability in 1987 and 2002 and assesses the nature and sources of
change.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relevant literature brings together research in systems thinking, policy, ecological economics, sustainable development, social capital, community development, land trusts and social movement organizations.

Sustainable Development

Sustainability is characterized in terms of the ‘well-being’ or ‘health’ of human and ecological systems, meaning that human life will continue and human lives will flourish only in the context of continuing and flourishing ecological systems. Sustainability has to do with processes, the ‘ability’ of human and ecological systems to ‘sustain’ themselves, in healthy positive ways, now and into the future, in all the complexity that implies, rather than a particular end (Meadows et al 1996; Munn 1993; Rapport 1992; Smil 1993; Steedman and Haider 1993). The strength or weakness of the concept depends on how the integration of these systems is perceived and how they are valued (Goodland 1995; Norton 1992).

The operational framework for sustainable development has evolved through the work of activists, academicians and practitioners. The phrase “sustainable development” first found worldwide expression as a consequence of the 1987 UN World Commission
on Environment and Development, the Brundtland Commission. In documenting the state of the global economy and environment, the Commission acknowledged the growing and increasingly serious conflict between current approaches to economic development, ecological integrity and social vitality. The solution proposed by the Commission in its final report, *Our Common Future*, was ‘sustainable development’: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own” (WCED 1987: 43). While open to interpretation about what constitutes ‘needs’ or is meant by ‘development’, the Brundtland Commission set the stage for research and debate and gave public and political acceptance to the understanding that there are economic and social inequities within and between human societies, ecological limits to societal growth and placed intergenerational equity as a key component for a new meaning of development.

Further elaboration came from the United Nations Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. As set forth in Agenda 21, countries representing over 98% of the world’s human population agreed to a global plan for sustainable development that linked economic, social and environmental well-being. Poverty, hunger, poor health, illiteracy, gender, ethnic and other socio-cultural inequities, population growth, consumption behaviors, political barriers, natural resource depletion, environmental destruction all signaled a failure of attention to issues of sustainability.

*Agenda 21* fostered further acceptance of the premise that current development patterns are not sustainable and that change is needed (Sitarz 1984). Widening gaps between rich and poor people, within and among nations threaten social stability [almost a third of the world’s 1.3 billion people live below a minimum standard of consumption

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The Earth's ecosystems cannot sustain nor withstand today's level of economic and population growth and its associated resource use and waste generation. Evidence abounds (Brown 1996; World Resources Institute 2000).

Calculations by biologist Peter Vitousek and others have revealed that human beings are consuming directly or indirectly 40 percent of the products of terrestrial photosynthesis (Vitousek, et. al. 1986). Collapse of fisheries worldwide and the associated loss of livelihoods, food supplies and ways of life have made the intimate connection between humans and ecosystems transparent (Weber 1994). The demands humans place on ecosystem services for air, water and waste disposal, suggest that human beings are using Earth well beyond its capacity (Meadows, et. al., 1972; Dailey 1998; Rees 1989).

Wackernagel and Rees (1996) estimate that if everyone in the world were to adopt a typical North American life style it would take two additional planets to produce sufficient resources, absorb waste and provide life support. As summed by Herman Daly and John Cobb (1989: 21): "We human beings are being led to a dead end—all too literally. We are living by an ideology of death and accordingly are destroying our own humanity and killing the planet."

The way to change this 'ideology of death' is to change to a path of sustainable development. But what is it? Implicit are questions about development goals and the structure and dynamics of ecological and human systems. The answers reflect differing economic, systems and normative perspectives.

Traditionally the goal of development has been one of progress through economic growth. But prevailing economic approaches are at the heart of the problem. How then is sustainable development different? What is an appropriate economic approach?
Herman Daly takes on the economics of development by arguing that the goal should be societal improvement within the ecological carrying capacity, rather than growth. The objective should be to achieve a more equal distribution of social goods and improved quality of life: e.g., education, health services, housing, political involvement and power—without causing unsustainable resource consumption. Where growth means an increase in material accumulation—getting bigger—sustainable development means fulfillment of potential—getting better. Sustainable development is not sustained growth; it is “development without growth—that is without throughput growth beyond the regeneration and absorption capacities of the environment.” (Daly 1996: 13) The first aspect, throughput, is the flow of materials and energy through the human economy; the second aspect is ability of the environment to provide materials for our use and places and processes to handle our waste (Daly 1991).

In considering these ecological constraints, the neoclassical economic perspective would weaken Daly’s concept of sustainable development, by assuming an ever expanding economic pie created in part by natural capital—the resource stocks and waste sinks Daly refers to—which is replaceable with manufactured or created capital. This viewpoint is based in a belief that the invisible hand of the marketplace will cause price rises for scarce resources and trigger technological innovation to create substitutes.

It assumes that nature is highly resilient, made up of interchangeable parts, such that changes in the system (e.g., species diversity and population, physical structure, etc.) can be fixed, substituted for by new technology or ignored. Thus for example, sustainable development from this perspective would replace a natural wetland in one
place with a created one elsewhere and expect to achieve a comparable environmental
result.²

Daly would disagree. As an ecological economist, he would argue that natural
resources and manufactured capital are complements, with limited substitutability. The
result obtained through substitution is not comparable and in many cases not possible. It
is the 'ideology of death.' An ecological economic perspective sees the environment (or
human society) as an open, layered system with multiple components bound through a
complex array of linkages. It places humans in the context of nature, not outside. Rather
than resiliency, fragility is the norm as stresses on individual components accumulate,
placing the entire system at risk. A wetland is more than a wet spot in the path of a
highway, but a living interdependent community in which resilience is dependent on the
number, diversity and interaction of the species present, as well as in adjacent or
surrounding systems.

In answer to our first question then, the stronger approach of ecological
economics is how development can be sustainable. It argues against threatening the
stability of a system (human or ecological) or its component parts and acknowledges
uncertainty as a limit to technological intervention. As an economic approach for
sustainable development, it gets at the changes industrialized nations, whose consumption
of resources already exceeds sustainable ecological limits, must make in terms of
reducing resource use at home and abroad, as well as changes in manufacturing and
agriculture practices that must be undertaken. And it accounts for the externality costs
(pollution, remediation) of growth and the depreciation of natural capital.

² This approach also assumes that other forms of capital are substitutable, that for example you can replace
the cultural capital of the Cree Indians in the Hudson Bay with institutional capital and obtain a comparable
society with a comparable relationship with the environment (Berkes and Fast 1996)
The disagreement in perspective between neoclassical and ecological economics about how a system is understood to work, such that its future might be understood and predicted, underlies a second issue to be resolved in defining sustainable development. Neoclassical economics embraces a Newtonian paradigm which understands a system metaphorically as a machine that can be reduced through classification and aggregation to a set of component parts for which the causal links can be examined. The probability of what might happen to the system is based on the average behavior of the average components. The problem with this mechanistic approach is that it only works for systems at or close to equilibrium and misses the potential for evolution due to the "effects of non-average values — fluctuations — of variables and parameters, and second to change introduced by microscopic diversity" within the classification model (Allen 1988: 7).

The alternative begins with a recognition that human and ecological systems are open, not closed or isolated. Energy and matter flow through hierarchical, layered boundaries. Systems thinking gets away from simple causal relationships and away from looking at human and ecological systems in terms of component parts. Ecological economics finds its basis here. Thinking in terms of open systems challenges us to look not only at parts and how they are organized and function, but to look at how systems relate to another, as wholes and as parts. Relationships and interactions are emphasized, individual and multiple. Issues of scale (time and space) are raised along with the influence of negative and positive feedback loops, non-average behavior and microscopic diversity. Together these dynamics give a system the capacity for self-organization — to
learn, adapt and thus to evolve (Senge 1990). This is the appropriate context for sustainable development.

Differences in normative orientation also impact the operational meaning of sustainable development. Both neoclassical and ecological economics assume an anthropocentric utilitarian position that values the natural world not for itself, but for its services, e.g. the wetland as provider of clean water or scenic beauty. In a little collection of essays published fifty years ago, Aldo Leopold argued that a values orientation that considers humans at the center of the world and sees the world in terms of human needs and interests is at the heart of our inability to pursue sustainable development: “We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect” (Leopold 1949: 214).

Leopold argued that because development decisions are dominated by economic self-interest, this creates a situation which “tends to ignore, and thus eventually eliminate, many elements in the land community that lack commercial value, but are (as far as we know) essential to its healthy functioning. It assumes falsely, I think, that the economic parts of the biotic clock will function without the uneconomic part.” (Leopold 1949: 214) By challenging the anthropocentric view of “man [sic] the conqueror versus man [sic] the biotic citizen” and exhorting us to “quit thinking about decent land use as solely an economic problem” Leopold moves us closer to a normative basis for a stronger view of sustainable development. His recommendation for an environmental ethic is deceptively simple: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and
beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." (Leopold 1949: 224)

The Buddhist philosophy expressed by Thich Nhat Hanh, comes to Leopold’s recommendation from a different direction. In his view, humans are not just biotic citizens—there is no distinction between human and nature. Everything is related, past present and future. Through experiencing these connections we experience our oneness with the world:

The most important precept is to live in awareness, to know what is going on. To know what is going on, not only here, but there. For instance, when you eat a piece of bread, you may choose to be aware that our farmers, in growing the wheat, use chemical poisons a little too much. Eating the bread, we are somehow co-responsible for the destruction of our ecology...When we pick up the Sunday newspaper, for instance, we may be aware that it is a very heavy edition, maybe three or four pounds. To print such a paper, a whole forest may be needed. When we pick up the paper, we should be aware. If we are aware, we can do something to change the course of things... (Nhat Hanh 1987: 65, 66)

This is the essence of strong sustainable development. A view of the world that is not anthropocentric. A view of the world that is sensitive, engaged and caring and where everything we do in our every day life, what we wear, what we eat, what kind of home we have, has to do with the world. Everything is connected. Humans in relation to each other and the Earth in widening circles and chains of connections are intertwined and interdependent. Our actions toward each other and the environment, both near and far, reflect this basic condition.

Regardless of whether we choose the path of Leopold or Nhat Hanh, these are the directions our thinking about our selves, each other and our relation to the natural world need to take as we consider a framework for sustainable development. Ethics are a
screen for learning and action, whether coming from an ‘ought’ or from within. At minimum, an ethical understanding of sustainable development should help us do three basic things: It should enable us to 1) determine whose well-being needs to be considered, 2) resolve conflicts among moral principles and competing interests and 3) act in the now, in the context of a specific situation, while acknowledging the future.

As an applied concept, sustainable development fundamentally rethinks neoclassical economic assumptions from the perspective of ecological knowledge and system theory. It changes the predominant paradigm from ‘economic growth’ to a vision of development that protects and restores natural capital and services. In so doing it incorporates the precautionary principle given the uncertainty in scientific understanding of biophysical interactions and limits.

Sustainable development also relates economic to social development. Do jobs created in the community relate to the skills of residents? How does corporate relocation affect the social fabric of the community being abandoned and that of the new community? How does economic and environmental resource use enhance community life for all social groups? A sustainable social system ensures the health and security of community members and affords opportunity for personal development, engagement with others and participation in decision-making. The social system nurtures a community’s ability to foster change on its own behalf. Because community development is human-powered, the social system is the key to sustainable development, the people part of the whole picture.

Sustainable community development has at its core an “emphasis on developing appropriate civic capacity with which to improve the quality of life and the economic
viability” of communities, the “resources that enable people to improve the well-being of their communities.” (Ferguson and DeWitt 1994: 2) A sustainable social system must sustain participatory social practices, shared memory and knowledge, social learning, and foster relationships that facilitate communication and cooperation within communities, with other communities and other levels of society—this is the role of the community’s social capital in development.

Social Capital and Sustainable Community Development

Sustainable community development is based in the premise that citizens, businesses, organizations, institutions and government, in all their diversity of interests, can come together to articulate, then implement, a strategic vision for their future, one that balances economic, social and environmental needs (Colorado Forum 1996; Hart, 1995, 1998; Kline 1995; Redefining Progress, et. al. 1997; Sargent et. al. 1991; Sustainable Seattle 1998; Sustainable Community Roundtable 1995, 1997; Zachary, 1995). The ability to engage in community development, sustainable or otherwise, depends in large part upon the existence of social relationships or networks that enable community organization, problem solving and decision making (Flora and Flora 1993; Luloff 1990; Luloff and Swanson 1995; Putnam 1993; Wilkinson, 1991, 1995). And it depends on individual and institutional leadership, community building and resource mobilization skills (Gittell and Vidal 1998; Hobbs 1995; Israel and Beaulieu 1990; Keyes et. al. 1996; Luloff and Swanson 1995; Mulkey and Beaulieu 1995).

Altogether these capacities are found in a community’s social capital.

Sociologists, economists and political scientists have all had a hand in defining this type
of community capital. While the theoretical foundations derive from the work of Durkheim, Marx and Weber (Flora 1998; Portes 1998; Woolcock 1998) and the term is attributed to Jane Jacobs (1961), the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and American sociologist James Coleman laid the conceptual framework under development today (Flora 1998; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Portes and Landolt 2000). Bourdieu argued that social, economic and cultural capital were interlinked and that people purposefully invested in relationships that could bring them future benefit (Bourdieu 1986). He defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual and potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.” (1986: 248)

Coleman also defined social capital by its resource function: “It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors—whether persons or corporate actors—within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible.” (Coleman 1988: S98) Social capital is found in relationships which enable people to identify, mobilize and combine resources “to produce different system-level behavior” (Coleman 1988: S101), that is, to create change.

The importance of these personal relationships, especially those found in organizational and work networks is a critical element of social capital. Economist Mark Granovetter’s job search studies suggested that weak ties, as opposed to the strong ties of familial and friend relationships, are the most effective at connecting people and resources, because “those to whom we are weakly tied are more likely to move in circles
different from our own and thus will have access to information different from that which we receive.” (Granovetter 1973: 1371) Furthermore these connecting ties are social resources “embedded” in the social structure and are maintained by norms of trust and reciprocity (Granovetter 1973, 1985).

Where Bourdieu, Coleman and Granovetter focused on individual development that flows from social capital, the attention of scholars has more recently shifted discussion to its role in community development (Evans 1996; Portes and Landolt 2000; Ostrom 1996; Putnam 1993a, b; Woolcock 1998). At the community level, social capital includes the “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1993a: 35-6) and “the ability to marshal resources through social networks” (Portes and Landolt 2000: 546).

Social capital thus consists of the networks and competencies which enable people to effectively engage in community life. The concept includes institutional relationships and capacities as well as individual ones. As a resource, social capital facilitates civic engagement, the problem-solving ability of a community to make active connections between the community’s needs and the community’s physical, financial and human resources (i.e. other forms of capital), both internal and external. In other words social capital facilitates community development.

Moving beyond what social capital is, Putnam makes a number of claims which are key to understanding how social capital is a development resource:

- Social capital improves the “efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.” (Putnam 1993b: 167)
- Social capital is a “prerequisite” for the development of “effective public policy.” (Putnam 1993a: 42)
• Social capital “embedded in norms and networks of civic engagement seems to be a precondition for economic development, as well as for effective government.” (Putnam 1993a: 37)

• Social capital “enhances the benefits of investment” in other forms of capital. (Putnam 1995: 63)

However, just as there is empirical evidence that support these claims (Flora 1998; Gittell and Vidal 1998; Evans 1996; Putnam 1993a, b), there is also evidence that neither the existence nor the amount of social capital is a predictor of successful development initiatives (Flora 1998; Ostrom 1996, Portes Landholt 2000 and Woolcock 1998). Social capital is a crucial but enigmatic component of the development equation precisely because it can enhance, maintain or destroy physical and human capital. The challenge for development theorists and policy makers alike is to identify the mechanisms that will create, nurture, and sustain the types and combinations of social relationships conducive to building participatory societies, sustainable equitable economies and accountable developmental states (Woolcock 1998: 186).

Where Putnam asks: “What kinds of civic engagement seem most likely to foster economic growth?” (Putnam 1993b: 42), this research asks: What kind of civic engagement fosters sustainable community development? To answer we need to understand the ‘mechanisms’ whereby social capital becomes engaged in development, and most particularly, sustainable development.

One mechanism suggested by the literature is the role the civic infrastructure plays in enabling (or not) social capital to become developmentally active (Evans 1996; Flora and Flora 1993; Flora 1998; Fox 1996; Lam 1996, Woolcock 1998). Important variables include:
1. individual and institutional ability to deal with diverse ideas and groups and to manage conflict
2. diverse horizontal and vertical, internal and external community networks
3. open channels of communication
4. accessibility
5. a willingness by individuals and institutions to use their networks to mobilize needed resources

An effective civic infrastructure facilitates a ‘synergy’ between citizens and institutions (Evans 1996) or what Ostrom (1996) calls ‘co-production’ that enables the attainment of development objectives.

Other mechanisms are found within the structural character of social capital.

Based in an extensive review of the literature, Woolcock (1998) identifies four forms of social capital consisting of two distinct, yet complimentary social relations, embedded and autonomous, which operate at two different social levels, micro and macro:

1. Integration—embeddedness at the micro level consists of ‘intra-community ties’ (internal horizontal networks)
2. Synergy—embeddedness at the macro level refers to ‘state-society relations’ (internal vertical networks between constituents and institutions)
3. Linkage—autonomy at the micro level concerns ‘extra-community networks’ (networks between community groups)
4. Organizational Integrity—autonomy at the macro level involves ‘institutional capacity and credibility’

Woolcock theorizes that development proceeds from social capital when “people are willing and able to draw on nurturing social ties (i) within their local communities; (ii) between local communities and groups with external and more extensive social
connections to civil society; (iii) between civil society and macro-level institutions; and (iv) within corporate sector institutions” (Woolcock 1998: 186).

This research utilizes the civic infrastructure variables listed above (Evans 1996; Flora and Flora 1993; Flora 1998; Fox 1996; Lam 1996; Woolcock 1998) and those in the social capital model posited by Woolcock (1998) as analytical frames for understanding how social capital becomes engaged in sustainable community development.

Finally, not only must social capital be invested in sustainable development, like other forms of capital it must be strengthened and increased. Much like personal self-esteem and self-confidence, social capital is created through use. As Robert Putnam notes “stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. Successful collaboration in one endeavor builds connections and trust—social assets that facilitate future collaboration in other, unrelated tasks” (Putnam 1993a, 37).

Echoing Putnam’s assessment, Robert Bellah and his colleagues, in their study of American public life, Habits of the Heart, call attention to the importance of “practice” in building community skills (Bellah 1985: 254). Daniel Kemmis adds that the practice of civic skills must be place-centered and consciously pursued. “They do not seem to flourish automatically; they require human nurturing, forethought, and intention” (1990: 107). Individuals and institutions learn to engage social capital through the experience of a community issue.

This research examines one such experience.
Land Trusts and Sustainable Community Development

Land trusts are formally incorporated non-profit organizations formed to conserve natural and built resources. From the establishment of the first land trust in 1891 to the present these institutions represent a primarily private response to population growth and development (Gustanski 2000). The latest national census (2000) conducted by the Land Trust Alliance reported that 1263 local and regional land trusts were managing the protection of 6,225,225 acres of land, a 42% increase in numbers of trusts and a 226% increase since 1990 (Land Trust Alliance 2000). This phenomenal growth underscores their importance as an emerging institution in sustainable community development.

Table 1 illustrates the extent of land trust activity in New England.

Table 1. New England Land Trust Census 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th># local and regional trusts</th>
<th># acres protected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>70,361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>141,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>209,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>288,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>444,036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Land Trust Alliance 2000)

The kinds of resources these mostly small, local, volunteer organizations protect reveal the connection to community sustainability issues: wetlands (52%), river corridors (52%), watersheds/water quality (47%), farm/ranch land (46%), nature preserves (45%), other open spaces (43%), endangered species habitat (42%), scenic views (34%), recreational trails (27%), historic (28%), coastal resources (18%), timberland (14%), urban open space (10%) (Land Trust Alliance 2000). The list also demonstrates the
multiple objectives that land trust efforts serve, e.g., simultaneously conserving wetlands, preserving wildlife habitat, providing hiking trails and protecting water quality.

Land trusts typically form as a consequence of a development threat to a piece of property which would result in lost social or environmental benefits to a community and the desire to prevent that loss (Whittacker 1999). The growth in land trusts and land protection is a reaction to sprawl, rising property market values in urbanizing areas, changes in landowner plans/needs, increased environmental awareness and development pressures on undeveloped land (Gustanski 2000). This change agent, community action character testifies to their affinity to social movement organizations.

Reflecting this context, the case focus, the Rivervale Land Trust, was organized by

a group of local residents concerned about the potential loss of rural character and natural resource base in the Rivervale, Vermont area. This founding group of people recognized that Rivervale lay on the fringe of the high growth areas of Northwest Vermont and would eventually experience the impact of increased pressure on land resources. Hence, their objective was to maintain Rivervale's high quality of life through efforts to preserve and conserve significant parcels of land and participation in community affairs to encourage the maintenance of local natural heritage as this growth occurs (Rivervale Land Trust 1999).

People organize a land trust in order to have the institutional ability affect their situation, to raise money and make legal agreements to secure property through the acquisition of a conservation easement or outright ownership. As important is the ability to manage property in perpetuity to ensure the conditions of an easement are monitored and enforced, and the property is maintained and used as the original owner directed. This attribute distinguishes land trusts from citizen action groups which coalesce around a particular issue and disband once the issue is resolved. Because a land trust assumes
long term, legally binding stewardship responsibilities it must become a formal institution with a permanent interest and presence in the community.

The process of making land deals requires a capacity to (Endicott 1993; Dennis 1993):

1) negotiate among funders, landowners and other interested parties
2) build and work with partnerships of diverse organizations with diverse goals
3) leverage resources
4) maintain the goodwill of members, partners, landowners and the community.

This research examines the contribution of social capital to the development and exercise of these capabilities and the role of the civic infrastructure in the process.

The national census also reported that 72% of land trusts were involved in environmental education and 51% in local land use planning (Land Trust Alliance 2000). These findings point to the engagement of land trusts in the larger issues underlying the needs to which land protection is one solution. This factor extends the influence of the land trust beyond the parameters of a land deal to issues of community sustainability.

According to its mission statement, the Rivervale Land Trust characterizes itself as likewise engaged: “Neighbors working together to preserve the rural character and quality of life in Rivervale and its surrounding communities through land conservation, historic preservation, land stewardship, and community service and education” (Rivervale Land Trust 1999. The research explores the ways in which these commitments have been actualized over time and the connection to changes in community sustainability.
Given their concern for land and community, land trusts are most apt to engage issues related to land use and economic development. Table 2 organizes some of the sustainability practices that a land trust might influence along with related indicators.
Table 2. Indicators of Sustainable Community Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Issue</th>
<th>Anticipated Sustainability Practice</th>
<th>Potential Social, Economic and Ecological Links</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land development</td>
<td>Reduce amounts of land converted to impervious surfaces. Reduce wetland conversion.</td>
<td>water quality stream, lakes and wetland health open space landscape esthetics</td>
<td>Site review: road standards, lot coverage, parking, etc. Zoning changes: cluster, density, shoreline &amp; wetland setbacks, etc. Integrated decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Encourage agricultural land uses and sustainable practices.</td>
<td>food security local economics recreation human and ecological health</td>
<td>Agriculture supportive land use regulations Farm markets, U-Pick Land protection opportunities Tax policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Reduce land fragmentation</td>
<td>ecological health habitat biodiversity open space recreation</td>
<td>Identification and protection of critical natural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>Sustainable management</td>
<td>open space water quality habitat erosion stream and wetlands health</td>
<td>sustainable forestry practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space</td>
<td>Increase the amount of land protected from development</td>
<td>habitat recreation human and ecological health air and water quality livability</td>
<td>Protected land (conservation easement, development rights transfer, purchase) Changes to land use regulations Current use taxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Encourage public participation in and ownership of governance</td>
<td>Access Responsiveness Open communication Problem-solving trust</td>
<td>Forums and meetings Voter registration and voting Volunteer service Institutions: conservation commission, review boards, study committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Increase sense of and valuing of place Well-being</td>
<td>membership cohesion participation interaction</td>
<td>Networks Organizations Civility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>Encourage local business</td>
<td>employment opportunities for youth and adults</td>
<td>Zoning regulations Economic development policies and institutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Straussfogel and Becker 1996

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Were those associated with the Rivervale Land Trust the “people who have the power to change” their communities (Berry 1988: 14)? The people, who by becoming aware of the need to develop sustainably, “can do something to change the course of things” (Nhat Hanh 1987: 66)?

Perhaps. John Lofland in his guide to social movement organization research identifies key variables that influence the formation of civic action groups which aim to “challenge mainstream reality and seek to establish new and better ways of life” (1996: xiii). Besides the individual and community social capital factors discussed earlier, Lofland calls attention other sources of influence: changes in community character whether demographic, cultural, political, environmental, economic, etc., the availability of resources to support organizational development such as access to funds or meeting places, a perception of injustice, geographic proximity and social homogeneity, the ability of an individual to get involved given their life stage; occupation; etc., and a leader’s ability to frame an issue or to organize others.

These factors combined with those noted earlier are summarized in Table 3. Together they establish the theoretical basis for examining the engagement of social capital in the formation of the Rivervale Land Trust and subsequent collective and individual member efforts to achieve greater sustainability in the future development of their community.
Table 3. Theoretical construct of macro-level and micro-level variables influencing the engagement of social capital in sustainable community development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro-level Variables</th>
<th>Micro-level Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character changes: demographic, cultural, political, environmental, economic, etc. (Gustanski 2000; Lofland 1996)</td>
<td>Motivation: perception/recognition of threat from a macro-level situation. (Allen 1982; Allen 1988; Dyke 1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkage: extra-community external networks (Woolcock 1998)</td>
<td>Timing: personal ability of an individual to respond given their life stage; occupation; etc. (Lofland 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership: ability to frame an issue or to organize others. (Lofland 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civic action experience: successful collaboration on community issues. (Bellah 1985; Kemmis 1990; Lofland 1996; Putnam 1993a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of injustice: &quot;something is wrong and it does not have to be the way it is&quot;; sufficient reasons exist to change the situation. (Lofland 1996: 187)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in collective action: my action with yours will make a difference. (Lofland 1996)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

What we know evolves in response to new experiences, new information and new ways of thinking. Specialized knowledge derived from carefully designed empirical studies adds to the learning process through development of an ever-growing disciplinary body of research. It enables the replication of findings, extension of theories and development of new ones that seek to explain phenomenon. Specialized knowledge enlightens an understanding of ‘what is’. Because of a high level of credibility, research findings can be a basis for change. When passed on to community development practitioners, natural resource managers and policy makers this type of knowledge influences practice. When passed on to lay people it can influence personal decision-making and political action.

Social science research studies which add to specialized knowledge tend to be either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative research assumes an objective physical and social reality, that can be studied and understood. Implicit is the further assumption that social and physical reality displays constancy over spatial and temporal settings. This makes explanation through random sampling possible and the use of experimental methods that control for confounding influences appropriate. The ‘observed’ is assumed to be independent of the observer, meaning the observer can investigate a phenomenon
without influencing the observed or being influenced. Causality is understood from a linear perspective.

Qualitative research assumes a greater influence by humans in constructing social reality, the interplay of multiple variables in explaining social phenomenon and the existence of ascertainable, reasonably stable relationships among them. “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” Denzin and Lincoln (1994). “The researcher’s role is to gain a 'holistic' (systemic, encompassing, integrated) overview of the context under study” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 6. A focused and bounded case, rather than a sample population is the locus of study; methods are based on the analysis of data from observations, interviews, documents and archival records; results are reported in words. (Creswell 1998)

This is a qualitative study whose purpose is to examine and elaborate upon the theoretical constructs of social capital and its relationship to sustainable community development through the lens of lived experience. The research is structured as a case study of the interaction between institutions of municipal government, townspeople and a land trust over land use planning and development issues from 1960 to 2002, incorporating data from key informant interviews, town records and newspaper accounts.

**Research Method**

Qualitative data “are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events led to which consequences, and
derive fruitful integrations” (Miles and Huberman 1994: 1). A case study research method was selected to provide the opportunity for in-depth focus that could bring forward the voice of community and land trust members.

As defined by Yin (2003: 13) “a case study is an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” In considering the relationship between people, social capital, civic infrastructure and community change, not only is context as important as the phenomenon under investigation, it is difficult, if not impossible or appropriate to separate them. The need to limit the number of variables in experimental and survey designs, and to distinguish between phenomenon and context renders both less suitable to this task. To rely on a strictly historical strategy would fail to capture the contemporary nature of the investigation.

A case study is most suited to research that examines contemporary events where there is not a need for the researcher to control behavior. The appropriateness of a case study as the preferred research strategy for this situation is further strengthened by the assessment that it (Yin 2003: 14)

• copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result

• relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result

• benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide collection and analysis.

The aim of this study is to describe the links and relationships among issues as opposed to determining their rate of occurrence. As Yin states, a case study is suited to research which will “expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization)” rather than
“enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)” (2003: 10) The goal is to produce an intensive study of a community phenomenon, processes, events and people. Consequently case studies are most appropriate to “how” and “why” research questions (Yin 2003) as proposed herein.

**Design Principles**

To assure the quality of empirical research, the case protocol developed from four commonly accepted design principles: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Kidder and Judd 1986; Yin 2003) Construct validity was assured by 1) specifying the types of community sustainability changes to be studied, 2) ensuring that the selected measurements were relevant and related, 3) the use of multiple sources of data; and 4) maintaining an accurate data record. (Creswell 1998; Yin 2003)

As a descriptive study, the research does not propose to determine whether one event lead to directly to another event. Consequently the need to assure the internal validity of causal inferences or claims is not applicable. (Yin 2003)

External validity concerns the generalizability of the study to other cases. In this instance the aim is to generalize the results to theory, to make an “analytical generalization.” The study is explicitly grounded in the literature and is extended to other cases through use of a within-case historical perspective.

Reliability of the procedures used in the study was assured through a Case Study Protocol developed from the dissertation proposal, which introduced the case and its theoretical foundation, and includes the conceptual framework, research goal and questions, case selection criteria and data collection and management procedures.
Case Study Protocol

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework was derived from the literature to graphically depict the key factors in the case study and the connections among them (see Figure 1). Development of the framework served to both focus and bound the research. It enabled the identification and sorting of variables and their relationships in order to determine which were the most important and what information needed to be gathered and assessed.

An historical approach was used to enable within-case comparisons of community attitudes and actions vis-à-vis land use planning. The study examines factors leading to the adoption of the community's first zoning ordinance in the late sixties and concludes in 2002 with the adoption of a significantly revised master plan. Concentrated attention is placed on the parallel development of the local land trust and its host community from the inception of the land trust in 1987 to the present in terms of development attitudes, policies, initiatives and institutional change. Fifteen years is a sufficiently long time period for any policy change related to the land trust to have occurred (Sabatier 1993).
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Purpose: to study how community agency supported by social capital invested in a self-organizing community institution can facilitate a change to sustainability in a particular place as shown through the experience of a New England town and its locally based land trust.

Time period: 1960 to 2002

Location: Rivervale, VT Pop. 4092


Research Goal and Questions

The goal of the research was to understand the contribution social capital makes to sustainable community development. The conceptual framework (Figure 1) illustrates how the study would shed empirical light on process: initiation, organization, implementation, institutionalization and provide insight to how a network of people and resources is mobilized and institutionalized to direct development efforts in a community towards sustainability. Research questions (Figure 2) followed from the framework.

Figure 2. Research Questions

A. Primary Research Question: How did social capital become developmentally active in civic efforts to shift a rural community toward sustainability?

B. Secondary Research Questions:

1. How was social capital used in the formation and collective actions of the land trust?
   
a. Organizational process
   1). How did community and individual factors precipitate the formation of a land trust?
      (a). How did macro level factors contribute?
         (1) Social: population growth, density, in-migration
         (2) Economic: agriculture and forestry industries, prosperity, growth, village businesses
         (3) Political: land use regulations, tax structures, participation
         (4) Leadership: institutional, organizations
         (5) Identity: sense of place
         (6) Environment: type, changes, impacts
      (b). How did micro level factors contribute?
         (1) Motivation: Perception/recognition of threat from macro-level situation
         (2) Communication/information sources: formal/informal systems
         (3) Connections: Personal ties; external networks; willingness to mobilize
         (4) Timing: personal ability of individual to respond, e. g. life stage; occupation; etc.
         (5) Leadership/Skills: process, e. g. ability to frame an issue; organize others; legal; etc.
         (6) Affiliation/organizational experience

2). What kinds of people initiated, organized, lead and supported the land trust?
3). Why was the land trust seen as needed by founding members?
4). What resources/civic skills were needed and how were they obtained?
5). How were relationships and networks used?
   
b. Collective actions
   1). What actions/projects were undertaken?
   2). How/why were these actions selected?
   3). How were issues communicated?
   4). How were relationships and networks used?
   5). What resources/civic skills were needed and how were they obtained?
   6). Did the land trust change? If so, how and why?
   7). In what ways were members/supporters empowered by their association with the land Trust?

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2. How did the land trust affect its host community, its institutions, its governance, and its policies?
   a. Community Sustainability Initiatives
      1). What initiatives to integrate sustainability in community development occurred?
      2). How were resources, abilities and civic skills obtained?
      3). How did land trust projects, members, relationships and networks relate?
      4). What is the extent of civic engagement by the land trust institution and individual members?
   b. Sustainable Community Development Indicators
      1). What changes in community attitudes, policies, or infrastructure indicative of sustainability occurred?
      2). How did land trust projects, members, relationships and networks relate?

3. How was the civic infrastructure involved?
   a. responsive to citizen input?
   b. able to deal with diverse ideas and groups?
   c. willing to mobilize needed resources?
   d. open in communication?
   e. accessible?
   f. credible?

Case Selection

Vermont was selected as the study location because of its history of state land use planning. The Town of Rivervale was selected as the research site because it met the following characteristics:

1. a rural community of 5,000 or fewer residents
2. commuting workforce
3. vehicular transportation infrastructure
4. significant development pressure
5. defined village or town center surrounded by a rural landscape with significant natural resources
6. a local land trust

The site was identified following a review of land trust locations in the state. The researcher confirmed the appropriateness of Rivervale based on personal knowledge of the town gathered from 15 years of informal observations of the community. Her sister’s family has lived in the community for 23 years.

Data collection, analysis and management procedures

The name of the community and all identifying characteristics: geographic location, the land trust, newspaper, natural features, community buildings, development
issues and projects, has been fictionalized in the case study, along with names of those who participated in case interviews. Because the study is a published document and reports on contemporary people and their on-going community efforts, the researcher took care not to destroy or disrupt internal or external social networks, not to influence community issues or relationships, nor to interfere in on-going actions to create change by not allowing recognition of those interviewed nor the community. Confidentiality agreements signed by participants assured anonymity and use of pseudonyms for the person and the town. *Worlds Apart* (Duncan 1998), a case study examination of poverty in America, served as a model for assuring that the identity of the community would remain confidential as did the procedures recommended by Robert Weiss (1994).

Table 4 summarizes the relationship between theory, research questions, data sources and data analysis.
Table 4. Research Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro-level Variables</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>networks. (Woolcock</td>
<td>and networks used?</td>
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<td># 1. a. 1). (b). (3); 1. a. 4); 1. b. 4)</td>
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<td>Interviews Archival data Newspaper accounts Land trust records</td>
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<td>Civic action experience: successful collaboration on community issues. (Bellah 1985; Kemmis 1990; Lofland 1996; Putnam 1993a)</td>
<td>#1. b. 1)-7). What collective action were taken, how selected, how communicated, how were networks used, how were resources obtained, how did the land trust change, how were people empowered?</td>
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<td>Interviews Newspaper accounts Land trust records</td>
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</table>
Data collection began with archival sources. A review of town histories helped identify major periods of town development. Town reports and town meeting minutes from 1936-2002 were consulted to capture the post World War II character of the community and follow its evolution to the 21st century in terms of leadership, infrastructure and governance issues. This information was supplemented by Selectboard minutes from 1960 through the present. For all sources, attention was placed on tracking action and leadership which moved the community towards or away from sustainability.

Newspaper accounts gave context to and elaboration of the town record. Special attention was given to a local paper which began publishing in 1984. To ensure a complete contextual perspective, rather than utilize a key word search, an issue by issue, page by page review of the local paper was conducted.

Rivervale Land Trust records, e.g. newsletters, by-laws, minutes, were consulted for information regarding leadership within the organization and the community, involvement in community initiatives, mode of operation, mission, projects, networks and resources.

Data from these sources was recorded in a master document, then organized into a Rivervale Event Chronology: 1940 to 2002, a Rivervale Planning and Zoning History: 1959 to 2002, a list of Rivervale Officials: 1980-2002 and a list of Land Trust Founders and Board members: 1987-2002. This work provided the researcher with a sense of
issues, events, attitudes, actors and chronology from which to identify those to interview and to conduct interviews.

Three sets of interview candidates were identified. One included people active in civic affairs in the 60's through 1986, the pre-land trust period; a second included people engaged in civic affairs during the land trust period, 1987-2002; a third included land trust founding members still resident in the community and members of the current board. Of the 20 interviewees, fifteen people were associated with the land trust; 5 had no land trust affiliation. Of the nine people who were born in Vermont, five were Rivervale natives. Regards age, eleven interviewees were in the 40's, four in the 50's, 1 in the sixties, 1 in the 70's and three in the 80's. All were married and all but one had children. Occupational backgrounds included two college professors, two doctors, three builders, an administrative assistant, a computer scientist, two community development planners, a copywriter, a banker, an environmental planner, three business persons (all with agricultural connections), a daycare provider, a school administrator and a public works director. Of the five people who were currently retired, one was not active in the community.

Six interviewees had served on the Selectboard, six on the Planning Commission, three on the Conservation Commission, three on the Recycling Committee, two on the School Board, one on the Recreation Commission, one on the Zoning Board of Adjustment, one on the Development Review Board, one on the Economic Development Committee and one on the Recreation Path Committee. Seven had served on multiple boards. Four people, three with land trust affiliations, had never been involved on town boards. In addition to formal public service, interviewees had been active in various
town study committees (6), Master Plan committees (6), Historic Society (5), non-profit
town newspaper (4), Rescue Squad (2), Women's Group (1) and the Regional Planning
Commission (1). All but three people had multiple town board and organizational
involvements. Only two people, one a land trust board member, had no official volunteer
involvement on town boards or organizations.

Land trust interviews included ten current board members, of whom three were
founding members, two former board members, and one additional founder and two
members who had never served on the board.

Interviews with land trust members were arranged by telephone after a letter was
sent to the board introducing the research and the researcher and seeking their
participation. A confirming e-mail followed each conversation. Non-land trust members
were contacted by telephone and given a brief explanation to the research, the researcher
and why the person came to be selected. Everyone who was contacted agreed to
participate. Interviews were conducted at locations deemed most convenient to the
interviewee: homes, workplaces, restaurants, town offices. Prior to beginning the
interview, the purpose and nature of the study was again explained, and interviewees
signed confidentiality agreements as per UNHIRB procedure (see Appendix). Interviews
ranged from an hour to ninety minutes each.

Three interview guides (Seidman1998) were prepared for use as a checklist to
direct the conversation towards study content (see Figure 3). One interview guide was
for land trust founding members, one was for current board members and one was for
community leaders not associated with the land trust. If a person fit more than one
category, the relevant guides were merged.

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The objective of the interviews was to understand the experience of townspeople and the meaning they made of their experience (Seidman 1998; Rubin and Rubin 1995). A distinction was made between the questions which guided the research and questions which guided the interviews. Interview questions were designed to elicit data that would enlighten the research inquiry.

Care was taken to pose questions that would not lead the interviewee to a particular answer. The intent was to create a free-flowing, yet focused and probing environment wherein interviewees were encouraged to speak freely and to raise related or additional issues (Rubin and Rubin 1995). The assurance of anonymity and confidentiality helped create an atmosphere of trust and openness.

Interviews were taped and notes were taken during the conversation to help keep the researcher focused and to ensure against recording failures. Following each interview a memo of key points, avenues of further inquiry, insights and reflective comments was prepared. The tape was replayed immediately following the interview to identify the possibility of a recording failure, to stimulate the researcher’s thinking about the study and to prepare for subsequent interviews (Lofland and Lofland 1995).

Figure 3. Interview Guides
Guide 1. Land Trust Founding Member

Name: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________
Research/Interviewer introduction: ____________________________
Consent form signed: ____________________________

A. Community identity: What is your personal tie to Rivervale?
1. How long have you lived in Rivervale?
2. If not a local, where are you from? When did you move here? Why?
B. Process: Tell me the story of how the land trust started. [Discussion of issues, parties, key individuals, time frame, actions, town officials/boards involvement, community support/resources/skills needed, how obtained]
1. What lead to the formation of the land trust? What were the background issues? What parties were involved? What were their positions/attitudes? What happened?
2. How/Why did you get involved? How did you know what was happening?
3. If an individual involved you, what did they do to get you involved? Did you involve someone else? If so, why and what did you do to get them involved?
4. How did you come to decide that a land trust should be formed?
5. What kinds of resources, assistance and or expertise did you need in the beginning? How were these obtained?

C. Collective actions
1. Tell me about the projects the land trust has undertaken over the years. [Discussion of issues, parties, time frame, actions, town officials/boards involvement, community support/resources/skills needed, how obtained]
2. What was your role or contribution?
3. How does the land trust decide what projects to undertake?
4. Has the land trust changed over time? If so, how?
5. What has remained the same?

D. Personal contribution
1. How much time did (do) you put into the land trust? Doing what?
2. How/why were (are) you able to participate?
3. What skills and or resources did (do) you bring to the organization?

E. Community involvement: What is your history of community involvement?
1. Before the land trust on what community boards or organizations had you participated? [were these in Rivervale?]
2. What was the extent of your involvement? [leader, bystander, active etc.]

F. Community issues
1. What are the biggest issues facing Rivervale? [elaborate]
2. What initiatives has the town taken (or tried to take) in response to those issues? [what, when, outcomes]
3. Besides the land trust projects we have discussed, has the land trust gotten involved in these issues or town initiatives? As an organization? Informally? As individuals?

G. Land trust contribution
1. How would you describe the influence (informal and formal), if any, of the land trust in/on the community? [culture, governance, institutions, attitudes, policies, etc.]
2. What about individual members and supporters: Have they influenced the community? If so, who and how?
3. How have you benefited from your involvement?
4. Does the land trust enable you to do anything that you couldn’t do without it? Is this what you expected?

Profile Information:
Age: 20's______ 30's______ 40's______ 50's______ 60's______ 70's______ 80's______
Family Status: Married?______ Divorced?______ Single?______
Kids?______ Age (s)?______
Occupation:________________
Guide 2. Land Trust Board Member

Name:________________________________________
Date:________________________________________
Research/Interviewer introduction:________________
Consent form signed:___________________________

A. Community connection
1. How long have you lived in Rivervaie?
2. If not a native, Where did you move from? Why?

B. Land trust involvement
1. Before getting involved in the land trust, what did you know about the organization? Where did you get your information?
2. Why did you get involved with the land trust? When was this?
3. Did someone ask you to get involved? If so who? What did they do?
4. Have you involved someone else? If so, who, and what did you do to get them involved?
5. Tell me about the land trust board? How do you come to be on the board? How long have you served? In what capacities?
6. Are general members involved in the organization? In what ways? How do you communicate with members?

C. Collective actions
1. Tell me about the land trust projects in which you have been involved. [Discussion of issues, time frame, parties, actions, town officials/boards involvement, community support/resources/skills needed, how obtained]
2. What was your role or contribution?
3. How does the land trust decide what projects to undertake?
4. Has the land trust changed since you've been a member? If so, how?
5. What has remained the same?

H. Development issues
1. What are the biggest issues facing Rivervaie?
2. Has the town taken (or tried to take) initiatives in response to those issues? [what, when, outcomes]
3. Besides the land trust projects we have discussed, has the land trust gotten involved in these issues or town initiatives? Formally as an organization? Informally? As individuals?

I. Personal connection
1. How much time do you put into the land trust?
2. What do you think enables you to be able to participate to this degree?
3. What skills and or resources do you bring to the organization?
4. I’d like to shift the subject to the interpersonal dynamics of the land trust and ask you to characterize your relationship with other land trust members, especially those on the board. Are there any with whom you get together socially? Is your relationship mostly in the context of land trust business?

J. Land trust contribution
1. How would you describe the influence (informal and formal), if any, of the land trust in/on the community? [culture, governance, institutions, attitudes, policies, etc.]
2. What about individual members and supporters: Have they influenced the community? If so, who and how?
3. Does the land trust enable you to do anything that you couldn't do without it? Is this what you expected?
4. Have you benefited from your involvement? If so, how?

K. Community involvement
1. Before joining the land trust in what community activities, boards or organizations had you participated? [were these in Rivervaie?]
2. What was the extent of your involvement? [leader, by-stander, active etc.]
3. Since becoming involved in the land trust, in what town boards or community groups have you participated? Have any been elected positions?

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Profile Information:
Age: 20’s ______ 30’s ______ 40’s ______ 50’s ______ 60’s______ 70’s______ 80’s______
Kids? ______ Age(s)? ______
Occupation: _______________________

Name: ________________________________________
Position: _______________________________________
Current? ______ Former? ______ When? _____
Address: _______________________________________
E-mail: _______________________________________
Date: _______________________________________
Research/Interviewer introduction: ______________
Consent form signed: _________________________

A. Community identity: What is your personal tie to Rivervale?
1. How long have you lived in Rivervale?
2. If not a local, where are you from? When did you move here? Why?

B. Community involvement: What is your history of community involvement?
1. Before becoming a __________________ in what community activities, boards or organizations
   had you participated? [were these in Rivervale?]
2. What was the extent of your involvement? [leader, by-stander, active etc.]
3. How long have you been a member of the __________________________________________
4. Have you any connection to the Rivervale Land Trust?

C. Development issues
1. If former community leader, what were the issues you faced in your tenure? What happened?
   Who was involved?
2. What are the biggest issues facing Rivervale? [elaborate]
3. Does your board have any responsibility to deal with these issues?
4. What initiatives has the town taken (or tried to take) in response to those issues? [what, when,
   resources needed, outcomes]
5. Have townspeople been supportive of town initiatives?
4. Have any of the Rivervale Land Trust projects related to your board? [which ones, how]
5. How would you describe the influence, informal and formal, if any, of the land trust in/on the
   community? [culture, governance, institutions, attitudes, policies, etc.]

Profile Information:
Age: 20’s ______ 30’s ______ 40’s ______ 50’s ______ 60’s______ 70’s______ 80’s______
Kids? ______ Age(s)? ______
Occupation: _______________________

Complete verbatim transcriptions of the tape recordings were prepared by the researcher, providing invaluable familiarity with the data. Only “um’s” and “ah’s” and
other colloquial speech such as “you know” or “gonna”, unrelated to context or meaning were edited.

Using HyperResearch, a qualitative software program, transcripts were coded to link interview statements to study concepts and enable data to be grouped and sorted for analysis. (Table 5)

**Table 5. Code Format**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro-level Variables</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Code Reference</th>
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<tbody>
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<td># 1. a. 1) (a) How did macro level factors contribute to the formation of the land trust?</td>
<td>Effect of newcomers Community factions Noticeable community change Rivervale history Old guard High School regionalization Effect of mandates Interstate Town meeting 60's Town administrator Village town merger Conflict over land use planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic infrastructure: responsiveness, accessibility, institutional capacity and integrity. (Evans 1996; Flora and Flora 1993; Flora 1998; Fox 1996; Lam 1996; Lofland 1996; Woolcock 1998)</td>
<td># 3. How was the civic infrastructure (CI) involved?</td>
<td>CI accessibility CI controversy CI responsiveness Civic involvement Civic recruitment Community civility Community controversy First zoning ordinance Participation on town committees Pressing issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting resources: funds, meeting places, etc. (Lofland 1996)</td>
<td>#’s 1. a. 4); 1. b. 5); 2. a. 2). What resources were needed and how were they obtained?</td>
<td>LT resources used Community communication resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic proximity and social homogeneity: where people live, interact, socio-economic characteristics. (Lofland 1996)</td>
<td># 1. a. 2). What kinds of people initiated, organized, lead and supported the land trust?</td>
<td>Community membership Network connection LT member network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precipitating events: focusing crises and incidents. (Gustanski 2000; Lofland 1996; Whittacker 1990)</td>
<td># 1. a 1). How did community and individual factors (system feedback) precipitate the formation of a land trust?</td>
<td>LT first meeting LT precipitating event LT member motivation for joining land trust Cumberland Farms ARCO</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Synergy: citizen and institutional collaboration. (Evans 1996; Lofland 1996; Ostrom 1996; Woolcock 1998)</td>
<td>#2. In ways did the land trust affect its host community, its institutions, its governance, and its policies?</td>
<td>Dublin Interchange RCRG Chinburg Town Center Town meeting Town planning LT and advocacy LT awareness in the community LT contribution to community LT identity in the community LT influence LT legitimacy and credibility LT relationship with town LT success Monitor Barn River gorge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkage: extra-community external networks. (Woolcock 1998)</td>
<td>#1.a. 5); 1. b. 4); 2. a. 3); 2.b. 2). How were relationships and networks used?</td>
<td>LT resources used RCRG Chinburg Town Center Town planning ARCO</td>
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<td>#1.a. 1). (b). (2) How did micro level factors contribute to the formation of the land trust?</td>
<td>Community communication resource Community social capital resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections: personal and external networks that enable community organization, problem solving and decision making. (Flora and Flora 1993; Lofland 1996; Luloff 1990; Luloff and Swanson 1995; Putnam 1993; Wilkinson 1991, 1995)</td>
<td>#1.a. 1). (b). (3); 1.a. 4); 1.b. 4) How did micro level factors contribute to the formation of the land trust?</td>
<td>LT networks LT member recruitment LT member's contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment: willingness to use connections for social change. (Coleman 1988; Portes and Landolt 2000; Woolcock 1998)</td>
<td>#1.a. 1). (b). How did micro level factors contribute to the formation of the land trust?</td>
<td>LT member's contribution LT member personal benefit from LT involvement LT institutionalization LT culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and institutional leadership, community building and resource mobilization skills. (Gittell and Vidal 1998; Hobbs 1995; Israel and Beaulieu 1990; Keyes et. al. 1996; Luloff and Swanson 1995; Mulkey and Beaulieu 1995)</td>
<td>#1.a. 1). (b). How did micro level factors contribute to the formation of the land trust?</td>
<td>LT strength LT member skills LT member role LT project LT project selection LT strategic planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1.a. 4). What resources/civic skills were needed and how were they obtained?</td>
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<td>LT connection to personal life Personal benefit from community involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership: ability to frame an issue or to organize others. (Lofland 1996)</td>
<td># 1. a. 1). (b). How did micro level factors contribute to the formation of the land trust?</td>
<td>LT leader LT founding member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civic action experience: successful collaboration on community issues. (Bellah 1985; Kemmis 1990; Lofland 1996; Putnam 1993a)</td>
<td>#’s 1. b. 1.), 7). What collective action were taken, how selected, how communicated, how were networks used, how were resources obtained, how did the land trust change, how were people empowered?</td>
<td>First community involvement LT member civic engagement LT member empowerment Prior to LT civic engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of injustice: &quot;something is wrong and it does not have to be the way it is&quot;; sufficient reasons exist to change the situation. (Lofland 1996: 187)</td>
<td># 1. a. 1). (b). How did micro level factors contribute to the formation of the land trust? # 3. How was the civic infrastructure involved?</td>
<td>LT and advocacy LT member motivation LT precipitating event LT role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in collective action: my action with yours will make a difference. (Lofland 1996)</td>
<td># 1. a. 1). (b). How did micro level factors contribute to the formation of the land trust? 3. How was the civic infrastructure involved?</td>
<td>LT and advocacy LT member empowerment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To make the connection back to theory, data from all sources were ordered into analytical frames derived from the literature. These took the form of a Theory table, a Civic Infrastructure table and a Forms of Social Capital table. This material is found in Chapter 5.

Town master plans and land use regulations adopted by the community were examined as principal policy documents related to sustainability. An Indicators of Sustainable Community Development table was developed to assess findings. It is reported in Chapter 5.

Information was distilled into a large visual display that allowed the researcher to ‘see’ the mindfulness of the data (Miles and Huberman 1994). The data display formed 55
the basis for thinking about, organizing and writing the case study report (Chapter 4) and enabled the researcher to draw the conclusions presented in Chapter 5.

To summarize, data were analyzed and organized to

1) Tell the story of what happened. (Chapter 4)
2) Describe the actions and relationships among individuals and institutions engaged in the formation of the land trust, its projects and civic efforts to achieve environmental, economic, and social balance in development decision-making. (Chapter 4)
3) Identify forms of social capital using Woolcock's framework and examine how they were engaged. (Chapter 5)
4) Assess the role of the Civic Infrastructure in enabling social capital to become developmentally active. (Chapter 5)
5) Evaluate the community's progress towards sustainability. (Chapter 5)
6) Assess the role of a land trust and its members as a system changing variable—a self-organized institutional response to the concerns of citizens to the unsustainable development of their community. (Chapter 5)
7) Clarify the conceptual relationship between community development, sustainable development and social capital. (Chapter 5)
8) Provide lessons learned for strengthening the role of local land trusts in sustainable community development. (Chapter 5)
9) Present recommendations for further research (Chapter 5)

In the case study report, Chapter 4, quotations from interviews are presented in italicized text. Quotes were cut and pasted into the text directly from coded transcripts. The quote editing protocol follows a standardized versus a preservationist approach (Blauner 1987). To the degree that they had no effect on the interviewee's meaning, repeated words or colloquial phrases used by the interviewee to find his or her train of thought were changed (e.g. "kinda" to "kind of") or eliminated. Brackets "[ ]" signal the insertion of missing words by the researcher to help make a person's meaning clear. Where sentences were omitted to achieve a more succinct statement, an ellipse is used. Interviewer questions are not included to improve the flow and readability of the text and to allow the interviewee's voice to tell his or her story (Weiss 1994).
Newspaper and other citations from archival data are reported in quotation marks. Citations include the author's original emphasis whether underlinings, italics or capital letters. Missing copy is indicated by ellipse marks. As noted earlier newspaper names have been fictionalized to preserve community anonymity. Other data sources are identified by generic names, e.g. Town Meeting Report or Land Trust Newsletter.
CHAPTER 4

RIVERVALE CASE STUDY REPORT

Reader’s note: This chapter presents research findings in a narrative format. To allow the voice of townspeople tell their story, quotes from the interview database are integrated into the narrative and presented in italic script. Excerpts from documents and newspapers are reported in quotation marks. The relationship of townspeople to the land trust is indicated in a footnote at the first mention of his or her name. Professional and other personal characteristics are not disclosed in the interest of protecting the individual’s identity.

The context for examining the community’s progress towards sustainable development is its attitudes and actions regarding land use planning and regulation. Beginning with an introduction to the community and an early historical overview, the narrative follows the development of the community’s first land use planning regulation in the late sixties and concludes in 2002 with the adoption of a significantly revised town master plan. Concentrated attention is placed on the parallel development of a land trust and its host community from the inception of the land trust in 1987 to the present in terms of development policies, initiatives and institutional change. The narrative describes the process whereby social capital is converted into other forms of community capital in order to change a community’s path towards a more sustainable future.

Rivervale, Vermont is located in the western foothills of the Green Mountains, between a large metropolitan area located to the west and two smaller economic centers
to the east. An interstate highway, a state highway and a railroad bisect the town east to west. Rivervale’s approximately 35 square miles are generally hilly, with elevations of more than 1000’ and slopes in excess of 15%. Two rivers flow through the community, one of which is characterized by significant floodplains. Eighteen percent of the town’s dwelling units are located in a densely settled village spanning one of the rivers. About 80% of the landscape is forested. Agricultural uses predominate in riverside floodplains.

The population grew 10% in the last decade to 4000 people, slowing from an 18% increase in the 1980’s and a 40% increase in the 1970’s both of which had exceeded county rates. The current rate of growth is projected to continue for the next twenty years. In the same three decades housing stock grew by 63% and 39%, again outpacing county growth, slowing to 10% from 1990-2000.

Ninety-five percent of the workforce commutes to out of town employment. Median household income of $57,750 is higher than its host county or the state. While employment in agricultural and forestry increased from 1.2% of the workforce to 4.3% from 1980 to 1990, the property tax list indicates a decrease in agricultural land uses from 7.6% in 1980 to 1.1% in 1998 and an accompanying decrease in forest uses from 2.4% to 1.3%. Pressure to change land use comes primarily from suburban development spreading outward from nearby urban economic centers. The town’s land use policies and regulations determine how change will influence the community’s social, economic and ecological resources.

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^ Statistical information in this section is from the Rivervale 2002 Town Plan and is based on Census data and the Rivervale Grand list. Maps are located in the Appendix.
Historical background to 1940

Rivervale's history and development has to do with transportation systems... four systems; river, turnpike in 1812, railroad in 1849, interstate in 1964. (Andrew*)

Indigenous people made temporary settlements in the area, using the two main river systems for hunting and trading. During the 17th and 18th centuries waterways and trails served as paths for French and Indian raiding parties. Chartered in 1794, Rivervale pioneers settled in the hills and flats on the south side of the largest river. The economy changed from subsistence farming, to wool production in the 1820’s though 1860’s. Commerce was aided by the development of a turnpike that went through the town and linked to a canal system in the nearby lakeside city. From there goods were shipped to New York City, other parts of the country and into Canada. With the coming of the railroad in 1849 farms transitioned to value-added dairy. Supported by telegraph connections made the same year and by water power, a village residential and business center developed in the flat land on the north side of the river. Village factories produced cheese and butter for rail shipment to markets in Montreal and Boston. Forest resources were harvested using clear cut methods; the best trees were exported for lumber and the remainder burned to make potash. At the turn of the century farms again transitioned, this time to fluid milk.

Eight years after celebrating the new century, a devastating fire destroyed much of the village commercial center. Disaster struck again as three days of non-stop rain in November 1927 triggered severe flooding, exacerbated by forest practices of the 1800’s

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*Andrew is a founding member of the land trust.
that had left Rivervale’s steep sloped countryside stripped of vegetation. The depression took a further toll on community well-being.

**1940's and 50's Post War Stability**

By the late 1930’s the town was in an economic decline that would last until the 1950’s. At this juncture in the town’s history, the community looked to residential growth as a way to renewed prosperity. A compelling invitation was extended in the 1940 Town report:

> Along the river are large farms which are well kept and add to the beauty of the wondrous scenery through the valley. Rivervale also has two small lakes which add to its natural beauty and would make ideal places for summer homes. We have wonderful school facilities and churches of both Protestant and Catholic faiths. Altogether Rivervale is an ideal place for anyone to locate and make his permanent home where homes are inexpensive and rents are low.

Since incorporating as a town, taxpayers met annually in a town meeting to discuss what services would be provided and at what cost, and determine how they wanted their community regulated. By the mid 40’s the town was spending tax dollars on the basics: road, snow removal, school, poor relief, cemetery, library, police and fire. Day to day town governance was principally the job of three elected Selectboard members and the Town Clerk and was conducted with little public scrutiny. *Back in the days when I was in school like in the 30's and 40's, they used to have the meetings for the Selectboard or road commissioner or whatever group it was, they had them in their own homes! Uncle Asa had all the road commissioner work in his desk in his bedroom. All*
those papers were kept in the bottom drawer, all his work orders, all his purchases. He just had to sign them, fill them out and give them to the Selectboard. (John^)

Town concerns begin to change with the end of WW II and a return to peacetime living. Town meeting reports from the late 40’s and into the 50’s show townspeople raising new issues: sewerage dumping into the river, drinking water quality, school crowding, recreation. Articles placed on the town warrant to exempt new houses from paying a full share of real estate taxes are consistently passed. In this period, townspeople appointed school study committees, modestly expanded school facilities and defeated efforts to build a regional high school.

In 1955 voters shifted toward regional economic development as a resource for employment and property tax relief by approving a tax assessment to support the Greater Region Industrial Corporation. Expansion of town services into recreation was adopted as voters joined with three other towns to develop a town beach. (1956 Town Report)

1960’s Change Rivervale

Meanwhile, outside the town’s boundaries two significant events occurred that helped precipitate a development boom in the state that would change more than a hundred years of relative population stability. First, In 1957, IBM opened a new manufacturing plant within commuting distance of Rivervale and quickly became Vermont’s largest private employer. Growth pressure is soon felt as employees begin locating in Rivervale. “We are practically at our limit in the number of students for our

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^John has no land trust affiliation.

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present building and the census for the next three years show an increase based on the present enrollment without any growth figured for Rivervale” (School Warrant 1960).

Second, on October 30, 1964 the Governor and other state and federal dignitaries joined with the Selectboard in a ribbon cutting ceremony for the town’s exit on the newly completed interstate highway. The photograph featured prominently on the cover of the 1965 Town Report, because despite cutting the town in half and disrupting several farm operations, development of the Interstate had been welcomed.

The most obvious result of both events is a 75% surge in the town’s population by the end of the decade. *Everything was coming in at once...When IBM came into Essex it meant a lot more development out here. That's when you got all the new people coming in. And the highway. It all came in about the same time. Those are the years you began to see all the changes.* (John)

One of the first significant changes to the community came a few weeks after the exit opening ceremony. In October 1964 a ten year debate over whether or not the town should join a regional high school district came to a head. A special town meeting to decide the issue culminated in a favorable vote for a union school, immediately followed by a petition of 5+% of the voters to rescind. The State Board of Education upheld the vote and the union school went forward (Town Report 1965).

In part the decision to support the union school resulted from another new phenomenon: policy mandates from higher levels of government. *A lot of it had to do with new rules and regulations coming from the state primarily. You had to provide services that these small high schools weren't able to. Mainly the curriculum. You had to have certain things for science; you had to provide industrial arts, home economics,*
all these requirements.... Some communities fought it for quite awhile, but eventually they had to comply with the rules and regulations of the state. And one of the ways was to form union districts and that's what they did. All over the state. Except for the larger communities. (Jacob\(^6\))

Despite mandates and growth the decision to change the school system did not come easily. A citizen group “We Who Are Voters” organized to overturn the town vote. They did not want to let go of the high school, moving it out of town and I could appreciate it. But, I was a school board member. We knew from enrollment that it was going to be more than our building could handle. We had the evidence with all these substitute places for classes and so forth. We had to do something. The state was putting pressure on us. They said that we didn’t own enough land around the old school and that we had to do something, build another school somewhere. They didn’t say where, but you have to have a new high school someplace. (Lester\(^7\))

People in town had no forethought how change would impact the community. They just didn’t know how it [the Interstate] was going to affect the town. It was more of a local kind of economy. The stores changed drastically. We used to have a movie house in town. We used to have a grocery store. (Lester)

Besides the economic structure, culture changed as well. I think it [the union school] spoiled a lot of sense of community. (Harris\(^8\)) When the high school went out, when the school system changed, it made a big difference for a lot of people. They didn’t want the high school to go out of Rivervale... we always had kids come from Dublin and

\(^6\) Jacob has no affiliation with the land trust.  
\(^7\) Lester has no affiliation with the land trust.  
\(^8\) Harris has no affiliation with the land trust.
from Bristol, to go to our high school. People in Rivervale and Dublin and Bristol all knew each other because anything that was connected with the school, everybody went, and when kids were involved in the high school you got to know those families. You knew all the families... Once they went to a union school, people just didn't go to the meetings. They didn't go to anything. There was no connection. (John)

Despite the changes, in the 50's and 60's, having seen decline since the 30's and 40's, growth is regarded positively. From the perspective of the time, the future was assumed to be set: "We anticipate continued growth and the building of new homes in our area in the future as surrounding area business continues to grow" (Town Report 1966). A few years later in discussion about whether to continue funding the Greater Region Industrial Corporation the 1970, town meeting minutes note a supporter's comment that "much of the housing development in the town was due to the increase in job availability in the area because of the organization... and that even though no industrial development had come to our town, the local economy was better because of the expansion in the area" (Town Report 1970).

1967-1971. First Land use Planning Initiatives

Actions to deal with growth impacts were put forward for deliberation and vote at annual town meetings. An article to "join with other towns to create the County Regional Planning Commission" placed on the 1966 warrant passed and for first time the town voted not to give new homes a tax abatement (Town Report 1967).

The following year the Selectboard adopted the town's first land use regulation, a trailer ordinance to set "minimum standards for the licensing and regulation of trailer
coach and mobile home parks in the Town of Rivervale” (Trailer Ordinance 1967). Town meeting adopted a resolution from the floor directing that “the Selectboard be encouraged to start the zoning process for the entire town immediately” (Town Report 1968). 1968 warrant articles to “participate in Regional Planning and make an appropriate appropriation” and to “authorize the Selectboard to participate in a joint plan for a zoning commission to be prepared for adoption jointly by the Town and Village of Rivervale” were approved by the town meeting (Town Report 1969).

This was not the first time planning and zoning regulation had been put forward to townspeople. In 1959 Village trustees were authorized to appoint a committee to study the appropriateness of a zoning ordinance for the village (Village report 1960). In March 1962 “an ordinance in relation to Municipal Zoning” was noticed in the regional newspaper (3/13/62) by the Trustees of the Village of Rivervale for action by voters. Besides promoting “the health, safety and general welfare” the proposed ordinances promised “to protect and conserve the value of property, to secure safety from fire, congestion, or confusion.” The regulation failed to receive village voter approval (Village Report 1963).

A different outcome was to prevail in 1968. The convergence of state legislative initiatives with a recognized development threat to the town, lead to Rivervale being the first community in Vermont to adopt interim zoning regulations. The state legislature had responded to the 1960’s development boom by enacting the Vermont Planning and Development Act (March 1968) to strengthen municipal and regional land use planning

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9 In addition to town government Rivervale had village government, complete with a budget, trustees and annual meetings of those who lived in the village, to take care of village specific issues such as sewer and water, sidewalks, etc. Villagers voted in village and town meetings. Town government oversaw governance of the whole community. Those living outside the village had no say in village issues and voted only at town meetings.
authority, including the authority to adopt interim zoning regulations. As far as the threat, it was a question of one circumstance. There was a rendering plant that tried to move in down near the railroad. Where the old Borden plant was. People were very much afraid of the odors that would come from grinding up cattle, putting them on the railroad and shipping them someplace. About two blocks from here. These are the things that were frightening the Selectboard into doing something. [Under the new law] when you are preparing a zoning ordinance you are allowed to have interim zoning and the Selectboard makes a decision. (Lester)

The Selectboard’s decision was the result of local government responsiveness, citizen activism state enabling legislation. Town government at the time was small, essentially the domain of a Town Clerk who handled most of the daily tasks of town administration, and the Selectboard, three men with deep community roots. For those who shared those roots, access to town government was open and informal: I knew them. I don’t think I went into an official meeting. I talked to them individually.... We’d visit wherever we were together about things in town. (Lester) Those who led the pro-planning and zoning effort were very familiar with the new law and were well respected, well known and well connected in town. One leader served, by appointment, on the newly formed Regional Planning Commission. Another was a lawyer. Additionally, the Commission’s office was located in village and one of the principal planners was a new resident (Lester interview).

There was a public meeting called by the Selectboard to find out what our views were. There were probably 50 people present at the meeting. That’s pretty good for a small town. They were mostly village people, not town people. At that meeting, they took
a vote. Actually the Selectboard had the real vote, but they took an advisory vote and the only person that didn't want zoning was the man who proposed the rendering plant. He was going to make some money on it! (Lester).

Interim zoning was approved by the Selectboard and a Zoning Board quickly established. Within days, a variance request was made “to establish a so-called transfer location for trucks for the transfer of waste meat products from local trucks to larger trailer trucks for transportation to central processing plant” (Selectboard minutes July 1968) The lawyer tapped his networks in a letter on his corporate letterhead to the State Commissioner of Water Resources, addressed “Dear Bud.” He suggested to the Commissioner that “a calculation of their present sewerage and waste product volume would be in order. Also the impact of the waste affluent on the Winooski River” and requested “priority consideration” (Letter August 17, 1968).

A citizen petition signed by 213 people stated concerns plainly “We, the undersigned, residents of Rivervale, object to a favorable consideration of RENCO in their effort to locate their offensive plant in our community.” Their motivation was to protect their economic investment in their homes and properties (Selectboard minutes September 1968).

The variance hearing built support for zoning. Prior to the hearing the major regional newspaper reported in bold type “They plan to render the tallow, fat, bones and meat waste collected in markets and wholesale outlets in the area and transfer to larger trucks for shipment outside the state at the Rivervale plant” (Free Press August 1968. [Townspeople] were afraid of what it would do. As a result of that meeting the board
voted to stop their coming. That gave us a big boost. So it was a lucky circumstance that helped enact zoning. (Lester)

The variance was denied and the committee established by town meeting vote to write the zoning ordinance got to work. We were just anxious to build a better community. That's what our goal was. The areas that were being developed were...some of the most beautiful views of Rivervale in the whole town. (Lester)

The zoning committee was a joint effort of Town and Village governing bodies. They picked the group so that all sides would be represented. (Lester) Thomas James was a farmer outside the village. He probably had mixed feelings, but I think he approved it. (Lester) Noel Conway worked at IBM. He was very helpful in getting the zoning ordinance passed across the river. He had all sorts of personal connections. He helped to promote it tremendously. (Lester) Bart Jackson was a merchant from Warrensville, Rivervale's other village; Donald Brighton was manager of Happy Hollow Trailer Park. Robert Calef was a farmer within the village. He owned the property which was probably the most likely property to be developed, a big flat area. It was also a flood plain. Paul Thompson, a farmer, was one that was sort of opposed to zoning and so forth, but he worked on it; he knew about it. (Lester) Lester Jones was a professor and Lawrence Connors a lawyer (Selectboard minutes, October 1968; interview with Lester)

The committee didn't proceed alone. We got help from the Regional Planning Commission. At the time that was going on, I was Chairman of the Regional Planning Commission. And of course that is the reason why Cleve Harvey, a Selectman, was directed by the Selectboard to ask me if I would help write the zoning ordinance. I'd had the training through the Regional Planning Commission. (Lester)
Funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, under the Urban Planning Assistance program, supported the committee’s work. Ordinances of other towns were reviewed and a model developed by the Regional Planning Commission helped structure the work. *It took us two years to develop the zoning ordinance. That's lots of meetings. We met twice a week.* (Lester)

The argument for zoning was cast in terms of conflicting land uses, property values and economic benefits to the community.

As the community grows in population or as increasing and varied demands are upon the land, there inevitably occur conflicts in land use.

…..the net result of conflicting land use is that you, or your business, or your farms inevitably get hurt. The resale value of a home can be destroyed as swiftly and efficiently as if destroyed by fire. An insurance policy usually pays off; your neighbor with the conflicting land use does not...not only is there ample room in most communities for a wide variety of uses, but there is desirable room. It is a rare thing indeed when a garage or junk yard must be located in a residential area. It is rare that a home must be located in an business area...

Zoning replaces chance, uncertainty and the unknown with surety and purpose. Haphazard growth soon leads to chaos, waste and distress in the use of property. Zoning promotes community stability. Everyone prefers his home, farm, business—whatever investment he may have—in a stable community. Zoning facilitates the development of systems—good road systems, good fire protection systems, good policing systems—in contrast to stop-gap measures which hit-and-miss developments often impose.

Zoning provides a means to fit “objectionable” property uses (the noisemakers, the dust makers, the odor makers, and other nuisance property uses) into their proper place in the area. Zoning is a lure for good tax-paying industry. Modern industry is now as choosy as the home owner in demanding protection for injurious uses of property in its neighborhood. Zoning can help save taxes. Knowing prospective future developments, public funds are better used for positive, constructive measures designed to serve the entire community, and not merely to patch up conditions imposed by poor use of some properties.” (Jones 1969: 2)

The 60 page document created three districts: Residential/agricultural, the countryside; Commercial, the town’s two villages; and Industrial, a small area around the
Interstate bordering the next town. Uses by right\textsuperscript{10} were to be determined by a Zoning Administrator appointed by a Planning Commission. Uses by permit\textsuperscript{11} were to be determined by a Zoning Board of Adjustment. The ordinance set standards for parking and signs; lot sizes, dimensions and coverage; building height and setbacks; and performance standards in the industrial zone for noise, vibration, odor, smoke, dust, noxious gases, glare and heat. It was assumed that building permit application fees would pay “a substantial part of the salary of the part-time zoning administrator.” The Zoning Administrator’s decision could be appealed to a Board of Adjustment. A Planning Commission was responsible for the ordinance, recommending amendments, and acting on amendments proposed by others (Zoning Ordinance 1969).

Writing the ordinance was one thing. Getting it passed was quite another. \textit{It was pretty close to war \ldots We knew [who was on which side]. We had a pretty good idea. The public hearings were where it was thrashed out. We knew who our friends were.} (Lester)

Arguments against the ordinance came from those who felt that a property owner had the right to do with his or her land whatever the owner wanted. Land was considered to be personal economic capital. Those with a property-rights perspective disagreed that impacts from individual land use decisions on the community were a matter of public concern or regulation.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} This term applies to land uses specifically listed in the ordinance as appropriate in a particular district, such as housing in the Residential/Agricultural district.

\textsuperscript{11} This term applies to land uses that could be allowed if certain conditions were met, such as a business like a doctors office wanting to locate in a Residential/Agricultural District.

\textsuperscript{12} The rights of a landowner to develop his or her property is at the heart of the debate over land use planning and regulation. The property rights perspective holds that the individual who owns property has the right to develop that property as he or she sees fit. Period. The contrary view holds that individual actions have community ramifications and that planning and regulation are necessary to understanding and dealing with potential impacts to the community. In the late 1960’s the policy and regulatory approach to
Informational material developed by the Zoning Committee, and paid for by the town, was mailed to all residents. Two public hearings, one in June and the other in November provided opportunity for public discussion. The ordinance came before the community in January 1970. The regional paper urged passage: “Rivervale voters—take your choice. Do you desire an attractive, stable community whose future growth is controlled by you? Or shall you allow your promising community to fall into chaotic development, waste and misuse of valuable land?” (Free Press 1970)

Because we had a village within the town, the village had to vote on it and the town had to vote on it. The village voters could vote only in the village. The town voters included the village voters as well. The zoning ordinance was approved within the village. Not by a huge margin, but by a margin. It was not approved by the town. But, soon after that, the town at the March town meeting approved it too. What they were afraid of was that the undesirables would be dumped from the village into the town. The undesirable effects of not having zoning. That it would be passed on. (Lester)

It was one of the largest town meeting votes ever as 697 of 1000 people on checklist participated in the decision. The ordinance was narrowly approved by the town, Yes: 358; No: 334. The zoning effort had been led by concerned individuals with deep community roots and extensive ties, who used their social, professional and political networks to achieve their agenda, who involved local, regional and state officials, who included diverse voices within the town in developing the regulation and who accomplish this end was to separate uses. Eventually planning came to embrace a systems approach, holding that an individual in developing his or her property has to account for all the impacts that development would have on community assets (social, economic and environmental) and that an assessment of those impacts would determine whether and how the individual could proceed. The degree to which a community embraces land use planning, regulatory frameworks and other steps communities that balance economic, social and environmental impacts of development is an indicator of its movement toward sustainability.
communicated with the public informally around town, on paper and at informational meetings.

Although the community had experienced considerable in-migration, in the late sixties and early seventies Rivervale was principally run by natives\textsuperscript{13}, \textit{people I went to high school with or knew their family}. (Harris) In the coming decades, efforts to move the land use discussion forward, led in large part by newcomers with a growing concern for community sustainability, would meet protracted resistance from those with a strong property-rights orientation.

\textbf{1972-1986. Land use Planning Stalemate}

With the immediate threat gone, basic land use regulations established and a town plan approved, those who led the effort moved on to other matters. The social capital expended to bring various community groups together in support of the initiative was not invested in an institutional structure. The community entered a period of almost two decades of conflict and virtual stalemate over the direction and purpose of land use planning and regulation. Even though natives had spearheaded the first land use initiative, land use planning came to be regarded as an idea that new people moving into the community wanted to impose on those who had always lived there.

\textit{Most of the town of Rivervale was farms. We had the creamery; we had Borden's. Those were the two main for the farmers. And I guess a lot of people resented people coming in and wanting to give all these restrictions from zoning and what have you}

\textsuperscript{13} "Native" is the term used by residents to describe people who were born in the community. "Newcomers" is used by residents to describe those who have moved to the community from some other place.
because...if you ever came in to town or village that had a lot of farming it was already
zoned. It's common sense that you don't build near a river. It's common sense that a
farmer's going to take good care of his land because that's where he makes his money.
All these, and they wanted to make all these little lots and all this stuff and the older
people just didn't like it...We've paid taxes on it all these years. Why should you come in
or how can somebody come in and say 'well you can't do that anymore.' I think that it
was ...it was resentment. (John)

Community discourse turned rancorous. The very first [Planning Commission]
meeting I attended was a public hearing for an updated zoning ordinance. The first
zoning change since it was adopted...The first revision was completed and they were
holding public hearings... Dr. Reynolds, Harry Reynolds, who was not an old timer, he
was a bit older than I, but he wasn't an old Vermonter, he methodically went through it
page by page and came up with worst case scenarios for everything that had been
written. He did this, they had hearings several weeks in a row, it wasn't just one night. I
think it never wouldn't have been so bad if he hadn't gone through and done that.
Because as he pointed out worse case scenarios for flood control or road review,
whatever, people panicked and would stand up and say: you are taking my rights away,
what are you doing, who are you to tell me what to do, and they became really nasty at a
personal level. Not at me, because no one knew me at that point. The Chair, she
certainly took a lot of guff. I also understood that zoning by definition is a limitation of
people's rights. And it is a really hard thing for many people to comprehend. They have
a lot of fear of regulation and loss of rights. (Kathy\textsuperscript{14})

\textsuperscript{14} Kathy is a member of the land trust.
For 15 years town plans and regulations were written, rewritten and rewritten again and again with little public support as evidenced by few approvals from the voters. The Planning Commission would write it, warn it, hold a hearing. If discussion continued they would have another hearing. Many hearings were needed before the public felt like they had had time to speak. And then we would take the public input go back and say 'are we going to change anything or not.' Unusually we made changes. The public generally has some good ideas, catch some really obvious flaws in our sentence structure that resulted in us doing what we didn't mean to do. When you have read it all the time you know longer realize what it sounds like to someone who hasn't.

So once we had done the rewrites it would be sent to the Selectboard. The Selectboard would then warn their own public hearing. That hearing would go on as long as the public said we aren't done. Once they were done the Selectboard made any changes they wanted to. If they would make changes, they would have another hearing to address the changes they had made.

Following that hearing the Selectboard would send it back to us to redo all of these things...they might just turn the whole thing down, which would end it. Depending on who was in office at the time, if they passed it, then there were 20 days or something in which a petition could be brought to bring it to public vote and so it would not go into effect until the public vote. It might be denied at the public vote. So that is why it seems like it was being written forever, because it was. (Kathy)

In contrast to the effort which had instituted zoning regulations, lack of consistent administrative support for the Planning Commission from the Selectboard thwarted efforts of the town's citizen planners. Clerical assistance for the Planning Commission
was lacking. Zoning Administrator turnover was constant. We spent so many meetings interviewing for a new one. That was one of the frustrations. We interviewed and recommended, but the Selectboard choose... It was a part time job. Poorly paid. (Kathy)

Neither was political endorsement forthcoming. Planning board proposals were defeated by the Selectboard a couple of times depending upon who was on the board. There was a lot of back and forth of who got elected as selectman and then therefore who made the appointments to the Planning Commission and what the balance on the Planning Commission was... It was just a constant frustration because we would make some progress on something and then the makeup of the board would change and a couple of new people would say: alright we don't really like this section and this section. (Kathy)

Reluctantly the Planning Commission adopted a different strategy. We started doing things piecemeal. We finally said we would never get the whole thing done. This is a really bad approach. Bag this. Let's just adopt some subdivision regulations because we didn't even have those and it was really hurting us. So we did interim subdivision regulations and got those adopted and before that we had done the flood plain and after that we said, alright, we have a whole bunch of things in this 1971 ordinance that are just a nuisance, the sign regulations were very limiting and not appropriate for the kind of businesses that were coming in. The apartment set backs...there were a bunch of things that were non-controversial. Fixing the sign ordinance. We said, let's fix five things that are constantly getting appealed to the Zoning Administrator or to the ZBA. We started going through them. It was annoying because you would have to warn them, you would
have to hold hearings, you would have to go through the whole adoption process, but we

got some irritations out of the way at least. (Kathy)

Modest progress was made. Interim subdivision regulations adopted in

November 1978 and finalized in 1982 gave the Planning Commission authority to require

basic development plans, albeit without impact assessment or mitigation requirements.

The rhetoric of town planning began to change from economic concerns about

separation and location of land uses to social and environmental concerns. “With the
growth in our community and the increasing complexity of life around us certain
guidelines to protect the character of our neighborhoods, the quality of our environment

and the safety of our citizens become necessary” (November 27, 1979. Proposed Zoning

Regulation. Preface.) But while the land use planning perspectives of the town’s citizen

planners was changing, the townspeople’s was not. The proposed 1979 zoning ordinance

was soundly defeated as the property rights position prevailed.

Five years later in 1984 a progressive new Town Plan was adopted by
townspeople. The goal statement signaled a shift by the members of the Planning
Commission to a broader development perspective. “Growth will happen, and it is the

intent of this plan that it will be orderly and considerate of the values of the community in

order to maintain the present rural character and typical Vermont atmosphere which
makes Rivervale such a pleasant place in which to live.” Objectives recommended the

encouragement of “enough commercial and light industrial development to lesson the tax

burden on agricultural, forest and open land,” promoted “measures that would encourage
farmers to continue to farm” and called for “all future development in the town (for
whatever purpose) be pursued with strict regard to the capability of the soil in the intended area” (p. i)

The plan asserted that “the process followed in formulating and compiling this plan was one of development of fundamental goals and policies, identification of natural and manmade constraints, awareness and concern for protection of past heritage, present neighborhood interests, and future needs; in addition, the balancing of these necessities with regional economic development programs against the resource base and existing settlement patterns” (p. 2).

Language reflecting a more sustainable context for town planning was supported by policy initiatives that would take the town in a new direction. The future land use section proposed nine land use categories including shoreline areas and natural areas and stated that “special attention will be paid to Rivervale’s identified natural areas because wise protection of the community’s non-renewable earth and mineral resources, and protection of the beauty of the landscape are matters of public good.” And it “proposed that the town’s historic resources be conserved and viable uses encouraged, where appropriate, as they contribute to the New England atmosphere and rural character of the town. The heritage of Rivervale must be maintained in order to preserve the community spirit and traditions of the people, and to aid in the education of Rivervale children” (p. 25).

The Plan’s Town Center Residential Policy recommended that the “majority of residential growth should take place and emanate from existing settlements” and “encourage use of open space and cluster housing” (p. 25). The Town Center Commercial Policy “proposed developments should be viewed in the light of the historic
value of these areas and their architecture, and steps taken to insure that new development complies with the nature and needs of the Town Centers” (p. 26).

The Residential Agricultural Area Policy proposed that “development should take place in such a way that any irreplaceable or unique natural areas and scarce resources will not be harmed” (p. 27). The intent of an Agricultural Residential Area Policy was to “facilitate the long term use of lands best suited to agricultural production by preventing a mixture of urban and rural uses which place unbalanced loads on agricultural land and which may result in speculative or inflated land values which encourage the premature termination of agricultural pursuits” (p. 27).

The Shoreline Area policy aimed to “preserve and enhance the high quality” of the town’s two ponds, by protecting the shorelines “which are unsuitable for development, maintain a low density of development and maintain high standards for permitted development.” The Natural Areas Policy called for limited uses and promoted protection “whenever feasible.”

The Plan also proposed a Transportation Policy which supported non-automated traffic (bikes, horses, pedestrians, etc.), limits to curb cuts, an additional I-89 exchange in Dublin, off-street parking, experiments with mass transit. The Historic Sites Policy proposed conducting an inventory and assessing impact on historic sites from new development. The Economic Development Policy encouraged industries that would use local skills.

Rhetoric aside, the Zoning ordinance proposed to implement the new plan was soundly defeated seven months later, 756 no to 420 yes. Community consensus had not been reached. A constituency for land use planning had not formed, nor had systems to
support such a constituency been established. Conflict over land use planning remained the norm. In a community used to one acre zoning and few restrictions, the new zoning regulation called for many controversial actions regardless of pro-planning and anti-planning sentiment: 2 acre zoning in the RA district, 5 acre zoning in the AR district, one acre in Town Center areas without town sewer and water, 7 acres in the shoreline district, 50 ft stream, river, brook or lake buffers and a 500 ft shoreline buffer.

December 1984. Town newspaper forms; information channels open

In December 1984 following the defeat of the zoning ordinance, what was to prove a significant addition to the town’s social capital was launched—a non-profit community newspaper. The Rivervale News was started to “foster a stronger sense of community among our residents by providing a means of communication that will objectively inform the residents of Rivervale on those subjects which are important to our town’s vitality.” (News December 1984) Most of the people who started the paper are people who had been active, and frequently frustrated, in civic affairs, including two people from the Planning Commission and one person who later founded the Rivervale Land Trust. While making a commitment to present all sides to an issue, the paper would provide a new forum for public discussion.

The newspaper had a ten month publishing schedule and was mailed free to all residents. It reported on Selectboard, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment meetings and land transactions. Letters to the editor, “Remembering Rivervale” a column of history and personal stories from the past, a kids page, club news and recipes rounded out the content. The front page headline in first issue, “Voters Again
Reject Zoning Ordinance” and in the second, “72-Unit Resort Planned…” announced the type of issues the paper would feature (News December 1984).

Until the News began appearing in mailboxes around town most people, especially those without personal connections to town officials or staff, had no idea what transpired at meetings of town boards or what issues were being discussed. Information about town affairs was shared informally among friends and relatives through conversations at church, the library, civic groups, school and local businesses. Coverage by the nearby metropolitan paper was limited to very major events; TV and radio coverage non-existent. Now, for the first time in the town’s history, the work of town government became more transparent. The on-going conflicts between the Selectboard and the Planning Commission, details about development proposals, concerns about town and school facility needs, information about state and federal mandates and so forth became common knowledge. At election time, readers could review candidate positions related to growth and development; letters to the editor and advertisements offered pro and con opinions about issues and candidates.

1986-1987. Community changes, threats and land trust precipitating events

In what would be a triggering event in changing the development history of the town, the headline for the May 1986 News “The Zoning History of Cumberland Farms” focused attention on a Cumberland Farms convenience store and gas station under construction at the intersection leading to the village business district. The Cumberland Farms was a bizarre thing. It was built in three weeks. Groundbreaking to cracking a beer. No local contractors whatsoever. Shipped them up from New Jersey. Completely

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took over that corner. That corner if you drive by now when they are doing deliveries or picking up trash, well they had construction vehicles all over the place. An old beat up gas station used to be there. I don't think it even had pumps anymore. Some people thought of this as an improvement, but as soon as it went in other people thought it wasn't such an improvement. Lots of conditions on the permit to try to make it fit in with the architecture and it all sounds good. 'We will use antique brick and cedar shingles' and stuff like that. Then they actually violated their zoning permit. (Hank)

The bright blue and orange building which appeared at the entry to the village business district rankled the sensibilities of some townspeople. It got in somehow before we got organized. (Lester) For them it became a symbol of development out of character with the community. It was more that it was a national chain that came in and people really resented it. (Whit)

Other changes were coming as externally imposed government mandates once again influenced school decision-making. By requiring all districts to have kindergarten by the fall of 1988, the State Department of Education forced resolution of an issue discussed and defeated by townspeople since 1970. As part of decision to go forward with kindergarten, a committee formed to study school facilities recommended construction of a new school. In the fall of 1986, a bond for construction of a new elementary school was approved raising the question of what to do two former school buildings located in the village: the original brick high school and an adjacent wooden building, a former church built in the 1800's and converted in the 1960's for use as the school gymnasium and cafeteria.

15 Hank is a founding member of the land trust.
16 Whit has no affiliation with the land trust.
At this point a group of people, mostly newcomers, with strong community sensibilities began to get involved in town affairs, first on the study committee for school facilities, then leading the effort to re-use both old buildings for town purposes. *It sort of precipitated the collection of people that were not just buying into the existing decision-making system* (Bob\(^{17}\)), people who would eventually form the Rivervale Land Trust. In their first efforts at community influence, these folks used the *News* to promote their idea to amend the article warned by the Selectboard to study re-use of the former church only, to include the study of both buildings.

*We made a motion on the floor of town meeting to say 'let's form a committee to look at whether there are some other ideas that might make sense.'* We had enough organization at that time that four or five people wind up in front of the microphone in support. (Bob) They convinced townspeople to amend and pass an article to hire “an architect and/or other consultants to study all potential re-use alternatives for both the church and the brick school buildings” and direct the Selectboard to appoint a steering committee to advise on the scope of the studies, the selection of consultants, and the disbursements of funds. *So we had had a collective action by the whole town really to say 'there's other ways of looking at issues here besides just the traditional decision-making.'* (Bob)

Right after town meeting, in April, the same people began to pay attention to a conditional use permit issued by the ZBA for a truck stop in a cornfield located opposite the Rivervale Interchange, at the gateway to the community. Their first action is to seek support from the Planning Commission to re-zoning the area so that a truck

\(^{17}\) Bob is a founding member of the land trust.
stop/convenience store/motel complex would not be a permitted use: "We the undersigned wish to protect Rivervale's prime farmland. To help achieve this goal we petition the Rivervale Planning commission to change the Rivervale zoning ordinance from commercial to residential/agricultural in the area of town south of the I-89 interchange near Route 2. This change is to make the Zoning Ordinance conform with the Town Plan in the area."

In a personal commentary published in the News, the leader of the petition initiative (who would go on to organize the land trust) set the stage for the coming community debate over development. He argued that "few people move to Vermont because of our winters. Fewer still move to Rivervale because of the tax base. But what does attract people to Rivervale and what keeps many of us here is the environment, the rivers, the hills, the farms and the architecture, and the sense of community that all this creates. Much of that would be lost if Rivervale allows sprawling development to come to Rivervale and take over all the farmland" (May 1987: 4).

After four months of discussions among the Planning Commission, the town lawyer and the petitioners about the legal appropriateness of the petition, the Selectboard acted to warn a hearing on the zoning change for September. By contrast, a petition to re-zone land just outside the village from residential/agricultural to commercial to support a local (native) business person's plan to build a 5 store shopping center met with an immediate and positive response by the Selectboard: "The hearing is just a formality. I think we can make the change" (News August 1987).

Following the September hearing, the Selectboard denied the zone change from commercial to residential-agriculture, saying that "the town of Rivervale is limited now..."
with its commercial and industrial land. Ideally that parcel of land would have least amount of impact on the town. We would rather see that land developed for commercial use and not residential.” In denying the change a selectman accepted as inevitable that “land in that area is going to be developed within the next few years and we would much rather see commercial use then mobile homes and multi-family dwellings” (Selectboard minutes September 1987). The petitioners on the other hand denied the inevitability of sprawl.

1987-2002. From conflict to collaboration on a new direction for land use planning

In 1987, the development vision of the petitioners and the Selectboard was deeply at odds. The Selectboard, all Rivervale natives, supported the extension of commercial development from the Village to the Interstate. We wanted to expand down Highway 2… the big argument was that you were going to have sprawl happen, along that road, and they were probably right, but we felt that a certain amount of development along there would be nice. (Harris\textsuperscript{18}) They had favored the Cumberland Farms development and were not advocating adaptation of the former school buildings to municipal use.

For an emerging group of residents the Selectboard’s development paradigm was a clear threat to their community. We had just got this Cumberland Farms. Do we need another convenience store around here? What’s this going to do to our town? (Hank)

In their view the prevailing direction of development was unacceptable. The truck stop was a big event that a lot of people were upset about. At the same time the

\textsuperscript{18} Harris has no land trust affiliation.
school has decided to build a new school...and there was a question of what to do with these buildings...And there is land just as you cross the interstate on Route 2 that was up for sale and the owners wanted to get it permitted ...to build a nine house subdivision.

We always thought that area was a clear delineation with the village limit and we didn't want to start spreading...Having the interstate there creates a real boundary. And something else, the [Cumberland Farms]. (Andrew)

The Rivervale Land Trust Forms

For one person it was time for a radically different approach. Andrea and I went to Nantucket for 10 days just when all this stuff was really eating away at me and so I ended up spending most of the time talking to the conservation organizations out there...The Nantucket Conservation Foundation which owns about a third of the island outright...started buying land when it was cheap. Then there is the Nantucket Land Bank which is a town group; 1% of all property sales goes to the town; they can buy land with it. And then there is the Nantucket Land Council which is a real advocacy organization which goes out and fights for better laws and regulations and they also go out and clear title on land the Nantucket Conservation Foundation would like to own, get title and hand it over. So I came back all fired up...(Andrew)

When Andrew returned he took an action that would ultimately change the course of development in Rivervale. He became the variable in the microstructure of the system which set off feedback effects through the community, fueled by social capital, that would cause the system to organize along a qualitatively different, more sustainable, developmental path. We had a volleyball game up at Jane Kline's and I told everybody there...I really wanted a land trust. I knew that, but we went into it pretty open.
Everybody could come to whatever conclusion they wanted to. It was just an open meeting. And with Vermont Land Trust in the state, it’s such a great model. We started meeting every week. It seemed like in a few weeks we had an organization. I wasn’t the only one worried about all these things. (Andrew)

He used his connections and got in touch with others that were worried too. It was an idea we knew a little bit about because the Vermont Land Trust was doing some dog and pony shows. I had been and heard them talk about it. We also knew we didn’t just want to be obstructionist. The real solution was to take land out of the speculative market. We knew enough about land trusts to know that is what they did. There were maybe 30 or 40 people there...Andrew made most of the phone calls. Word of mouth and calling people up and saying, listen we are having a meeting about this ARCO project. (Bob)

The group that met in the Middle School cafeteria that fall was deeply concerned as they discussed the changes that happened or were about to happen to our town. We talked about the ‘For Sale’ signs on many of the farms, about how strip development was threatening to connect the village to the interchange, about the new convenience store in the center of town eroding the architectural beauty of the village, about the probable demolition of the Church, about the loss of access to swimming holes on the Bristol River and the increased use of those that were still open to the public, about the relentless arrival of more and more housing units into a town which had not begun to protect its natural and cultural resources. The meeting was accurately summed up by one of the participants when he said that he had come to the meeting to hear about an issue which we could tackle, but the issues were so many and so over whelming that all he felt was despair. (RLT Annual Report 1988)

So out of that meeting, there was a decision, ‘okay let’s form this land trust.’

(Bob) From there we wrote our by-laws... A painful process. Very dry. Kind of
bureaucratic. In a lot of ways I thought it was actually good. It really gave us some 
grounding. We had to think about it. It wasn't just 'arrrh those awful bad guys;' there 
was some thought put into 'what about us? what are we going to do? how are we going 
to be?' Choosing the land trust model was pretty serious choice because it means being 
around forever. (Hank)

Who were these people? Unlike those who led the town's first land use planning 
effort in the late 60's, these were men and women, mostly people who had young kids, 
some with no kids, but who were seeing the opportunity to take some kind of action in the 
town that would have an effect on what the town was like. (Bob) As a group they tended 
to be well-educated, in their 30's and were newcomers, having moved to town in the late 
70's and early 80's.

Many had been involved with the town meeting campaign to study reuse of the 
school buildings and felt empowered by their success. They knew each other through 
informal social ties: common day care providers, children's activities, chance encounters 
at the bakery or the library, volleyball games, town and school meetings, neighborhood 
contacts, professional connections and political activities.

Their common connection was Andrew, who was Rivervale born and bred. He 
had served several terms on the Selectboard, the first in 1971 when he was 21 years old 
and had a long history of town involvement including service to the Historic Society and 
the Rescue Squad. He was a founding member of the News and frequent contributor. As 
one land trust member put it he's the single most, as far as I'm concerned, most effective 
and right minded and patiently persistent person in this community. (Mary)¹⁹

¹⁹ Mary is a founding member of the land trust.
For many, Andrew was their first contact with Rivervale. *When we first moved here, he and Andrea drove up, I guess we had met him before, but he and Andrea drove up and paid us a visit like our parents used to do on Sunday afternoon.* (Dave)

Andrew made a point to make an unannounced visit to every new family to solicit a contribution to the Rescue Squad. The visit offered the person the opportunity to find out about town issues, groups, etc. He provided a link between new people and Rivervale natives. Importantly he had led the effort to preserve the old school buildings which had engaged many of the initial land trust members in the community for the first time and in a collective community action, one with successful results. In the process he had earned people’s trust and respect and had demonstrated his capability as a leader. A builder with a law degree, at the time he was working on a Masters of Fine Arts in Historical Preservation.

The Selectboard’s decision to deny the zoning change was the lead story in the next issue of the *News*: “Swain’s Field Stays Commercial.” Reported comments on the truck stop proposal, from a land trust founder: “This is the first step to becoming the Barre/Montpelier Road. I signed it (the petition) because I don’t want to see a strip from the Interstate to the village,” from the farmer: “If people want to have it agricultural, people should buy it,” and comments on the shopping center proposal, from another land trust founder: “We need to have growth in a planned, orderly manner” and from local business persons: “I can see more business can only benefit the town”… “We need to employ people IN Rivervale.” (*News* October 1987) framed the agenda for land use

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20 Dave is a member of the land trust.
deliberation, policy and rule making in the town for the next fifteen years. The front page
copy set the context: “This is a crucial time in Rivervale’s development.”

The members and directors of the newly formed land trust immediately assumed a
leadership role in placing town development and land use issues before the community.

An open letter to townspeople, set forth their vision of development:

We know there are many more of us out there: Residents of the town and
village concerned about the direction Rivervale is taking now and in the future. With tremendous pressure for development, many crucial decisions are being made now that will affect the way Rivervale will look and feel forever. Several fertile, scenic and central areas of town are currently requesting zone and/or use changes. In other areas, our extremely lax zoning is making us vulnerable to legitimate, if not desirable development.

For instance, at present a truck-stop and motel are proposed for the field across from the Mobile station; for many of us this is a favorite view of Camel’s Hump and Rivervale that we appreciate every time we come into town...a small shopping center...is under consideration for the section of Route 2 at the entrance to the village.

East of the village, there may be approval for a satellite relay station which would include a metal building next to the James Farm’s old barns. It is unclear whether or not these historic monitor barns will be preserved. Other farmland is being subdivided and offered for sale along Route 2 and in other parts of town.

Rivervale, without planned and controlled growth, could begin to lose its identity as an agricultural and rural community. We have something very special to preserve in Rivervale. Unlike [a neighboring community] we have not yet become an extension of suburban and industrial sprawl.

Over 25 people have been meeting to discuss our growing concerns over the future of our town. It is our opinion that Rivervale residents would be participating in a more integral way in decisions facing the Selectboard and Planning Commission if they were better informed as to the proposals under question. We are sympathetic to the view that people have the right to do pretty much whatever they want with their property. That is, of course, as long as they do not fringe on our rights as neighbors or burden us with greater taxation for continued expansion of schools, sewer lines, police and fire protection as well as increased road maintenance.
We feel Rivervale would benefit from managed growth maintaining its unique and pastoral quality. The look and value of our town could be greatly enhanced by architectural and site review. (Look at Cumberland Farms) As a town ripe for development, we need to show those interested in gaining from it personally that it will not be at our expense and that Rivervale has integrity to be maintained...

The widely accepted belief that increasing the town’s commercial base will lower property taxes is not a given. This is an important question since so many decisions are made based on the assumption that growth will relieve some tax burden. In reality, the reverse may be true. The taxes collected by the village and town on those businesses may never pay for the expenses they create. When quality of life is put into the equation, we must also think about increased crime and traffic congestion and the loss of tranquility. We, as residents, need to weigh carefully the benefits versus the drawbacks each new business will bring. Then, in a democratic manner decide whether this is what we want for our community.

It is not enough simply to restrict the rights of property owners...[We] would like to enlist your help in devising viable options for landowners...thereby allowing us to sell our property at fair market value and to simultaneously enjoy knowing we have helped preserve the natural and/or architectural beauty of the community. (News October 1987)

In announcing their formal organization as the Rivervale Land Trust, incorporation was cited as a means to “allow the group to apply for various land use grants, speak with a strong and coherent voice on development issues, begin to build a financial base for alternative development projects and provide a community resource for all Rivervale citizens” (News November 1987). The formative “conviction that decisions affecting Rivervale’s growth and development should be made with great care and consideration, not only for the needs of the present, but also for the needs of the future generations” declared their understanding of the need to strike a sustainable balance among economic, social and environmental needs. And the group emphasized the value placed on community in development decision-making: “we recognize that some change
and growth are necessary, but not at the expense of our town’s character as a desirable place to live—a quality that, once lost, can not be recovered” (Newsletter 1988).

The land trust and townspeople had much work before them as yet another development proposal came before the town. Chinburg, a 200+ unit project, was proposed on a 600 acre site extending from the flood plain next to the river into the hillside above, within a few miles of the village. What was happening is we were experiencing the development pressure that everybody was afraid of. All at the same time. (Hank)

In response to these threats, the land trust asserted its founding purpose of “protecting and enhancing the historic and rural aspects of our town’s character. The land trust seeks to do this by promoting the conservation of agricultural and forest lands and the preservation of buildings of historic value in Rivervale. We also hope to assist in planning for Rivervale’s growth and development, so that the town’s agricultural, commercial, residential and recreational needs—as well as the need for undeveloped ‘wild’ lands and open spaces—are all carefully considered as planning decisions are made.” (Newsletter 1988)

Committees were established to coordinate member involvement in the organization and the community. An administrative committee assumed responsibility for the Rivervale Land Trust newsletter, along with membership and financial tasks. The Acquisition and Finance Committee was assigned land and development rights purchases, planning, contact with land owners and fund raising. Looking ahead, the Stewardship Committee was responsible for developing and implementing “stewardship plans for lands owned and maintained by the land trust” and took care of taxes and
insurance, posting land, establishing trails and identifying critical resources. (Newsletter 1988)

A Planning and Protection Committee was charged with advocacy regarding “water, sewage, solid waste, natural areas, regional tax base, design control, town government, steering of development, zoning, Act 250, Selectboard, and historic preservation” (Newsletter 1988). It “monitors and provides input to local governing bodies…and organizes action around important local issues.” (Newsletter 1988).

Committed to a dual strategy of land conservation and community advocacy, the Rivervale Land Trust took on several initiatives at once: the Town Center Preservation Plan, the ARCO truck stop, organized involvement in the town government and the Winooski Valley Conservation Project. All are projects that would take years to complete; projects that would demand substantial commitments of time and financial resources, engage a web of personal and professional connections and leave the community profoundly changed.

**Land Trust Community Advocacy: Historic Preservation**

In opposition to the Selectboard and its officially appointed study committee, the land trust advocated the “Preservation Plan” to reuse both old school buildings to “create a town center to house the town offices, the library, the police department and additional office space” (Newsletter 1988). The concept was eventually expanded to include the Post Office, because we collectively realized that if the town post office gets moved into a cornfield a mile outside the village, that is going to have an effect, and not a good effect. (Bob) Over the next four years members convinced architects, builders and others to volunteer expertise, conducted petition drives to bring design and funding proposals to
town vote, created, funded and distributed informational materials and made countless phone calls presenting their case, made a successful application to the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation for $7,500 to cover some of the restoration costs and worked their political connections to facilitate inclusion of the school district offices and the Post Office in the Town Center complex.

Early in the project, as a means of communicating their vision to others, the group painted one of the old church towers in its original colors.

I can remember the day when I felt that I was really apart of this community. During the Preservation Plan one of the questions was whether or not to save the Church. It came very close to being a fireman's exercise. The problem was people didn't see this as a nice building; they saw it as an old building with peeling paint. All the moisture from the school lunch kitchen had driven the paint off the walls on one side. It looked awful. Looked horrible. Andrew's idea was to take one of the towers and paint it the original colors. He took a paint chip and went to the first color in the paint chip for both the trim and the base paint and took it to a paint shop and matched the colors.

I was charged with going to the school board and asking if we could paint this building that might get torn down. 'Cause they still owned it. The concession that I had to make was that if the vote went down and the Preservation Plan didn't prevail, that we would have to paint it back to the gray. 'Oh sure. Okay.'

So we got scaffolding, a bunch of volunteers. I remember really clearly being up on that scaffolding painting this building that wasn't mine, but felt like mine at that point. It was during all the same time I'm working on my house. I have become more and more vested in my place because I've put so much effort and work in to it. I was now working on the larger community. Physically doing it. Not just intellectually, but physically doing it. It felt great. I think a lot of people felt that way. (Hank)

The project was controversial. For some, new buildings meant progress. I have this friend and I love her dearly. We grew up as kids, lived right across the road from each other...historical things mean nothing to her. Tear them down and start new. (John)
For others, investing in old buildings seemed like a waste of money. *A lot of concern about using them was expressed as 'gees I've been working on my house for years and just everything is always breaking goddammit, I want new.'* Or [*from town staff*] *'I don't want my feet cold; I gotta bring in a heater to put down by my feet because they are always so cold.'* Or *'why don't we tear the damn buildings down. They're worth more as a parking lot.'* (Hank)

Altogether there were some pretty hot issues. *It did work. It was tough though because there were some very strong opinions. A lot of the old timers were against it.* (Harris) The last vote on the project in 1992 to approve a bond for the final major phase of the original Town Center Preservation Plan won 624 to 372 and strongly affirmed the broad public support for the project that had been created since 1987. As further confirmation the 1993 Town Report was dedicated to the Town Center Building committee.

When the project was finished Rivervale had, for the first time in its history, a defined civic area in its business district, complete with town and school administrative offices, Library and Post Office. *I think it's beautiful. I could see it right from the day it was mentioned. I could see it. We did a lot of talking. A lotta, lotta talking. Got the state behind us. Being old, preservation and all that stuff. A lot of the newer people who came in really wanted it. More newer people wanted it. You know there was only two of us on the Committee that were Rivervalites to start with. Andrew Lewis was the other one. The rest of them were all newcomers, some of them had been here ten or 15 years, but to me they're newcomers...It was surprising because a couple of years before [the town] really voted it down by so much. I was beginning to think we were never going to*
get there. (John) Today there is tremendous pride in the vision and the result. I thought it would help anchor things and it has. (Harris) Keeps your village. (John)

Land Trust Community Advocacy: Sprawl

Opposition to the ARCO truck stop, the catalyst issue for the organization, ultimately changed the land trust’s advocacy role. Members sustained their efforts through nine years of meetings, civic action, legal arguments and administrative proceedings. There was a very specific reason we formed [the land trust]: in order to gain access to the permitting process there needed to be a legitimate organization. You have less likely chances with an ad hoc group of people. In order to gain party status to the Act 250 proceeding you need to show that you can provide evidence. We really didn’t know much. I knew the permit process a bit. I didn’t know all the nuances of party status. Andrew knew some, I think Francis Dupuis was involved at that point and Mary Barr was involved. I had a friend, an attorney I had worked with, at that time he was president of the NRC [Natural Resources Council] and I asked him, ‘here’s this issue, what can we do?’ And he agreed to kind of coach us. We paid him for the hard time he put into the preparing some of the legal documents, but basically he said, ‘okay here is

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21 Act 250 was enacted by the state legislature in 1969 in response to the development boom of the 60’s. It provided for state review of certain developments, primarily from an environmental perspective. In places with local zoning and subdivision regulation, Act 250 review applied to commercial or industrial developments over 10 acres as was the case in Rivervale; in places without local regulation, Act 250 applied when a commercial or industrial project exceeds one acre. Town and cities could choose to have Act 250 review for smaller projects as well. Additionally Act 250 review applied to: construction above 2,500 feet, residential development of ten or more units within a five mile radius of each other within any continuous 5 year period, a municipal, county or state project of ten or more acres, exploration, extraction or processing of fissionable materials, drilling of oil or gas wells, certain road construction projects, subdivisions of ten or more lots for resale within a five mile radius of each other, or within the same district area, which have been created in the previous five years, “substantial” changes to pre-1970 developments, “material” changes to a permitted project that affects its permit or any of the ten Act 250 criteria. (Anderson & Gillies 2002: 22-23)
what you need to do. You can't afford to have me do all this; you guys need to do it yourselves.’ So we learned. ARCO had been before the town Zoning Board, because they needed a conditional use permit and the town granted that permit. We decided that someone needed to appeal that. (Bob). That someone was the land trust.

The Rivervale Land Trust lost the appeal of the town ZBA decision to the Superior Court. ARCO next applied for their state subdivision permit. Which means in Vermont any time you create a lot less than ten acres, you have to get a special permit. That permit basically asks two things: is there water to support the project and is there waste water disposal to support your project. That’s what we focused on, that section of the subdivision regs. Could they build a septic system in that field? We lobbied the state regulators hard to really look at this closely. We were right out there. Hank was very involved. When they were out digging test pits, he was right there. (Bob)

Advocacy proved to be difficult work with unexpected consequences. We didn’t really know that that’s not what land trusts do. Because this is 1988 or so, the land trust movement is still pretty new. That fall I went to the Land Trust Alliance Rally out in Colorado and there are 200 people there. Very small group, very exciting group, compared to what it is now. Now they turn away people because they have two to three thousand. So it was still pretty new in the land trust business and everybody is sort of figuring out: What do we do? Clearly, although it is not written anywhere and there is no requirement, land trusts typically do not take advocacy positions. We heard that from the Vermont Land Trust. They didn't want us to be part of their organization. But then, it wasn't a priority for us to be part of their organization.
We had looked for other organizations to take on the ARCO deal. We were like really dumbfounded that the Vermont Natural Resources Council or CLF, [Conservation Law Foundation] wouldn't take it on. They thought about it but, and we were saying like, 'don't you guys see what's going on' because what was happening was a very critical issue about flood plains was being debated in this. Prior to this project most people thought that flood plains were pretty much protected, that there was a state agency that said 'you can't build in a flood plain, the state won't let you'. Well what we learned from this, was that first of all that was a very ambiguous part of the regulations and that secondly with good lawyers, like the developers had, they walked right through.

The whole set of regulations has changed now, but at that time, this was one of the few projects where the developer was proposing to put a septic system in the 100 year flood plain. Everybody you would talk to said 'oh, you know the state will never do that'. We said, 'Well that's not true. Look at what's happening.' We were very frustrated by not finding a statewide organization, because this was a statewide issue. If this went through none of the flood plains in the state were protected. (Bob)

The land trust prevailed in having the state subdivision permit denied because of its location in the 100 year flood plain. The developers appealed to a higher administrative level. At this point the land trust was joined briefly in their efforts by the Conservation Law Foundation and the Vermont Natural Resource Council. The Commissioner of Environmental Conservation made a Declaratory Ruling that development could not occur in a flood plain. But, upon appeal by the developer to the Vermont Supreme Court, the Declaratory Ruling was reversed.
Although the land trust stayed with the process through the Supreme Court ruling within a year of its founding, the group had “made an organizational decision to no longer participate in controversial land use/development issues but to, instead, seek the preservation of Rivervale’s rural, agricultural, and in many areas, pristine character through the acquisition of development rights.” (Hank Pre-filed testimony. Vermont Environmental Board 1995) Advocacy had its downside. *I think that we pretty quickly realized that we had to try to distance ourselves from that as an organization...we still cared about it and several board members were still very active in it, but we pretty quickly realized that it would be to our advantage as a land conservation organization to try to separate ourselves from that particular issue. If we wanted to grow, attract new members and if we wanted to be able to encourage landowners to work with us...a lot of people in town really supported what we were doing and really didn't want to see a truck stop there, but it was a divisive issue. We realized we wanted to work on a cooperative and a positive basis with landowners and not have a lot of baggage.* (Francis)

When the land trust took on the truck stop development, *we didn't know what we were doing. We didn't know how it was going to work. Or how long it was going to take. Or how much it was going to cost. I think if we had known all that we probably still would have done it. There was no real choice. You either do this or the truck stop will be built. It seemed pretty obvious that if the truck stop was built, that was the end. It would just be strip development into the village. Where is the evidence that doesn't happen? It happens everywhere. As soon as it starts.* (Bob)

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22 Francis is a member of the land trust.
Their community, their town, was too valuable to lose, too valuable to do nothing. The threat was real. While the benefits were worthwhile, the costs to the land trust were many and considerable. As far as what it did for our status in the town or credibility, it had its plusses and minuses. It wasn't all good. And it was an odd model because the notion of a land trust in large part is to work with large landowners. A lot of large landowners in town believe pretty strongly in property rights. Land conservation and property rights, there are some rough edges there that don't always fit great. And we were taking one of the large landowners to court. That is a direct battle against a large landowner. It is an odd model. In some ways it really didn't fit. (Hank) Monetary costs were an issue as well. In the face of mounting legal expenses, members contributed personal funds, and one agreed to carry a promissory note to cover costs (RLT minutes).

While in the moment, members of the land trust felt they really had no other choice; as for the future they would do things differently. We eventually won, but we incurred some hefty legal bills and I think it got us as a group scared off from going that route. Because even though we won, and I'm glad we did it, there are still people who are still kind of anti-land trust because we picked on this poor farmer. We also saw that we weren't going to be very effective preserving land if we spent all our money on legal costs. The advocacy thing kind a dropped out, the fighting part. (Andrew)

Land trust efforts to negotiate a conservation sale of the property were rebuffed by the owner. In 1995, after the Supreme Court ruling, the project was taken over by the Rivervale Citizens for Responsible Growth (RCRG), an activist group organized to take on the proposed Chinburg development. The two groups shared many members and a
common commitment to place. RCRG continued the legal and regulatory battles until the developers gave up in 1996.

The land trust’s legal action over the truck stop occurred largely behind the scenes in bureaucratic meeting rooms outside the community over nine years. As a consequence it rarely made the newspaper. Chinburg, on the other hand, was a highly visible development issue, one that played out locally, got a lot of press and by galvanizing residents across a wide political spectrum created a community wide learning experience. The housing project would have been huge. Two hundred and twenty-five units on 600 acres of land. To give that some perspective, that’s about the number of residential units in the village. What was interesting about that is, okay, everybody is all into their property rights, everybody should be able to do what they want with their land, but wait a minute, 200 plus units? You can’t do that with your land, can you? And so there was a huge consensus. (Hank) Everybody was furious. You mention Chinburg today people would tell you it was a disaster. Everybody was against it. It was the size of it and it was their attitude when they came in that they were going to do so much for the Town of Rivervale. Well the Town of Rivervale didn’t want it…We didn’t want a big development. (John)

After first surfacing in 1887, Chinburg’s progress through the town’s regulatory channels was well publicized in the local paper. As the town’s decision-making process came to closure late in the fall of 1989, RCRG organized citizen opposition. At an overflowing Planning Commission hearing, more than 100 people voiced their concerns. The picture on the front page of the News’ showing people spilling out the door onto the street, standing several rows deep peering in the windows, dramatized the event. The

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Chair of RCRG summed public sentiment: “as proposed [the development] is not consistent with principles of responsible growth such as scale, diversity and balance...it is the land and its people...that determine the rural character of Rivervale.” (News October 1989) In keeping with its decision to move away from public advocacy, the land trust took no formal position. Instead the President of the Board publicly stated: “I think it is fair to say that many of them (land trust members) are concerned about the scale of the project and whether it’s in keeping with the rural character of the town” (News October 1989). In fact the land trust newsletter reported on progress made by RCRG and encouraged opposition. RCRG and the land trust with overlapping members and leadership represented the same people in a different organization.

Despite public outcry and “ignoring the 800+ Rivervale voters who petitioned the Planning Commission to ‘just say no’, four of the seven members of the Commission voted to approve the study plan.” The decision sent the Chinburg project to the state’s Act 250 process. Unlike the truck stop proposal, the absence of an appeal made the process move fairly quickly. But this time, the Selectboard, composed of different people, supported the RCRG position against Chinburg and got involved. And this time the project was also defeated, assisted by the expiration of the Town Plan which shifted regulatory authority to the Regional Plan which had that area zoned as one house to 25 acres. So the density killed them...It was a total fluke that we won. (Andrew)

Public involvement in and awareness of the experience brought increased understanding of development issues and the limits of the town’s regulations. This insight would help build public support for new land use planning initiatives. “The time
is now for we who live here to shape the vision of Rivervale’s future by becoming involved in the planning process.” (RLT Report October 1989)

*Land Trust Community Advocacy: Governance*

While removing itself from outright advocacy regarding specific developments in town, a more subtle advocacy strategy is seen in the land trust’s purposeful monitoring of town government. *One of our first standing committees was the Planning and Protection Committee. It was specifically formed to keep an eye on the Selectboard and the Planning Commission to know what was going on. To make sure they weren't ramming another development down our throats. We went to every meeting. It was a goal to have a representative of the land trust at every meeting, although we wouldn't come in and sit down and say we were there officially as members of the land trust. What we found was that you go and you sit in at these meetings, and you are typically the only people in the meetings, the only public at the meetings, you become a part of the meeting, whether you have a voting place at the table or not. If an issue comes up and you know something about it and you can add some light to it, it becomes less formal. You become an adjunct to the committee no matter what. It’s how Mary wound up on the Planning Commission.*

(Hank)

It is in this kind of advocacy role that the land trust through its members begins to influence and change local governance. By monitoring town government, eventually joining and leading town boards and committees and lending support through their professional networks, members of the land trust are able to improve the community’s ability to work toward sustainable development.
In their first proactive foray, land trust members met with the town’s Selectboard and garnered their support for a cooperative project between the land trust and the Planning Commission to inventory natural and cultural resources in the Winooski River corridor with assistance from Vermont Natural Heritage. Land trust members used their professional connections to involve this resource in the community.

Again with the support of the Selectboard, land trust members led a successful campaign to gain town meeting approval for a Conservation Commission. Once approved, land trust members were urged to “apply for positions on this committee,” which they did with the result that two members were appointed to the first Conservation Commission. Other land trust members led an initiative to gain town meeting support for creating a committee to establish recycling in the town, volunteer to serve the committee and establish the town’s first recycling center.

In the late 80’s broad community support for town planning is still lacking. Land trust members attending Planning Commission meetings get involved with continuing work of writing a new zoning ordinance to conform to the 1984 town plan. One member begins contributing regular articles on planning topics to the News. With passage of the 1989-90 budget, funds are approved for the town’s first administrator, a position with combined town, planning and zoning duties. This sets the stage for a new approach to developing land use policies and regulations that with leadership from land trust members will break two decades of stalemate and create a constituency for land use planning and regulation in the town.

Rivervale 2000 is formed as a community based master planning process as the 5-year state deadline for updating and adopting the town plan approaches in 1989. She
[town administrator] has to be given credit for starting the process. Getting facilitators, putting groups together and helping us begin to write this plan. (Mary)

Six working sub-committees are organized: economic development; natural resources; housing and demographics; traffic/transportation; facilities, utilities, education, energy; historic continuity. A brainstorming session assisted by the Regional Planning Commission and the University Center for Rural Studies drew 60 people and listed protecting natural resources and rural character and addressing tax related concerns as top issues.

Two land trust members help lead Rivervale 2000, assisting sub-committees, organizing information and coordinating the process; each sub committee had at least one land trust member. It was a pretty complete process, because we did have all these groups, lots of subcommittees where people will talk to each other. I think there was a concerted effort by the Town Administrator to involve pro-planners and anti-planners. She tried to get us to identify the farming community so we could be sure we got them to come. Or the business community, or whatever. It wasn't totally new to us. We had elderly people here who had worked on the original 1973 plan; we had had zoning and planning. It wasn't like it was a brand new concept. So we had a base to start with. . It was a struggle to bring it into the modern century. But it was a pretty good process as I remember it. [Mary]

As Rivervale 2000 gets underway, the ambivalence and outright antagonism toward town planning is expressed in a two and a half hour town meeting debate over an article to see if the town would prepare a plan to comply with Act 200, the Vermont
Growth Control Act. Land trust members are active proponents, citing needs for stronger regulation and having a say in neighboring development, while the opposition, the “Information Group”, stressed local control. While the article went down to defeat, later in the day a resolution encouraging ‘vigorous efforts’ to continue developing the town plan was passed. (News March 1990)

The Rivervale 2000 process included periodic open meetings, enhanced by educational programs. A slideshow prepared by a land trust member introduced cluster housing, transfer of development rights, site plan review and planned residential development concepts to the community. Another wrote articles for the local paper on planning topics.

When two land trust members are appointed to the Planning Commission in 1990, the ‘protection’ component of the Rivervale Land Trust’s Planning and Protection Committee is dropped. One of the committee’s last initiatives is to coordinate action against a proposal to create another interchange to the north of the town that had been proceeding with Regional Planning Commission support. In this case, members worked though the Rivervale Business Association. They are not political, except they did come

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23 Act 200 became law in May 1988 following a Governor’s Commission convened to gather public opinion about growth and make recommendations to state government on improving the effectiveness of planning in the state. Like Act 250 it was a response to a development boom in the state. Act 250 served to regulate the quality of development but did little to affect location, type or quantity of development. Act 200 was an initiative to create a process for linking local municipal planning with state goals under the review of Regional Planning Commissions. It set forth requirements and preparation guidelines for local plans. The authority of regional planning commissions was substantially increased. Not only were they to review plans for compliance with state goals, they were authorized to develop regional plans and strategies to implement state goals and ensure that local plans were in conformance. Opposition to Act 200 organized by a group called Citizens for Property Rights mounted across the state. Almost half of the 1989 town meetings across Vermont opted out of Act 200.
out against the Dublin Interchange. That was a big thing: that they took a stand and got
the town, the businesses to oppose the Dublin Interchange. (Harvey26)

By the spring of 1991, the draft town plan was ready for community decision-
making. Again the local paper played a big role in communication.

What’s new and different about this Plan? Plenty. The draft incorporates the
concept of a ‘growth area’ which is the primary area for residential development.
Growth can still occur outside of this area, but at a slower rate.

Growth is inevitable and growth areas exist so that new residences will have as
little negative impact as possible. By grouping homes together and consolidating
infrastructure (e.g., bus routes and sewer lines), costs and public health risks can
be reduced, growth areas can also help preserve open lands.

Rivervale’s proposed growth area is contiguous with he village center so that the
traditional pattern of a higher density village may be maintained. The growth area
would be located on the same side of the river as the village and interstate exits in
order to protect already overburdened roads and bridges...

The Natural Resources subcommittee perhaps faced the most challenging
dilemma of all: how to balance the property rights of the individual with adequate
planning for open space and natural resources protection. The Plan draft stresses
the fact that many systems are interconnected in a community: Property owners
actions impact bodies of water and parcels of land without respect to property
lines. The Plan is not intended to diminish property rights, but to balance them
with other interests. (News May 1991)

The influence of recent civic struggles were evident in the goals of the Plan. As
the “principal policy statement for the Town of Rivervale” it stressed the importance of
preserving open space and natural resources, including the integrity of flood plains,
directed development to village areas, and proposed planning guidelines to avoid the
“negative effects” of “strip development” (p. 1). The Plan “recognized that the impact of
activities on one parcel may extend beyond the boundaries of that parcel and that the
planning process can help to lessen those impacts” (p. 2). The Plan also recognized the

24 Harvey is a land trust member.
value of place in the town’s development vision by asserting that “Rivervale’s character...should be preserved wherever possible” (p. 3).

Public discussion demonstrated that while land use planning remained controversial, a supportive constituency was emerging. Public meetings were “packed to overflowing” and the pages of the News were so filled with letters to the editor, informational articles and advertisements that the pre-town meeting edition was printed in a smaller type face to allow more copy (News February 1992).

Opposition to the 1992 Town Plan organized as the “Rivervale Forum.” Asserting the property-rights view, the group felt plan’s goals for “protecting, preserving and conserving land, energy, scenic views and natural resources sounds fine, but to implement these ideas would ignore property rights. Life would be more restricted. There is a definite no growth agenda.” The group listed these concerns in a half page ad in the News. Some are concerns expressed since the 60’s such as “Do you want your taxes to increase? Do you want to be told what you can and cannot do with your land?” Others pertain to the new vision proposed by the plan. Regarding a growth center, the Rivervale Forum asked “Do you know services (water, sewer, roads) will not be provided equally around Rivervale? Do you agree with your property being devalued? (Unless you are in the village and high density area your property will be devalued) If you rent, do you know your rent will increase?” Regarding open space, they asked “Do you know open space planning will require you to leave acreage permanently undeveloped? Do you agree with the town using tax money to ‘acquire’ land?” The group concluded with the recommendation that “If you answered no to any of the above questions, vote NO” (News February 1992).
The Rivervale Forum listed no names in their newspaper ad. In contrast, the half page ad headlined “Support Rivervale Town Plan” thanked the “Selectboard, the Planning Commission and all the many people who worked so hard to draft Rivervale’s new Town Plan,” urged an affirmative vote and was signed by 159 people who had supported and opposed planning initiatives, natives and newcomers. The depth and breadth of support was an outcome of the inclusive citizen directed planning process. While not officially acting as the Rivervale Land Trust, members informally organized and paid for an intensive communications campaign which included letter writing, distribution of flyers, posters and conducted get out the vote phone calling.

Come town meeting day, the proposed Town Plan was approved 585 to 451. A record turnout of over 300 people attended the town meeting and half of the checklist cast ballots. Soon thereafter the vote was contested by a petition with 285 signatures calling for a re-vote. A second vote in June ratified town meeting approval of the Town Plan. “ ‘I haven’t spoken to anyone else, but my personal feeling is the old-timers in town are the minority,’ said a member of the Rivervale Forum after the vote. ‘The new influx of people have proven they are the majority in town. They’re flatlanders, tree huggers and land grabbers’ ” (Free Press 6/10/92).

Characterizations aside, while a pro-planning contingency of newcomers—and natives—may have voted in the majority, until the new town plan is given regulatory power, it remained unclear whether the vision held by the land trust community would prevail, whether a constituency for a new, more consciously sustainable approach to town development had formed. After we passed that plan in 1992 we began rewriting the zoning which was the more crucial piece in a way because a plan, to get it passed you

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can make language that everybody can agree on, but when you come to write the teeth to
the language to implement the plan, it's more difficult. We did manage to get some things
into the plan about conserving land, and about thinking about the food plain, and
thinking about wetlands... we started to get these concepts in, which hadn't been in there
before. (Mary) The zoning ordinance would codify those concepts and through
regulation help achieve more sustainable community development.

Planning Commission members obtained permission from the Selectboard and
successfully applied for a planning grant from the Vermont Agency of Development and
Community Affairs to hire a consultant to assist with writing a new zoning ordinance to
implement the Town Plan. Many meetings and two years later the Planning Commission
had a working draft for public review. Again the connection and follow-up to civic
action to prevent unsustainable development is plain. To help bring the vision set forth in
the Town Plan closer to reality, the regional newspaper reports that the new ordinance
“develops a growth center near the town’s existing village, creates planned residential
developments, updates an antiquated sign ordinance to address home business use,
establishes a site review process.” The Planning Commission Chair (and a founding
member of the Rivervale Land Trust) is quoted saying that “Rivervale is a bit
constrained with its hills, winding roads and the Winooski River. A growth center would
concentrate the town’s infrastructure, which is more cost-effective, and it would leave
other land open.” Another Planning Commissioner (and land trust member) is quoted
saying that “there’s been general agreement on preserving the entrances to Rivervale
from over development.” He goes on to note his major concern is prevention of strip
development of the gateway and in the flood plain [the site of the proposed ARCO truck
stop just outside the village. ‘Ecologically it just doesn’t make sense to me’ (Free Press April 25, 1994).

The detail of the new ordinance makes it clear that “Rivervale’s rural character will be protected by zoning regulations that support current patterns of use; and by small-scale, rather than large-scale, development” (p. 1.) This will be accomplished in part through Site Plan Review and Planned Residential and Planned Unit Development (PRD, PUD) “to promote the most appropriate use of land, to facilitate the adequate and economic provision of roads and utilities, and to preserve the natural and scenic qualities of the open lands of the Town of Rivervale.” Going well beyond basic separation of land uses, to better utilize and conserve social, environmental and economic resources, the three basic zoning districts established in 1969 are replaced with seven. Sustainability objectives are expressed throughout the regulation. A High Density Residential District (40% lot coverage) required “energy efficient pedestrian traffic, roadways and school bus traffic” and called for “traditional spacing and setbacks” to “preserve the integrity of the New England Village atmosphere.” PRD or PUD is encouraged and required for subdivisions over 3 lots. Accessory dwellings are allowed for disabled family members or those over 55 years of age. Historic sites are not to “be adversely affected” by new development.

A Gateway Commercial district (40% lot coverage) allowed commercial uses in the entry corridor to the village while avoiding strip development through limited curb cuts, internal circulation, side or rear parking, green space and landscape screening. A mixed Residential/Commercial zone (40% lot coverage) allowed residentially compatible business uses in residential style buildings. A Village Commercial zone (50% lot
coverage) created opportunity for pedestrian friendly business development in the village
in addition to a Commercial zone (50% lot coverage) with broader economic uses, and an
Industrial/Commercial zone (60-80% lot coverage) for manufacturing, warehousing and
larger operations.

Planned Residential Development was promoted in an Agricultural/Residential
zone (30% lot coverage) and required for subdivisions over 9 lots with retention of
agricultural, forest or outdoor recreational land encouraged. The ordinance allowed
cottage industries secondary to agricultural uses, adaptive re-use of existing structures,
with specific mention of “enterprises whose principal use is for the sale of agricultural
products.” Farm structures were exempt from 35’ height restrictions.

A Mobile Home Park District (30-40% lot coverage) provided “an area in town
which supports an intense development of land for residential purposes while recognizing
the need to create open spaces, efficient traffic patterns and comfortable spacing between
individual homes” (p. 23.)

The new zoning ordinance specified that “rare or irreplaceable natural areas shall
not be adversely affected” by development (p. 34) and that a PRD or PUD should make
appropriate provision for the following features when feasible: streams, stream banks,
and water bodies, aquifer recharge areas, slopes greater than 20%, wetlands, soils
unsuitable for development, agricultural lands, meadow lands, productive forest lands,
historic features, unique natural features as identified on the Town Plan, wildlife habitat,
high elevations, ridge tops, and floodplains. It further stated that “existing water supplies
and the quality of ground and surface water resources shall not be adversely affected” by
development (p. 34) and created a Shoreland Protection Overlay Zone to protect
shorelines from “erosion, pollution and visual blight” and a Flood Hazard Overlay Zone to protect the natural ability of the floodplain to retain waters safely. No development was allowed within 100 feet of a Class I wetland and within 50 feet of a Class II wetland.

The ordinance provided for adaptive re-use of structures in all zones and easements for pedestrian and bikeways envisioned by the Town Plan. Traffic, noise and lighting standards applied to each district. In agreeing to adopt the ordinance townspeople had to agree that the individual’s right to develop his or her property had to be balanced with community interests for social, environmental and economic sustainability.

In November 1996, four years after approving the Town Plan, voters gave the Zoning Ordinance their approval. As with the Town Plan, land trust members acting as individuals organized others to contribute expertise, time and personal funds to a public relations campaign to build community-wide acceptance.

Community support for the new direction to land use planning, which seemed soft when the Town Plan was adopted in 1992, is in fact firm. We did an upgrade [of the Town Plan] in 1997, which was just kind of a pro forma upgrade...We just upgraded the demographics. (Mary) The 1997 Town Plan passed by a comfortable majority, 361 yes, 144 no.

To complete planning reform, a new sub-division ordinance was adopted by townspeople in January 1998, substantively strengthening land use regulation that would move the community toward greater sustainability. The ordinance affirmed the community’s threefold intent to “promote the orderly and planned development of
Rivervale so as to maintain and improve the quality of life in Rivervale, enhance Rivervale’s economy, and sustain the environment” (p. 1)

Following from the goals and objectives of the Town Plan, the regulation was designed

to provide for adequate light, air and privacy; to secure safety from fire, flood and other Edger; to prevent developments which exceed the capacity of the land; to provide adequate transportation and traffic flow and to maximize pedestrian and cyclist safety;...to prevent adverse impact on public facilities;...to prevent the pollution of air, ground water, streams and ponds; to assure the adequacy of drainage facilities; to prevent environmental degradation; to encourage the prudent use and management of natural resources throughout the town;...to preserve village and rural characters, natural resources, natural beauty and topography of the town; and to preserve sites that are historically significant (p.1).

To implement these purposes the new subdivision regulations required developers to not only identify all historical, archaeological and natural features including wildlife habitat, assess impacts, but to describe methods of protection. In addition letters from school, police, fire and rescue officials indicating their assessment of impact or formal municipal service impact studies could be required. Other impacts to be identified and addressed were those from flooding, drainage, run-off and erosion before and after construction, steep slopes, surrounding land uses, density, traffic, air, noise, water or light pollution. Proposals to maintain open space and natural features on the site were also required (Subdivision Regulations 1998).

As a further demonstration of community support, a substantially new Town Plan was passed in 2002. This was a major revision. The town approved it. This town plan took us another step in terms of statements about conservation, planning growth in the village, protecting ridgelines. We started in 1999...We took care to involve lots of people
with lots of different opinions through word of mouth, invitations, public announcements. We used a formal process with lots of committees, 2-3 public meetings. (Roxanne⁵)

The 2002 Town Plan recognized a need for the town to simultaneously “develop its economy, protect its environment, and preserve its sense of place.” In order to do so, Rivervale planned to concentrate and encourage development in “existing village areas to maximize the efficiency of town services…and to minimize the fragmentation of our rural areas” (p. 5) The Town Plan acknowledged as a planning principle that “Rivervale’s unique character centers on its vibrant, multi-use village” and the surrounding “working rural landscapes, forests, water resources and natural areas” (p. 6).

**Land Trust Community Advocacy: Summary**

How had the town come to recognize the critical interplay among social, economic and environmental actions? How had voters become responsive to land use planning and regulation which directed a shift to sustainable development? The civic activism of members of the Rivervale Land Trust in the late 80’s and early 90’s created a town-wide climate of communication, community involvement and citizen empowerment which allowed and encouraged new ideas about community development to be placed on the public agenda. *I think the land trust has changed the mindset of a lot of people. Like there’s a guy I know, he makes his living off making cellar holes for people. He says ‘you know I think I am coming around to the idea that we don’t need that many new houses in this town.’ I don’t think that understanding would have come from anybody, but from what we’ve been doing. I think people can see it…it just shows you that things are*

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Roxanne is a land trust member.
possible. You don't have to just assume that eventually everything is going to be developed. (Andrew)

At the same time the civic infrastructure expanded and became more responsive to the consideration of new ideas, new approaches. In this period, townspeople voted to hire a full time Town Administrator, a full time Town Planner / Zoning Administrator, to reduce the governing influence of the Town Clerk, to expand the Selectboard and the School Board from three to five persons, to effect a gender inclusive name change from Board of Selectmen to Selectboard, to merge town and village administrative boards, to add a Conservation Commission, a Recreation Path Commission and an Economic Development Committee, to establish a Recycling Committee and to approve a change from a Zoning Board of Adjustment to a Development Review Board. These institutional changes, all of which were promoted by those associated with the land trust, opened the civic infrastructure to not only include more people, but made the governing system accessible to people whose community vision recognized the need to consider and balance social, economic and environmental resources in order to retain and enhance their town's character and its sense of place.

Beginning in 1990 persons with Rivervale Land Trust connections, through election or appointment, became members of the Selectboard, the Planning Commission, the Zoning Board of Adjustment, the Development Review Board, the Conservation Commission, the Economic Development Committee, the Board of Civil Authority, the Recycling Committee and the Recreation Path Committee and assumed leadership roles in town master planning processes. By 2002 these people are integrated into the town’s governance system—We had become part of the establishment. (Hank)—and are using
their personal and professional connections to foster systemic change to bring the value of the community’s natural, cultural and social resources into its development decision-making.

The Rivervale Land Trust, formally and informally, was the key institutional resource that kept these people in touch, involved and supported. *For a person, working together with people on a common cause can turn a town into a community* (Hank) and it can enable the development of communities with in a town. The land trust provided a formal structure, a new and very different social capital asset, which helped like-minded individuals to find each other and enabled them to form a community of interest within the town’s micro structure, a community which extended beyond the membership rolls of the organization. The land trust’s simultaneously unfolding land conservation initiatives added significantly to its ability to attract and engage people in shaping the development direction of the town.

*Land Trust Land Conservation Initiatives*

All the while multiple advocacy initiatives were in play, the Rivervale Land Trust pursued its land conservation strategy. By 2002 the organization was managing five land preserves totaling 126 acres with public access, four conservation easements totaling 304 acres on private land and negotiating the purchase of a 229 acre parcel as part of a multi-million dollar project, in partnership with a complex array of organizations, to preserve a critical agricultural landscape. As with civic advocacy, the commitment, skills and networks of members played a critical role in their success.
Land conservation began with a farmer’s gift of 53 acres. Initiated during the land trust’s first year of operation, the project began informally as a consequence of micro-level social connections. Mason called... and on the phone said, ‘I’ve been thinking it over and I want to give the land trust half of my farm.’ (Andrew) The impetus for the gift came from civic action around development issues before the town. The property was right below the Chinburg land and Mason was really concerned about that. (Ed26) The land trust was known to the donor and was positioned to help. The property included farm and forest land, river frontage and a network of logging roads suitable for a trail system.

The organization was aided in this negotiation, and others that would follow, by the experience of a new board member with professional land conservation skills. I had been involved in land conservation since I went to college. I actually worked as the director of a land trust for three years. I had done some work for the Nature Conservancy. I had been involved in land conservation for probably ten years before joining the land trust. (Francis) He had recently moved to Rivervale and through his work as an environmental writer became aware of the land trust. I made the contact and called to find out more about it...I was really happy to hear that there was a land trust in the area that I could get involved in, because I felt like it was something I wanted to continue to be involved in; it was sort of a void in my life at that point that I wasn't directly involved in anything. (Francis)

The second conservation project also developed from personal connections. It was initiated when one of our board members, donated an easement on his land. (Bob)

26 Ed is a member of the land trust.
This project protected a 121 acre hillside of river valley forest land. In addition, the over two years of negotiations gave the land trust valuable real-world “experience in the use of conservation restrictions as a land protection tool. We are now in a better position to offer this flexible and effective tool to other land owners who have a desire to protect their land in perpetuity.” (Annual Report 1991)

The easement donors had become involved in the land trust from an environmental predisposition. And we wanted to contribute something. We wanted to be involved in the community; we didn't want to just have a bedroom here. So we went to a land trust meeting. It was in the paper. Let's go! And these guys! We didn't know anybody there. I'm sure we baffled people. What are these people doing here? Are these Republican spies? I could just see their minds turning...They were young. And we were old. I could see them wondering. We were in our late 60's. They were in their 30's. (Dave). Age didn't matter; commitment did. Soon Dave was on the land trust, writing a pamphlet on conservation options for landowners, creating trails, building signs and conserving his land for the future.

The next property, a 35 acre riverside tract contiguous with town owned land, was acquired through outright purchase initiated by the land trust. By this time the organization’s planning process had identified important lands with conservation values. In this case, the private parcel together with the town’s property would protect a mile of river frontage, agricultural and forest land and provide a public canoe access. Marking its first move to use external networks to link outside resources with local ones, the board used member skills at grant writing to obtain $25,000 in state land conservation funds to match $15,000 raised locally. The land trust then acquired an additional $5,000 grant
from regional sources to develop recreational use amenities: parking, fencing and
signage. To put the funding package together, the land trust gathered support from the
Selectboard, the Planning Commission, the Recreation Committee, Trout Unlimited and
the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and received contributions from more than 40
businesses and individuals.

The challenge of purchasing land for conservation purposes reached new
complexity with a project to acquire 11 acres with a significant 3000 feet of rivershore
that included a popular swimming hole, an area where in the early days we used to have
picnics. Church picnics. The land trust did not want that developed. Wanted it available
to everybody. They thought it was beautiful...and ought to be preserved for all people.
(Lester) When the property came on the market, the land trust contacted the owners and
began the option and negotiation process. Having become adept at developing
partnerships and leveraging funds, a scenario evolved which would result in ownership of
the property by the state’s Agency of Natural Resources. The town had to sign off on it.
We thought things were going along pretty good. The state had agreed with us, were
willing to buy it and own it. Then the neighbors hated the idea. Came out in force.
(Andrew)

Due in part to strong resident opposition, the majority of the Selectboard felt it
was not in the best interest of the town...there's liability, we didn't have the
money...taking land out of the private sector and putting it in the public sector. Didn't
want to do that. So the Selectboard opted not to participate. (Martha^27)

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^27 Martha is a land trust member.
This decision threw a huge block on the project. The Agency of Natural Resources withdrew their support, advising the land trust to proceed on their own. This put a grant from another state agency in jeopardy.

But that was not the end of the story. In meeting with people, we found out that the neighbors didn't mind if the land trust owned it. Which surprised us that they made that distinction. They said that if the state owned it, it was going to be on maps and publicized. They thought that if the land trust owned it, it wouldn't necessarily be a draw to tourists or people from other towns. So I remember we had a board meeting. There was a deadline that we had to buy the property by and the owner said he had somebody else lined up who was going to put one or two houses on it. I said 'I think I can raise the money in two weeks and meet the deadline.' 'Cause I could see that the board was ready to give up at that point. So they said they would hang on, kind of shook their heads and said okay. The next day I found an attorney in Montpelier that would incorporate a corporation for me, a non-profit. We didn't bother to get 501c3 recognition because we knew we could just do the holding. So we just started beating on doors. (Andrew)

In two weeks, all but two of eighty $500 shares had been sold to townspeople, not all of whom were land trust members, to "purchase the property, with the aim of selling it to the land trust for the purchase price and then refunding the investors full $500." (RLT Report June 1994) In this case, the land trust did not have the resources to act. We used the community as a land trust (Harvey) to purchase the property and hold it with the committed funds. Within two years state funds were matched with two foundation grants and local funds raised by the land trust. And we got our money back! (Lester) which helped to engender the trust and good faith of the larger community. The process
affirmed the board’s trust in each other and attested to the network of support for the land trust and its conservation mission. And it affirmed an effective strategy: Use social capital to obtain economic capital to preserve environmental capital.

As land acquisitions continued, the Rivervale Land Trust took on the challenges of stewardship. On a yearly basis we have to go to all our conserved lands and make sure there aren’t any violations. Two different things: monitor the condition of the property and make sure it is safe and accessible and from a conservation perspective, it is being managed in such a way that is protecting the ecology of the site; then there is monitoring the legal responsibility of the easement. (Bruce) Stewardship plans were developed for each property with the Stewardship Committee tasked with implementation responsibilities.

Whether developing systems and infrastructure for public use where appropriate, managing property or monitoring easements, the work of the land trust grew ever complicated. For an all volunteer land trust I feel a little daunted at times because I try to do this on top of everything else I am doing. (Bruce) Members volunteered for clean-up days, trail building and maintenance and stewardship walks. We do field work days. Everybody has assignments in terms of their stewardship for a particular preserve. (Bruce)

The board developed strategic lists of potential donors, assigned responsibilities for making contacts and conducted well-organized fund drives. Raffles and food concessions at town celebrations rounded out annual fund raising activities, publicized the organization and its work, helping recruit new members.

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28 Bruce is a member of the land trust.
The land trust’s biggest conservation project began in 1996 and continues to the present: the protection of an agricultural landscape of “more than 1000 acres of prime agricultural lands, wooded uplands, and three distinct farmsteads of nationally recognized historical significance.” (RLT Annual Report 1997) It started with the organization’s strategic planning process conducted a few years earlier. Out of that process, we decided to focus on the Winooski River Valley. That was the strategic threatened resource that if we lost it, it would be much worse than losing some forestlands somewhere...That became the strategic thread. It makes sense to get involved with conserving this agricultural landscape.” (Bob)

When one of the prominently located farms in the valley came up for sale we were really afraid of who was going to buy it. It could be someone who just said: torch these buildings, I can't maintain them. It was a very real possibility. It had been zoned as a commercial site...and it is on the market. Who is going to buy it? Not another farmer...We [the Rivervale Land Trust] were still pretty new at that point. I don't think we knew what all the tricks were that we could do to help...anyway the Farm Bureau comes along and buys the property. (Bob)

Soon thereafter, the Farm Bureau Director, who was aware of the land trust through professional connections to several board members, asked the organization to join a discussion about what can we do about this whole landscape here. We call a meeting of all the landowners in that area in the Farm Bureau office and say: we don't have any plans, we don't have any ideas, we don't have anything. We are just wondering whether people would be adverse to the idea of some kind of conservation. All the landowners were there. Nobody objected to us thinking about it. (Bob) A few months
later, the Farm Bureau alerted the land trust to a possible funding source. The land trust moved quickly to apply for state administered federal funds to stabilize two of the agricultural structures in the area ($150,000) and purchase easements ($200,000) on surrounding lands, and then boom all of a sudden we get it. $350,000. Before that our biggest grant was $25,000. (Bob)

From there the project grew exponentially. It was an idea that gained a life of its own. Got a lot of momentum. We got committed to a certain point, then there was no looking back! (Ed) We are taking on a whole valley, two miles of road frontage (Andrew), and a thousand acres of a significant agricultural lands and community viewshed. Not to mention that the area abutted an 1800 acre family trust that might someday be conserved, as well as thousands more acres of private, state and federal lands in adjacent towns that a collaboration of local land trusts were working to protect.

What began as a project to conserve land and preserve historic agricultural structures soon evolved into a major multi-year, multi-million dollar economic development project. Along the way, the land trust had to assume ownership of, then deconstruct one building in order to save it. That led to an initiative to create a viable re-use plan in answer to the question: Now that we own it, what was the building going to be used for? Can we pass ownership to another entity?

To help find the answers, the organization consulted with fund raising specialists and business planners from the local university. Eventually the land trust board came to the realization that we've got to find a tenant, find a use for it because we need to come up with the economics to support its being. That was quite a bit of work to get everybody to come around and see that point. Lots of talk about well, you know we'll have agriculture
there, this that and the other thing. I said, well you know folks, not too many people need a million and a half dollar four story barn to store farm machinery in, and by the way the doors are a little small. The machinery won't go it. So it was a matter of getting people to think out of the traditional framework a little bit. (Ben)

In pursuing its land conservation mission, the land trust now pushed tradition such that it was functioning as a developer... a change of role... The land trust was a vehicle in the first instance to try to do something to protect what was a very important scenic resource in the valley: the view when you come down French Hill. It's absolutely priceless. There was a proposal to put a truck stop there...Beyond that it became a vehicle to accept donations of land which we could then keep open and provide for recreation, habitat, scenic easements, we continue do all that. When the barn project came along... the goal was to preserve some aspect of the agricultural heritage of the community. (Ben)

Now the land trust was a vehicle for creating economic development. Again social capital played a key role as a board member has a very unplanned meeting with the head of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. We were both at a meeting at the Lake House. I am now working for a preservation trust part time. Joe White is my boss. It was a meeting about what we should do about historic barns in the state. Joe says you guys ought to talk with each other. So we had a conversation in the lobby of this old hotel...and he said, well, we are looking for a permanent home and I said we have a barn we don't know what to do with. (Bob) A partnership formed focusing the re-use discussion on business development related to the organization’s training center which

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29 Ben is a land trust member.
would employ 20 people permanently on staff, provide hands-on conservation education to hundreds of youth and create a periodic need to host their families in the community.

While the details of that relationship are being worked out, 230 acres behind the property was put it on the market. We said yikes!...We look at this and say: There is very developable land here that will be sold for house lots, 10 to 15 house lots right in back of where we are working! So we take an option. This is the most we have ever stuck our necks out on any project. (Bob)

But where to get $400,000? As had happened with earlier projects, the land trust leveraged its social capital to raise financial capital. Martha knows about commercial lending. So when she looked at how are we going to do this, she had a whole bunch of ideas that were outside of the land trust book. She was the one who said, you can debt finance this, why not? If you know you have a future buy out, if it requires taking on some debt for a limited time, then you break it down to where you are only paying interest. (Bob)

So a strategy was devised using board contacts and a willingness to take creative, if risky, action. Joanne and I went through our neighborhood, because we are adjoining landowners to the Barn project...got three other families together and raised $50,000 between the five families. And that was what we gave the owner as the down payment... Then we financed the rest. We got a loan from a local bank and grants from Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Freeman Foundation and then some Department of Agriculture money to do the $400,000. (Martha) So we have now gone from where we would only buy land before had the money up, to buying land without having the money. (Bob)
The project and its risks expanded, taxing the limits of our board. We are all in it for the long haul, but I think there are times when we all kind of go: WOW! This is so much more work than we ever thought we were going to do. (Francis) Tasks for the volunteer board mounted: negotiations with multiple land owners, overseeing the contracting and construction details of historic barn preservation, re-use planning, fund raising and the reality of managing in-coming financial resources. It is just so complicated...Money sources are so varied and there are stipulations on how money from here can be used which is different from the money from here. Some money can be used to match, others can't. Some can be used for certain things but not for other things. Some money doesn't come until some money has already been spent. Some you have to spend and then you get reimbursed. It's just overwhelming. (Ed)

Land Trust Strengths

The Rivervale Land Trust found the ability to deal with increased complexity in its social capital assets. The strength of our board is that we have so many different connections. Many of us are in a position where we can use those networks to help us get things done, whether it is raising money or dealing with a specific landowner or doing public relations work. We have a really good mix of skills and connections and experience on our board...people who are involved in a broad range of organizations and issues and can use those to advantage. (Francis)

One key element has been the ability to identify and recruit people who have similar conservation interests and skills that are needed by the organization, to grow the organization’s social capital. We are populated with people who have a professional link
and a vocational and an avocational link. (Harvey) Or as another board member put it: fantastic people with incredible backgrounds. (Dave)

The make-up of the board is not left to happenstance; recruitment is purposeful; expectations are clear. We do strategic board membering. (Bob) We have tried to say 'what are the skills and competencies we need'... We thought about this in our strategic plan and intuitively have done it...We like to fill spaces with people who have some skills. But, rather than just try to populate with skills...to my mind it is most important to be kind of like-minded and then the skill second...a primary requirement is enthusiasm and willingness to do it. (Hank) It is not a "show" board, where you can say, 'oh I'm on this board, I can put my name on it' and just go to a meeting and talk. We have an expectation that you are going to be on a committee and you are going to do something. Therefore we have to get those kind of people. (Harvey)

People are found through relationships. People know people who are of a like mind... Often it's just a matter of ... of just asking the people. They are ready and willing. Take Bill [a new board member], he's been on the stewardship committee for years. He likes to go out with brush cutters and the chain saw. And so it's just bringing him one step farther. That is the way I get involvement. (Ed) It seems like someone knows somebody that's new to town or at a point in their life when you can get active. (Andrew)

While the recruitment process isn't easy, the board makes it happen. [Board recruitment] is a continual challenge. We need new people. We need different people. We always have a hard time in part because the people that you want are usually the people who are really busy. So we get turned down, not so much because people don't
want to be involved or don't agree with what we are doing. It's because they are already involved in three other boards. So when we try to go after the best people, those are the people who are already involved in things. We have tried to get farmers involved and other people like business people to try to broaden the scope and the breadth of the board and we have been successful to some extent. (Francis)

Member professional skills and connections are important organizational assets which not only enable work to get done, but are used to demonstrate credibility and leverage needed resources and assistance. I work in government, state government. I help with connections that need to happen with public agencies, which sometimes is just a grant or help to figure out some of the regulatory and planning and policy issues that relate to state and local government... It helps to be able to pick up the phone and know exactly whom you need to call and where you are going to go to get an answer to something. (Francis)

Part of the reason the land trust has been so successful is because a lot of the people are professionally involved in the field. People who work in state government or who work in a teaching environment. They didn't have a lot of people who were involved in for-profit business organizations... I have more of a formal business and organization background. When I joined it was a very effective, but loose organization. As it began acquiring property and taking on projects with obligations in perpetuity, came fiscal responsibility, it needed some of that...and I bring things I do every day like how to run an effective meeting, get an effective agenda out, the formation of the strategic plan. (Harvey) I helped the board put together investment accounts and checkbooks and
accounting systems. (Ben) I joined the land trust because of my background with financing and community based ownership. (Roxanne)

I bring my knowledge of the town. I do have some education around community planning issues. I am pretty familiar with how the state works in a variety of different ways, through my different jobs and different involvements... I also bring some institutional memory. Organizational skills. (Hank) Other members are contractors who bring estimating, historic preservation knowledge and construction skills, writers, graphic designers, advertising and public relations professionals who bring communication skills, environmental educators, lawyers with environment or land conservation expertise and people who can build trails and manage databases and really good naturalists on the board to be able to do our baseline documentation. (Hank)

Besides member skills and contacts, another contributing factor to the organization’s effectiveness has been the ability to make and move on its decisions. The reality of our decision-making model is that when a piece of property comes up for sale you can decide in a half an hour whether to go after it. In a way you need to have that level of fleetness; you need to be able to move quickly to respond to these things. (Bob) It's a private group. It can act quickly, relatively quickly, to get out there and protect, conserve some land. There is a real expertise in that. (Joanne30) We continue to stress whenever it comes up that it is important for us to maintain our independence so that we can act more quickly than the town probably could. We aren’t encumbered by political issues like the town would be. (Francis)

30 Joanne is a land trust member.
“Fleetness” of corporate action is a legacy from its founding in community activism around the town center and the truck stop, a comfortableness with independent initiative. The original board members were all entrepreneurial, I mean myself, Hank, Andrew, Mary, Mark Hicks (a freelance editor), a lot of people who were comfortable in being, not necessarily in the financial sense, but entrepreneurial in the decision-making sense, who didn’t feel like they had to have affirmation from some other authority. I think that contributed to the initial sense of, we can make decisions. We know what we are doing. Let’s just do it. We didn’t go through a long agonizing process. It was just, here was the issue, we have to respond to it. (Bob)

The organization carried forward to the present, the founding members collective agreement about focusing our intellect and energies towards one common goal. (Hank) At the core, there is a commitment combined with a vision that is long term that everyone feels is important. (Ben)

As one of the founding members reflected, to be effective, you need a visible achievable project, usually crisis driven, not always, and there needs to be two or three people who are the vision holders, who say come hell or high water we are going to do this because it’s the right thing to do. You then need another, maybe bigger, maybe not, set of implementers. You can do this within a small group of people but, and there can be some crossover in the roles, there has to be the vision holders, the persons who can articulate why are we doing this. Then there needs to be, and there can be overlap, there needs to be the people who have the skills and the willingness to go out and do it. There is probably another, broader layer of just general supporters. (Bob) Vision fueled by a sense of justice supported by social capital has carried the group far.
Why have people stayed with the vision for a decade and a half? *The land trust has at least two very different functions: one is it provides a legal organizational system by which actions can be taken; the other is, it is a very important social function for the members, especially the board members. Part of the reason we go to these meetings I am convinced is because we like each other. We like to sit down at the same table. That is part of why it works. We like each other. There is a common purpose, but here is a very strong cohesive social function there too that is not written in the by-laws, but that is distinct from the technical legal function. I think it is very important.* (Bob)

Or as another member put it, the vision *gets them there. Then the fact that the group works well together, enjoys each other, keeps them there.* (Ben). Members are more colleagues than personal friends although some of the relationships are mixed. *Most of these people don't socialize together...like come on over and we'll have coffee and beers. Just this thing, this common element in the community.* (Ben)

Participation is enabled by an integral link between work in the land trust and each person's life. *At this point I feel like it is part of what I do. My life. The fact that it is working on something that is so directly related to improving or sustaining quality of life in the town I think is very important and is a real direct connection to your family.* (Francis) A belief in collective action plays an important part in this link. *I believe in acting, each in our own way, for things that we think are important and to try to make a difference, to model that for my kids. An individual can make a difference... The basic things that the land trust is trying to accomplish are very important. In my own back yard what better place to try to preserve working agriculture, open space. These are things I value. I go hiking, I go biking. I am a person who gets involved in things.* I am
one of those kinds of people. I live it. So I get the value of the product of the land trust.

(Harvey) Shared values are a related element. There is something down inside that everybody has in common. I think it is a respect for the community and a respect for that part of the community which is intangible. (Ben)

Another factor is the individual’s ability, given their lifestyle, occupation and other commitments, to choose to make time for involvement. This is part of life. And you become more and more confident of your ability and contributions. I have a family life and a work life that is supportive. (Roxanne) I have a pretty flexible schedule. I can come in a little bit late and work a little longer. No big deal. A lot of us are at that point where we have the flexibility. (Francis)

Participating in the work of the land trust is also satisfying. It is a social community. I am friends with people in the land trust; we share common interests...we accomplish things. (Harvey) Land trust work is tangible, i.e. you can fix trails; you can do something. It’s a place for like-minded individuals to meet. (Joanne) Satisfaction follows from the ability to interact around something very concrete with people who have a similar sense of vision and values... it's the satisfaction and pleasure that you get from doing something that is going to outlast your stay by a long time. (Ben)

Land trust work is empowering and enjoyable at the same time. The land trust can do what it wants. Almost by definition, when it suits our purposes we will try to get the town involved, but if we think a parcel needs to be protected we can act on it. We don't need the voters to vote on it (Harvey) and it's fun to do it. (Joanne) It makes me feel like I'm doing my part to help preserve the land other than bitch about it. (Ed)
From an institutional perspective, the can-do policy and action-taking role of the board was purposefully built into the organization's by-laws and culture in order to maintain organizational purpose and mission. While a membership organization, the board is the decision-making body; there is no need to go to the membership for authorization. *That was deliberate. Part of it is experience with consensus making decision-making systems and how it can be very frustrating. When you need to do something fast it is a difficult system to work with.* (Bob) *We do have members who are somewhat active, but it is really the board. We don't have any staff. The board does all the policy work and does all the grunt work.* (Francis)

The absence of a nominating committee structure was designed to fend off the possibility of a special interest coup from the membership that would divert the organization from its vision. The board has expanded twice to increase to its current size of fifteen *to bring in a wider group of people and get more people involved and share the work as we started to grow...* (Francis) Knowing the importance of institutional memory the group consciously tries to keep *a balance between maintaining some long-term stability and bringing in new blood.* (Francis) *You have this foundation and you have newcomers coming in.* (Ed) This strategy helps maintain the land trust’s focus and keep its energy fresh.

The depth of board responsibility for the organization is supported by a governance culture which demands thorough group decision-making input and agreement. *We tend to talk things to death and reach consensus...Ninety-nine percent of the time we work by consensus. We don't do votes typically. We do motions which pass*...
unanimously almost every time. We discuss things a lot. Our meetings have gone quite long. (Hank)

Altogether these elements have made the organization effective in its work. The board is phenomenal. From the beginning. The people who committed to doing this stuff and stick it and go to these meetings on a regular basis and pull off complicated projects. The expertise we have. And the fact that they'll do it. Every time. We've had quorums the first Thursday of every month for 15 years, with a board of 15 people. We can't do that on the School Board. I think we are successful and that helps. Commitment. (Hank)

As a consequence of this commitment, all these individuals have become very civically minded. They are active in lots of ways. This is just one... I think the land trust has nurtured the development of civic mindedness. (Hank) The land trust provides members with a direct involvement in land conservation, while work within town government as the organization’s community advocacy work described earlier demonstrates, provides an opportunity to broadly influence the community. But is harder to do. More systemic, but it is harder to do. You have to do both. Because the land trust isn't going to be able to do it all. You need somebody to look at the big picture that can go beyond buying land and begin to get into the regulatory side of things...and also bring a moral authority and the educational aspect... keep an awareness of conservation issues in front of people. (Joanne)

Land Trust Influence

By its combined approaches, advocacy and conservation, formally as an organization and informally through members’ participation on town boards and committees, the land trust has significantly influenced the community and changed its
development course. They have successfully preserved the view shed as you get off the
exit... Big, big influence is the town center. Huge. One of the things that makes
Rivervale so great is that the Post Office, town offices, library are in one place and in the
village. (Dave) The land holdings they have acquired are very important, especially as
the town grows we will be very glad we have those. [The land trust provides] a
conservation encouragement role in the community [and] invaluable expertise...in
preparing town plans, policy impacts, forums. (Roxanne) There are some things people
won't see that the land trust will be responsible for: you are not going to see building
along the Winooski River corridor because in a few more years, we are going to have it
all protected. (Ben)

When Andrew Lewis came back from his summer vacation in 1987, frustrated
and upset with his hometown’s development decisions, he activated existing, but dormant
social capital resources that would move the community in a more sustainable direction.
This reserve of social capital had no organized way to be spent or invested, much like a
dollar bill placed under a mattress. The Rivervale Land Trust became the instrument
through which the social capital vested in a group of people who shared common social
and environmental concerns became developmentally active. The land trust helped raise
the awareness of the specialness and the quality of life of the Rivervale community, so
that folks don't take it for granted...we have pushed the town bureaucracy to be aware of
these issues and sometimes to act on them. (Harvey) Andrew’s action created feedback
effects throughout the community that changed how townspeople perceived development
and in turn changed how town institutions were equipped to deal with development
decisions.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Land Trust is in a palatable way changing the face of Rivervale by preserving the face of Rivervale. (Harvey)

Working together with other organizations, the Rivervale Land Trust can help keep Rivervale not just a nice place to live, but a community that works together and supports its neighbors. (Hank)

How did social capital become developmentally active in civic efforts to shift a rural community toward sustainability?

The Rivervale experience points to a mix of individual and community level factors which supported a shift to a more sustainable approach to the community’s development. Over the course of fifteen years, the civic advocacy and conservation activism of the land trust board, its members and supporters mobilized extensive community networks to help convince voters to change the town’s development policies and regulations to include social and environmental resource impacts, along with economic ones, in town decision-making. Change resulted from a “synergy” (Evans 1996) between citizens with a sustainable development agenda and the civic infrastructure. In contrast, the preceding fifteen years had been characterized by conflict oriented community relationships that produced a stalemate over land use regulation, leaving the town vulnerable to a style of development that privileged individual economic
capital and ignored potential social, economic and environmental community impacts. The feedback from this vulnerability in the system in turn precipitated the formation of the land trust and consequent civic activism which set the town on a path to more sustainable development policies and regulations.

The community asset fueling this shift was social capital, specifically the social capital of people with sustainability sentiments. While affirmed in the case, the claim that social capital improves the “efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam 1993b: 167) and is a “prerequisite” for the development of “effective public policy” (Putnam 1993a: 42) is only part of the equation.

What also matters is whose social capital is invested and how (Portes and Landolt 2000; Woolcock 1998). In the town’s first period of land use planning, social capital held by pro-zoning advocates produced an initial change toward sustainability. In the stalemate period which followed, the social capital of property rights advocates stymied efforts to continue moving the town toward sustainable land use policy development. In the third period, the land trust emerged as an institutional resource with the capacity to place its vision of sustainable development on the public policy agenda. While acting on some occasions as an organization and on others as individuals, land trust members built a community of people within the town who were willing to invest their social capital, and in some instances economic and environmental capital, in initiatives to support sustainable development.

How social capital becomes developmentally active is a parallel issue. What are the “mechanisms” whereby social capital becomes engaged in sustainable development (Woolcock 1998:186)? The Rivervale experience offers as candidates a set of macro and
micro variables drawn from a wide body of community, development, sustainable development and social capital research. The supportive presence and interaction of these variables enabled people to function together to “create, nurture, and sustain the types and combinations of social relationships” (Woolcock 1998: 186) that effectively put their community on a path towards a more sustainable future.

**Conceptual relationships among community development, sustainable development and social capital macro-level and micro-level variables**

The Rivervale case provides a rich data source from which to examine the factors that influence whether and how citizens develop capacity to engage issues of sustainability in their community. The case reveals that all of study’s variables (see Table 6 below) were present and positively influenced the success of citizen efforts in the town’s two land-use planning periods. During the stalemate period, the presence and as importantly, the absence of specific variables, influenced the sustainable development policy environment in a negative manner, hindering citizen efforts to move sustainable land-use planning initiatives forward.

Beginning with community character (Gustanski 2000, Lofland 1996), macro level changes that had been occurring since the 1960’s had by 1987 significantly altered the socio-economic profile of the town. In-migration had more than doubled the population with the result that newcomers outnumbered natives. To this point, the family histories and personal connections of the new people were unknown to each other, to those who had always lived in the community, and *vice versa*. Socially, the new people
had not been integrated into the community. The newcomers tended to be more educated and wealthier, with higher employment in professional occupations than the native population.

At the political level, these newcomers had yet to be assimilated into the power structure. Community leadership remained vested in the native population, in the hands of a few people supported by long established networks that held a strong property rights perspective. This left social, environmental and other impacts of development to the discretion of the landowner to consider, or not, when in using his or her land as economic capital. Land use policy and regulation followed from this view. The 1987 civic infrastructure was largely opaque, closed to public knowledge and to participation by those with differing land use views, whether new to the community or not (Evans 1996; Flora and Flora 1993; Flora 1998; Fox 1996; Lam 1996; Lofland 1996; Woolcock 1998). Neither the town, nor individuals or groups had come forward with supporting resources needed to effectively engage land-use planning issues (as had been the case during the first land-use planning initiative) in the community (Lofland 1996).

Economically, by 1987 the town had transitioned from a local and natural resource-based economy to a commuting one. Pressure for housing and commercial development spreading out from nearby urban areas was an emerging phenomenon. Land once held in farm and forest use was coming on the real estate market, targeted for development. Significantly, for some people, native and newcomer, changes in the town’s traditional village and countryside land use, such as the Cumberland Farms, the proposed truck stop and the proposed Chinburg housing development, were precipitating
events, representing an assault on their concept and image of the community (Gustanski 2000; Lofland 1996; Whittacker 1990).

At a micro level, these latter changes were interpreted by one individual (Andrew) as a very real threat to his hometown. He set about to change a system he felt was spiraling out of control (Allen 1982; Allen 1988; Dyke 1988.) The effect of an individual actor within the system on its evolution is a principal distinguishing variable characterizing the community's first and third periods of land use planning. In both of these periods an event interpreted by an individual as a threat, triggers personal action to deal with the threat and causes feedback effects that shift the system to a more sustainable course. This variable was absent during the stalemate period.

Coupled with a strong belief that people can and should take responsibility for their community (Lofland 1996) in 1987, Andrew assumed a leadership role in organizing a response to the perceived threat. To accomplish this he was able to frame and articulate issues of concern (Lofland 1996) and use his social capital to tap a series of personal networks to bring like-minded people together (Coleman 1988; Portes and Landolt 2000; Woolcock 1998). Using formal and informal systems of communication (Coleman 1988; Lofland 1996; Putnam 1993a) he spread his message at governing board meetings, in the local newspaper, at dinner parties and volleyball games as well as chance encounters about town.

These factors also held true in the first period. The change agent (Lester), with a similar view of democracy, assumed leadership, framed issues, tapped personal networks and communicated his message to the Selectboard, at church and bridge parties and in the local press, in order to build support for community action.
Returning to the land trust period, Andrew used the informal network of people who had successfully collaborated to gain town meeting approval for a re-use study of two historic buildings in the village (Bellah 1985; Kemmis 1990; Lofland 1996; Putnam 1993a). He reached out to natives and newcomers, people he knew well and others he had never met, although through observation at public meetings and word of mouth, he felt were sympathetic to his concerns.

Again, this factor was also important in the first period. Lester used his connections to reach out to people he knew as friends and neighbors, as well as people with whom he had shared civic action experience. With the threat of a rendering plant moving into the village, next to their homes, residents could easily understand the need to separate industrial and residential uses.

In the land trust period, the threat was different. It wasn't next door. Development such as the Cumberland Farms followed by the potential loss of historic village buildings and a viable town center as well as the possibility of a truck stop framing the town entrance, was recognized by people who shared sustainability interests, both native and new as threatening to their sense of community. Prior to Andrew's call, these people had begun to find each other as parents of children who had formed school friendships, as rural neighbors, as business associates, while picking up their children at day care or buying a loaf of bread at the café, or as authors of News articles or Letters to the Editor (Granovetter 1973, 1985; Lofland 1996; Woolcock 1998). They had begun to recognize each other at town and school meetings and to note their commonalities (Lofland 1996). Some had experienced collective social action success as part of the re-use initiative (Bellah 1985; Kemmis 1990; Lofland 1996; Putnam 1993a).
Until one person formally connected those loose ties, they were as one interviewee put it, an undefined “green” community (Granovetter 1973, 1985; Lofland 1996; Woolcock 1998). As the initial group gathered, they acknowledged their sense of community crisis and reached out to find the “many more of us out there: residents of the town and village concerned about the direction Rivervale is taking now and in the future” (News October 1987). Importantly this group of people shared a belief that working together to change a direction they regarded as wrong was both possible and necessary (Lofland 1996).

A similar organizational process occurred in the first period. Concerned that a rendering plant would locate in their backyards, personal and professional networks were engaged and people organized, first to prevent the development and second, to change the way the community approached land use planning. In both periods people engaged in a process of community organization that was able to strategize an issue, communicate solutions and take action (Flora and Flora 1993; Lofland 1996; Luloff 1990; Luloff and Swanson 1995; Putnam 1993; Wilkinson 1991, 1995). These variables were absent during the stalemate period.

The civic initiatives that developed in the first and third periods were characterized by strong community leadership and resource mobilization skills (1998; Hobbs 1995; Israel and Beaulieu 1990; Keyes et. al. 1996; Luloff and Swanson 1995; Mulkey and Beaulieu 1995). Organizers identified needed technical support and effectively located assistance from within and outside the community, and when appropriate, with the support of local government. Links made with extra community resources such as regional planning, were effectively forged (Woolcock 1998). In both
cases, citizen and institutional collaboration emerged to strengthen change initiatives (Evans 1996; Lofland 1996; Ostrom 1996; Woolcock 1998).

The civic groups which organized in the first and third periods part in their approach to institutionalization. In the latter period, community activists incorporated and adopted the structure of a land trust. Incorporation gave members legitimacy, legal standing in development matters, corporate liability protection, and the ability to accept funds and acquire land or buildings. The land trust thus distinguished itself from an ad hoc organization which emerges around a particular issue and disbands after the formative issue is resolved. This form characterized the town’s first land use planning initiative which occurred over a five year period. The absence of a continuing organization factored strongly into the inability of the town’s planning commission to build a constituency for land use planning in the 15 year middle period.

Adoption of a land trust model gave people the ability to conserve property in perpetuity, which meant the organization was committing itself to being around for the long haul. The adoption of a membership structure gave the organization a ‘we represent so many people’ credibility and resource access to diverse social and professional networks, internal and external.

In another significant decision, the founding members implementation of the land trust model included an advocacy as well as a traditional conservation operational strategy. This institutionalized a 'big picture' systems perspective on the community’s development, sanctioning initiatives to challenge proposals regarded as unsustainable, to change public policy and to conserve important community resources. It also expanded the potential base of resident involvement in and connection to the organization.
Altogether these institutional decisions gave the land trust the wherewithal to manage the reality that substantive community change takes time, tactics must be multidimensional, action requires a wide variety of resources, broad public support must be developed, and people need a point of engagement. As a founding member put it, the organization gave an outlet for people like me, people of my age, educational background, gave us a vehicle to participate...an outlet, a vehicle and a group of like-minded people with whom to be able to make a positive contribution. (Hank) The institutional framework has thus far sustained 15 years of civic involvement and the holds the promise of many more years of engagement to come.

Table 6 summarizes the relationship discussed above between the study’s theoretical variables and the community’s policy environment during the three periods of land-use planning that emerged from case data. The table indicates whether the variable was present as a factor, or was absent, in the given period. Second, it indicates the kind of influence, positive, negative, the variable had on enabling social capital in support of community sustainability to become developmentally active. A variable with a positive influence is one that helped the sustainability agenda move forward. One that exerted a negative influence on the policy environment, by virtue of its presence or absence, hindered the process.
Table 6. Presence and influence of variables in activating social capital in support of sustainable community development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character changes; demographic, cultural, political, environmental, economic, etc. (Gustanski 2000; Lofland 1996)</td>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting resources: funds, meeting places, etc. (Lofland 1996)</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Period I: Cohesion. First Land-Use Planning Initiatives 1967-1971

**Macro-level Variables**
- Presence or Absence of the geographic variables in the policy environment: Present
- Influence of geographic variables on efforts toward sustainability: Positive

### Period II: Stalemate. Land-Use Planning Conflict 1972-1986

**Macro-level Variables**
- Presence or Absence of the geographic variables in the policy environment: Present
- Influence of geographic variables on efforts toward sustainability: Negative

### Period III: Collaboration Planning for Sustainable Land-Use 1987-2002

**Macro-level Variables**
- Presence or Absence of the geographic variables in the policy environment: Present
- Influence of geographic variables on efforts toward sustainability: Positive

### Geographic Variables

- **Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment**:
  - Present
  - Absent
- **Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability**:
  - Positive
  - Negative

### Precipitating Events

- **Focusing crises and incidents**:
  - Present
  - Absent
- **Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability**:
  - Present
  - Negative

### Synergy: Citizen and Institutional Collaboration

- **Present Positive**
- **Absent Negative**
- **Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability**:
  - Present
  - Positive

### Linkage: Extra-Community External Networks

- **Present Positive**
- **Absent Negative**
- **Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability**:
  - Present
  - Positive
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
<td>Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability</td>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
<td>Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation; Perception recognition of threat from a macro-level situation. (Allen 1982; Allen 1988; Dyke 1988)</td>
<td>Present Positive</td>
<td>Absent Negative</td>
<td>Present Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and information resources: formal and informal systems (Coleman 1988; Lofland 1996; Putnam 1993a)</td>
<td>Present Positive</td>
<td>Absent Negative</td>
<td>Present Positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Period II: Stalemate. Land-Use Planning Conflict 1972-1986


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Micro-level Variables</th>
<th>Period I</th>
<th>Period II</th>
<th>Period III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment: willingness to use connections for social change.</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Coleman 1988, Portes and Landolt 2000; Woolcock 1998)</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual and institutional leadership, community building and resource mobilization skills.</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Gittell and Vidal 1998; Hobbs 1995; Israel and Beaulieu 1990; Keyes et. al. 1996; Luloff and Swanson 1995; Mulkey and Beaulieu 1995)</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community ties: Extent and strength of group membership.</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### continued

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timing: personal ability of an individual to respond given their life stage; occupation; etc. (Loftland 1996)</td>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
<td>Presence or Absence of the variable in the policy environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability</td>
<td>Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability</td>
<td>Influence of the variable on policy efforts toward sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Role of the Civic Infrastructure

As raised in the literature, the effectiveness of the land trust as a change agent within the town was greatly influenced by the nature and relationship of the civic infrastructure to emerging issues of sustainable development. In 1987, principal components of the civic infrastructure included town meeting, the policy making authority, the Selectboard, the policy administration board, the Town Clerk, an administrative support person, the Planning Commission, the land use regulatory body, the Zoning Board of Adjustment, a land use appeals board, and a part time Zoning Administrator responsible for determining the compliance of development proposals with town regulations.

The town’s land use decisions were based on conformity with a master plan implemented by subdivision and zoning regulations, all of which were subject to approval by voters. A master plan crafted with some sustainability themes had been adopted in 1984, but implementation measures were soundly rejected by voters. In 1987, the town was using a zoning ordinance which dated back to late sixties when the town’s first land use planning tools had been adopted to provide for basic separation of residential, commercial and industrial uses. The subdivision ordinance, in effect since 1982, provided no environmental, social or economic impact assessment nor prevention or mitigation requirements.

In the view of its founders, the events and issues leading to the formation of the Rivervale Land Trust resulted from a lack of responsiveness by the civic infrastructure to their sustainability concerns, items such as strip development, re-use of historic buildings, village development, protection of farmland and floodplains. Civic actions taken by the
group to prevent the truck stop, establish a town center in two historic village buildings and defeat the 200 unit Chinburg development all followed from this situation. In establishing a Planning and Protection Committee, the land trust indicated its distrust of the existing system. Belonging to the land trust gave members the peer authorization to regularly attend and report back on Selectboard and Planning Commission meetings. This in turn provided invaluable insight as to how to make the governing system work to support land trust interests.

Equipped with this new knowledge, a collaborative relationship with town’s governance evolved as the growing land trust community prompted the opening and expansion of the civic infrastructure. After land trust member discussions with the Selectboard and successful gaining their support for a warrant article, voters approved the establishment of a Conservation Commission. The land trust recruited a couple of its members to apply for positions the new board and both were appointed, in their roles as residents, by the Selectboard. Land trust members who had been observing the Planning Commission, became involved in planning work and in a couple of years applied, and were appointed by the Selectboard to fill vacant seats.

Other institutional changes followed; all had land trust influences. The Selectboard supported and the voters approved the hiring of a full time professional Planning/ Zoning/Town Administrator. This new position reduced the gate-keeping and governing influence of the Town Clerk. Because the person worked for the Selectboard and the townspeople, in being responsive to both the administrator opened town government to more voices. The first person to be hired put together a master planning process that actively solicited participation from diverse community perspectives. Land
trust members in their roles as town residents lead the process and served on topical subcommittees. Land trust newsletters kept members up to date with the planning process; articles in the local newspaper kept the community informed about planning issues and regulatory tools. Land use planning and natural heritage workshops led by land trust members, again in their resident or professional roles, served to further educate the public. New institutional resources that redirected the community towards more sustainable development were approved by voters: a new Town Plan, a new zoning ordinance, a new subdivision ordinance, development impact fees.

By 2002, townspeople had voted to hire a full time Town Administrator and a full time Town Planner/ Zoning Administrator. Voters had expanded both the Selectboard and the School Board from three to five persons. Voters had also effected a gender inclusive name change from Board of Selectmen to Selectboard. A Recreation Path Commission was established as an official town board to develop and manage a town wide trail system. An Economic Development Committee was created to take on the task of business and commercial development in village growth centers. A change which replaced a Development Review Board with a Zoning Board of Adjustment freed the Planning Commission to focus more on planning rather than on regulating. As evidence of further integration, by 2002, people with land trust connections served on all town boards and in leadership positions.

As the civic infrastructure became more responsive, it was better able to deal with diverse and frequently conflicting ideas and groups; townspeople became more successful at listening to alternate viewpoints. Channels of communications opened. Town meetings became a venue to introduce new ideas. The land trust community with
Selectboard approval or if not, by petition, placed articles on the town warrant for public debate and vote. They led information campaigns involving phone trees, neighborhood canvassing, letter writing, newspaper articles and ads, flyers and lawn signs. The town newspaper took on a key communications role, reporting differing aspects of issues. Interest was stirred; people were engaged; many different networks were mobilized.

The town increasingly turned to outside technical service providers for planning efforts and funds to support community needs. The land trust tapped internal and external networks for conservation project specific skills and funds.

The civic activism of members of the Rivervale Land Trust helped foster town-wide communication, community involvement and citizen empowerment which not only allowed, but encouraged new ideas about community development to be placed on the public agenda. Through civic advocacy and land conservation, the operational sphere of the land trust spread beyond its Board of Directors and its membership to build a community of people sympathetic to its views and a voting constituency which supported public interest in assuring that individual land use plans did not adversely impact the town's character, its institutional and economic capacity or its social and environmental resources.

Table 7 below displays the historical evolution of the civic infrastructure and its effect on the activation of social capital in sustainable community development initiatives.
Table 7. Effect of the civic infrastructure on the activation of social capital in sustainable community development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individual and institutional ability to deal with diverse ideas and groups and to manage conflict</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectboard is supportive of citizen initiatives to regulate development due to a common threat</td>
<td>Selectboard support for planning inconsistent and mostly resistant to change in status quo; favor anti-planning position</td>
<td>Atmosphere of conflict</td>
<td>Selectboard initially hinders planning efforts; supports gateway strip development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectboard brings all voices to table in zoning development committee</td>
<td>Disagreements among people are disrespectful, personalized, adversarial</td>
<td>Town meeting rejects planning resolutions</td>
<td>Common threat from a large-scale residential development and success of Town Center provokes attitude change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village and Town meetings support planning resolutions</td>
<td>Diverse culture emerging as newcomers try to join/influence community decisions/direction</td>
<td>Community acceptance of controversy</td>
<td>Composition of Selectboard changes with addition of LT supporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common culture, people know each other; interact informally in many venues</td>
<td>No mechanism to move land use policy discussion forward</td>
<td>Political disagreements are accepted</td>
<td>Community wide planning process brings differing perspectives to the table and vests them in the outcome; allies develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political disagreements are accepted</td>
<td>Citizen activism not institutionalized</td>
<td>Town meeting provides venue for community discussion and action</td>
<td>Local newspaper opens governance, discussion communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LT takes rational, information based approach to influencing public opinion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Diverse horizontal and vertical, internal and external community networks</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectboard, community leaders use strong horizontal, internal networks for advice and support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look to other towns for ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens know who to involve within and outside community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectboard supports outreach to extra-community resources for information and technical assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town meeting supports external links; joins regional planning and economic development organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Planning Commission extends town networks vertically and externally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Open channels of communication</strong></td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectboard is informal and known to those in personal networks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information passes through traditional forms of social capital e.g. churches, library, post office, local stores, café’s, clubs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People know each other or know of each other from school, family, social ties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectboard stays within personal networks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak external links</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>New voices unable to find each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectboard closed to newcomers, new ideas about planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Town Clerk acts as gatekeeper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selectboard eventually opens to new people, new ideas as consequence of infrastructure changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local newspaper opens governance to public view</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional social capital networks augmented by new institutions: land trust, day care, bakery/ café, newspaper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Accessibility to individuals and groups</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selectboard open to natives and their connected newcomers</td>
<td>Selectboard control appointments to town boards and planning positions to support their views Strong Town Clerk as gatekeeper Open to natives Newcomer native dichotomy established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Willingness by individuals and institutions to use their networks to mobilize needed resources</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community looks to other communities for zoning models; seeks outside assistance Community members invest skills, resources and contacts</td>
<td>Resistance to sustainability initiatives in planning Voices of sustainability frustrated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Influence of Different Forms of Social Capital

As the civic infrastructure and the land trust community began “getting the social relations right” (Woolcock 1998: 187), the new mix of social capital “embedded in norms and networks of civic engagement” led to more effective government (Putnam 1993a:137). This result depended on getting the relations right at the micro level, both within and between diverse groups in the town, and at the macro level, between various groups and institutions of governance and within and between institutions. The Rivervale experience supports Woolcock’s assessment that all four forms of social capital must be present and engaged in order for sustainable community development to be successful.

In the 1972 to 1986 period of land use planning stalemate, the social relations between the civic infrastructure and people with sustainability concerns were conflicted. At the micro level, intra-community internal connections were well established among those who had long ties to the town. Newcomers on the other hand were not included and they had few connections with other newcomers. People with sustainability interests, native and new, were not linked with each other. And while there were well established ties between groups of natives, e.g. between farmers and villagers, there were limited connections between newcomers and natives.

At the macro level, while strong ties existed between local government and natives, poor relations existed between town officials and those new to town. The governing system was largely closed to public view and tightly held. Again the importance of who’s social capital was active mattered. Social capital held by

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status quo property rights position worked against the introduction of a more sustainable development direction.

After 1986, new micro level community groups began to form. Daycare providers, the bakery/cafés and the volunteer recycling program helped forge relations among native and new residents with a ‘green’ ethic. Andrew linked people with common interests from different community groups, native and newcomer. Commonly perceived threats to place brought like-minded people together in a community of interest. The master planning processes reached out to all groups. Greater intra-group integration and inter-group linkage resulted.

Macro level changes improved relations between local government and the emerging sustainability community. Governance became more transparent. Connections to outside institutions were expanded through the networks of newly involved citizens. The convergence of these multi-level social relations helped assert and gain public acceptance of the sustainable development agenda.

Table 8 below presents the relationships among different forms of social capital in the town’s land use stalemate and collaboration periods.
Table 8. Forms of social capital

Positive outcomes are attained to the extent that both embedded and autonomous social relations prevail at both [micro and macro] levels. (Woolcock 1998: 186)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social relations within a particular community or group of people (intra-community ties @ micro level = Integration)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1972-1986</strong></td>
<td><strong>1987-2002</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive social relations among ‘natives’, people who had lived in the community since childhood and had attended public school together</td>
<td>New venues for the development of social ties—daycare, bakery/café, News, Town and School Meeting, library, school, volleyball, recycling—help new community groups coalesce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive social relations among people living in the villages</td>
<td>Networks form among new and native residents, especially those with a ‘green’ ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive relations among farm families</td>
<td>Land trust provides an institutional base for sustainability community of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social relations vested in different church affiliations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of relations among ‘newcomers’, people moving into the town, especially among those with ‘green’ concerns</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social relations between one community group and others with different networks (extra-community ties @ micro level = Linkage)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1972-1986</strong></td>
<td><strong>1987-2002</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well established relations between village people and those “across the river”</td>
<td>Native activist, Andrew, links people from native and newcomer groups together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of relations between newcomers and natives</td>
<td>Commonly perceived threats to place enable new and native residents to forge relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civic action and planning processes reach out to engage the whole community</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social relations between communities and institutions (government, legal systems) (society- state relations @ macro level = Synergy)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1972-1986</strong></td>
<td><strong>1987-2002</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrow and tightly held governance institutions</td>
<td>Governance institutions change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong ties between town officials/ institutions and like-minded natives</td>
<td>Governance opens to all residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor to no relations between town officials/ institutions and newcomers</td>
<td>Connections to institutions outside the community are developed from new citizen involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newcomers are elected and appointed to town positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civic Infrastructure facilitates citizen engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social relations within and between institutions (coherence, competence and capacity @ macro level = Organizational Integrity)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1972-1986</strong></td>
<td><strong>1987-2002</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town governance largely closed to public view “Old Guard” in control, same people re-elected, appointed to town positions</td>
<td>Governance becomes transparent to public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance maintains strong property rights perspective on land use</td>
<td>New faces in town government as diverse groups share community leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited technical competence to deal with new and different community issues</td>
<td>Governance opens to community planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majority of townspeople adopt a community rights perspective on land use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External sources of technical assistance enhance local governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased capacity to deal with conflicting ideas, perspectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Indicators of Sustainable Community Development**

Evidence of the shift townspeople made toward sustainable development is seen through a comparative assessment, pre- (1987) and post- (2002) land trust influence, on town land use policy and regulations, as well as civic actions, related to a set of indicator issues: land development, economic development, energy, agriculture, forestland, wildlife, water resources, open space, governance and community. In the fifteen years which followed the town’s first land-use planning initiative, voters had not adopted a development path that could move the town toward sustainability.

In sharp contrast, between 1987 and 2002 significant progress was made. The collective vision laid out in the 1992 and 2002 Town Plans foresaw a future wherein environmental, social and economic resources were protected and the character of the community was preserved. Substantially reformed zoning and subdivision regulations, adopted by voters to implement the 1992 plan, put the town on a more sustainable course. Regulatory changes to implement the 2002 plan are underway. The influence of the land trust community in initiating, leading and supporting approval for these institutional changes is evident from the case record.

Governance influence was augmented by the land trust community’s advocacy efforts to create a town center in a pair of historical buildings in the village, protect the town’s gateway from strip development and prevent residential development out of scale with community character and ability to support. In addition, by 2002, the land trust’s conservation efforts had protected approximately 560 acres of farm, forest and river shore land and were progressing to preserve two unique historical agricultural structures.
Through the initial action of one person, an organization formed that significantly influenced the town's evolution. A self-organized institutional response to concerns about the unsustainable development of the town, the and trust facilitated the creation of a new interest-based group of loosely linked residents within the micro structure of the town. Together the land trust and this extended network of people changed the town's development path toward sustainability. The town's experience illustrates the principle that when a system begins to shift, many points come alive at once because feedback has touched every part.

Because of institutional concern for land and community, a land trust is most apt to engage issues related to land use, land use planning and economic development. Table 9 summarizes these sustainability issues, lists practices which affect sustainability, related social, economic and environmental links, and indicators of sustainable community development. As a means of documenting change, the table summarizes data from 1987 the baseline year and 2002, fifteen years after the land trust formed.
Table 9. Indicators of Sustainable Community Development, 1987 and 2002

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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Links</th>
<th>1987 Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land development</td>
<td>Do not act to prevent sprawl</td>
<td>Do not make social, economic, environmental links to development proposals</td>
<td>1. Master Plan: Passed in 1984, but town ordinances to implement the plan were defeated at town meeting. Allowed to expire in 1989. The language of the plan included sustainable development concepts:&lt;br&gt;Goal: “Growth will happen, and it is the intent of this plan that it will be orderly and considerate of the values of the community in order to maintain the present rural character and typical Vermont atmosphere which makes Rivervale such a pleasant place in which to live.”&lt;br&gt;Objectives recommended: “encouraging enough commercial and light industrial development to lesson the tax burden on agricultural, forest and open land;” “promoting measures that would encourage farmers to continue to farm,” “requiring all future development in the town (for whatever purpose) be pursued with strict regard to the capability of the soil in the intended area.” (p. i) “The process followed in formulating and compiling this plan was one of development of fundamental goals and policies, identification of natural and manmade constraints, awareness and concern for protection of past heritage, present neighborhood interests, and future needs; in addition, the balancing of these necessities with regional economic development programs against the resource base and existing settlement patterns.” p.2&lt;br&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not encourage re-use of existing structures</td>
<td></td>
<td>Town Center Residential Policy directed that the “majority of residential growth should take place and emanate from existing settlements” and the town should “encourage use of open space and cluster housing”. P.25&lt;br&gt;2. Subdivision regulations: Not updated to implement Master Plan. Regulations adopted in 1982:&lt;br&gt;Section 406 E: “in the planning of any subdivision due regard shall be given to the preservation and potential enhancement of existing natural features, large trees, scenic points, and other assets of a community nature.” P.5. No impact assessment or enforcement mechanism.&lt;br&gt;Section 407: “Any lot containing a stream bed or natural drainage shall have 35 feet added to its minimum width or depth whichever is most nearly perpendicular to the direction of the stream.” P.6 Location of “watercourses, natural drainage, marshes, wooded areas…and other significant physical features” must to be noted on the subdivision plan. P.13 No impact assessment or protection mechanism.&lt;br&gt;3. Zoning: New regulations voted down; not updated to implement Master Plan. 1969 regulations:&lt;br&gt;Purpose to “promote health, safety and general welfare of all citizens.” P. 1-1. Created three zones: Commercial, Industrial, Residential-Agricultural. 50% lot coverage in RA and C. No requirement in I. Allowed but didn’t encourage cluster development if it didn’t create “undue traffic congestion” or have a “substantially adverse effect on the character of the neighborhood.” P. 10-5. Allowed development in the floodplain.&lt;br&gt;4. Selectboard supportive of strip development from gateway to village; ZBA gives conditional approval to a Cumberland Farms building at entry to business district not in character with village architecture; not supportive of re-use of two historic buildings in the village for town facilities; not supportive of locating post office in the town center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not reduce impacts of development on the environment and society</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do not act to retain neighborhood character</td>
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### 1987 Indicators continued

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<th>Issue</th>
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</table>
| Economic Development   | Do not act to encourage local business                                  | Do not make social, economic, environmental links to development proposals | Master Plan: **Not implemented.**  
Economic Development Policy encouraged industries using Rivervale skills.  
The Town Center Commercial Policy proposed that development “should be viewed in the light of the historic value of these areas and their architecture and steps taken to insure that new development complies with the nature and needs of the Town Centers.” P.26  
Transportation Policy supported non-automated traffic: bikes, horses, pedestrians, etc., limits to curb cuts, off-street parking, experiments with mass transit |
|                        | Do not act to reduce commuting or encourage car-pooling                 |                                                 |                                                                                |
| Energy use             | Do not act to encourage efficiency and renewability                      | Do not make social, economic, environmental links to development proposals | No policy or regulation                                                        |
| Agriculture            | Do not encourage agricultural land uses and sustainable practices.      | Do not make social, economic, environmental links to development proposals | Master Plan: **Not implemented**  
Agricultural Residential Area Policy to “facilitate the long term use of lands best suited to agricultural production by preventing a mixture of urban and rural uses which place unbalanced loads on agricultural land and which may result in speculative or inflated land values which encourage the premature termination of agricultural pursuits.” P.27 |
|                        | Do not act to reduce land fragmentation                                 | Do not make social, economic, environmental links to development proposals | Master Plan: **Not implemented**  
The Natural Areas Policy advocated limited uses and promoted protection “whenever feasible.  
Residential Agricultural Area Policy proposed that “development should take place in such a way that any irreplaceable or unique natural areas and scarce resources will not be harmed.” P.27 |
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<th>Issue</th>
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<th>1987 Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water resources</td>
<td>Do not act to protect surface and ground water resources, wetlands, vernal pools, riparian, aquifer recharge areas</td>
<td>Do not make social, economic, environmental links to development proposals</td>
<td>Master Plan: <strong>Not implemented</strong></td>
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<td>The Shoreline Area policy aimed to &quot;preserve and enhance the high quality&quot; of Rivervale and Gillette Pond, by protecting the shorelines and maintain high quality &quot;which are unsuitable for development, maintain a low density of development and maintain high standards for permitted development.&quot; Proposed a 500 ft shoreline buffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestland</td>
<td>Do not encourage sustainable management</td>
<td>Do not make social, economic, environmental links to development proposals</td>
<td>Master Plan: <strong>Not implemented</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not act to reduce land fragmentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Natural Areas Policy advocated limited uses and promoted protection &quot;whenever feasible.&quot; Residential Agricultural Area Policy proposed that &quot;development should take place in such a way that any irreplaceable or unique natural areas and scarce resources will not be harmed.&quot; P.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open space</td>
<td>Do not act to permanently protect land from development</td>
<td>Do not make social, economic, environmental links to development proposals</td>
<td>Master Plan: <strong>Not implemented</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Natural Areas Policy advocated limited uses and promoted protection &quot;whenever feasible.&quot; Residential Agricultural Area Policy proposed that &quot;development should take place in such a way that any irreplaceable or unique natural areas and scarce resources will not be harmed.&quot; P.27</td>
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<td>Issue</td>
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<td>1987 Indicators</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Do not encourage public participation in and ownership of governance by all citizens</td>
<td>Do not make social, economic, environmental links</td>
<td>Selectboard:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Don't approve funds requested by the Planning Commission for planning support (clerical, professional, etc.) Don't approve, and frequently stall, town plans and planning regulations. Don't support Planning Commission recommendations for members, staff.</td>
</tr>
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<td>*Controlled by the &quot;old guard.&quot; I ran [for Selectboard] primarily because I had differences with the other candidate...that individual was new to the community and I felt as if someone who had some ownership ought to be running against the new individual. (Whit)</td>
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<td>*Block progress. In reality I think we probably tried to keep it the way we felt, but there was a couple of problems there. You tried to balance it a little, but you did try to lean your way...We probably held it to a good dog fight!! (Harris)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Monthly non-profit newspaper formed in Dec 1984; begins to open governance to public scrutiny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Do not increase sense and valuing of place</td>
<td>Do not make social, economic, environmental links</td>
<td>Monthly non-profit newspaper mailed directly to residents forms to &quot;foster a stronger sense of community among our residents by providing a means of communication that will objectively inform the residents of Rivervale on those subjects which are important to our town's vitality.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do not foster belonging</td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited opportunity for citizen involvement; limited outreach to newcomers.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of civility in public discussions about land use planning.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


2002 Indicators of Sustainable Community Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Links</th>
<th>2002 Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land development</td>
<td>Prevent sprawl</td>
<td>Ecological, economic and social well-being</td>
<td>1. Master Plan: 1992 adopted and implemented; 2002 adopted and implementation begun. 1992 goals stressed the importance of preserving open space and natural resources, directed development to village areas, planning to avoid the &quot;negative effects&quot; of &quot;strip development.&quot; It &quot;recognized that the impact of activities on one parcel may extend beyond the boundaries of that parcel and that the planning process can help to lessen those impacts.&quot; It recommended a change from three zones to 5: Village Commercial/Residential; High Density Residential, Industrial/Commercial / Industrial and Rural/Agricultural. A major revision, the 2002 Plan further developed the direction set in 1992. Its purpose acknowledged a &quot;recognition of the importance of economy, environment and sense of place, in addition to the respect for rights and property of individuals citizens, builds a quality of life that characterizes strong communities&quot; P.1 and committed the town to direct its planning processes and regulations to &quot;develop its economy, protect its environment and preserve its sense of place.&quot; P.5 as win he 1992 plan, development is directed to existing village areas with encouragement of mixed use. Architectural and historical integrity is to be protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage re-use of existing structures</td>
<td></td>
<td>Floodplain protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce impacts of development on the economy, environment and society</td>
<td></td>
<td>Open space recreation landscape aesthetics affordable housing livability public services and fiscal responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retain/ enhance community character and sense of place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use existing public infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td></td>
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2002 Indicators continued

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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Links</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Development continued</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Zoning: major update in 1996 to implement 1992 Master Plan and minor update in 2002. The ordinance states that “Rivervale’s rural character will be protected by zoning regulations that support current patterns of use; and by small-scale, rather than large-scale, development.” P. 1 Required Site Plan Review. Allowed for Planned Residential or Planned Unit Development (PRD, PUD) “to promote the most appropriate use of land to facilitate the adequate and economic provision of roads and utilities, and to preserve the natural and scenic qualities of the open lands of the Town of Rivervale.” High Density Residential District (40% lot coverage) allowed for “energy efficient pedestrian traffic, roadways and school bus traffic” and called for “traditional spacing and setbacks” to “preserve the integrity of the New England Village atmosphere.” PRD encouraged and required for subdivisions over 3 lots. Zoning allowed for use of accessory dwellings for disabled family members or those over 55 years of age. Historic sites “shall not be adversely affected.” Provided for adaptive re-use of structures and easements for planned pedestrian and bikeways. Development proposed for slopes in excess of 20% require engineering plans for erosion control and safe construction. 4. Civic Actions: Created the Town Center—re-used two historic buildings; located Town &amp; School offices, library, post office together in village; retained post office in the village; Preserved gateway to community and distinguished village boundary; prevented truck stop ‘sprawl’ proposal; prevented large-scale residential development outside village; established voluntary recycling; created non-profit elderly housing; adopted impact fees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>Encourage local business</td>
<td>employment, esp. youth, seniors community service public service traffic neighborhood character meeting places local ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce commuting</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Master Plan: 1992 and 2002 plans acknowledge importance of “locally owned and operated businesses” and diversity of economic opportunity. 2. Zoning: the Gateway Commercial district (40% coverage) allows commercial uses in the entry corridor to the village while avoiding strip development through limited curb cuts, internal circulation, side or rear parking, green space and landscape screening. A mixed Residential/Commercial zone (40% coverage) allows residential compatible business uses in residential style buildings. The Village Commercial zone (50% coverage) creates opportunity for pedestrian friendly retail type development in the village in addition to a Commercial zone with broader economic uses, an Industrial/commercial zone (60-80 % lot coverage) created areas for manufacturing, warehousing and larger operations. Different traffic standards applied to each district. Noise and light standards. Allowed for home occupations and cottage industries, adaptive re-use of existing structures. 3. Civic action: resisted development of a second interchange; Economic Development Committee formed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase community interaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use existing public infrastructure</td>
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## 2002 Indicators continued

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<th>Issue</th>
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<th>2002 Indicators</th>
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</table>
| **Energy**  | Encourage energy efficiency and use of renewable resources | renewable energy sources economic cost benefit social modeling ecological health | 1. **Master Plan:** 1992 plan included an energy policy which encouraged conservation, efficiency, renewable resources, and development patterns that concentrated growth to take advantage of energy infrastructure. Policy reinforced in 2002 by directing the town to “utilize land use planning to influence development patterns and site design in an energy efficient manner.”  
2. **Zoning:** Lighting: “it shall be a requirement for any municipal approval in all zoning districts, to mitigate adverse impacts and conserve energy.” Considered a best practice model ordinance.  
3. **Civic actions:** Volunteers begin a town recycling program with town meeting approval. Gain Selectboard approval to use town parking lot as a collection center. Town joins a Solid Waste District for waste collection and recycling services; Middle School and High School converted primary heating systems to wood chip burning furnaces; established commuter parking adjacent to the Interstate; create a volunteer town energy coordinator position. |
| **Waste**   | Reduction, re-use                                   |                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| **Agriculture** | Encourage agricultural land uses and sustainable practices | food security local economy recreation ecological health community character | 1. **Master Plan:** 1992 plan contained strong policy statements “to encourage the protection of agricultural and forestry lands” and individuals engaged in agriculture and forestry activities.” Included inventory and trend data for agricultural land.  
2. **Zoning:** Planned Residential Development encouraged in the A/R zone and required for subdivisions over 9 lots with retention of agricultural forest or outdoor recreational land encouraged. Allowed for cottage industries secondary to agricultural uses, adaptive re-use of existing structures, with specific mention of “enterprises whose principal use is for the sale of agricultural products.” Farm structures exempt from 35’ height restrictions.  
3. **Civic action:** establish Farmers’ Market at town park in the village. |
| **Wildlife** | Reduce land fragmentation                        | ecological health habitat biodiversity open space recreation community character | 1. **Master Plan:** 1992 Plan included inventory and trend data for wildlife habitat. 2002 plan drew attentions to the value of riparian areas and their connection to wildlife habitat.  
2. **Zoning:** “rare or irreplaceable natural areas shall not be adversely affected” by development. P.34. A PRD or PUD should make appropriate provision of the following features when feasible: streams, stream banks, and water bodies, aquifer recharge areas, slopes greater than 20%, wetlands, soils unsuitable for development, agricultural lands, meadow lands, productive forest lands, historic features, unique natural features as identified on the Town Plan, wildlife habitat, high elevations, ridge tops, and floodplains.” P.41. |
| **Water**   | Ensure ground and surface water quality wetlands, vernal pools, riparian, aquifer recharge areas | ecological health habitat bio-diversity open space recreation water quality | 1. **Master Plan:** 1992 Plan included inventory and trend data for significant natural areas, including rivers, ponds and streams, groundwater, aquifers, wetlands, floodplains and watersheds. 2002 plan drew attentions to the value of riparian areas.  
2. **Zoning:** “Existing water supplies and the quality of ground and surface water resources shall not be adversely affected” by development. p.34. Created a Shoreland Protection Overlay Zone to protect shorelines from erosion, pollution and visual blight; a Flood Hazard Overlay Zone to protect the natural ability of the floodplain to retain waters safely. No development within 100 feet of a Class I wetland and within 50 feet of a Class II wetland. |
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</table>
| Forestland    | Sustainable management                       | open space, water/air quality, habitat, erosion, ecological health | 1. Master Plan: 1992 Plan included inventory and trend data for forest land as well as for forested significant natural areas.  
2. Zoning: “rare or irreplaceable natural areas shall not be adversely affected by development.” P.34. PRD and PUD requirements |
| Open space    | Increase the amount of land protected from development | habitat, recreation, ecological health, community character, air/water quality, livability | 1. Master Plan: 1992 and 2002 goals connect Rivervale’s rural character to open space and direct high density new development toward the villages and call for planning regulation that cause the “least intrusion” on outside areas.  
2. Zoning: “rare or irreplaceable natural areas shall not be adversely affected by development.” P.34. PRD and PUD requirements.  
3. Civic actions: Land trust forms and conserves 560 acres by 2002; official town committee established to develop and maintain a town-wide trail system. |
| Governance    | Encourage public participation and ownership of governance | citizen empowerment, communication, access, responsive, trust, synergy | 1. Town meetings from 1887-2002 approved initiatives to expand the Selectboard to 5 members and adopt a name change from Selectmen to Selectboard; approved full time town administrator and planner/zoning administrator positions; merged the Town and Village; approved volunteer Conservation Commission, Recreation Path Committee, Development Review Board, Economic Development Committee, Energy Coordinator.  
2. Master planning process leading to the 1992 and 2002 plans involved citizens of all political persuasions, ages, genders, occupations and length of residency. |
| Community     | Increase sense and valuing of place           | cohesion, participation, diversity, collaboration, civility | 1. For a person, working together with people on a common cause can turn a town into a community. (Hank)  
2. We are a small town with a compact village with services...Anyone can get involved. Always vacancies on committees. Lots of places to fit in. (Roxanne)  
3. Community involvement is the process of democracy. We are practicing democracy. (Lester)  
4. I think people need ownership of stuff. As soon as they have something to do, they feel better about it and they feel committed. If you come on a town board you have ownership! Maybe more than you wanted. (Dave) |
Lessons Learned

Lessons learned from this study are, like the subject matter, intertwined and synergistic. Together these lessons contribute to the enhancement of what Boulding calls Integrative Power, learning by institutions and individuals that empower people to set their communities on a more sustainable development path.

Leadership

While the case pointed to the power of an individual to be a catalyst for social change, an unanticipated finding was the importance of leadership in making that change happen. The success of citizen initiatives depended in large part on individuals who could articulate a vision, set goals and inspire participation. Social capital resources were thus organized to advance the sustainability agenda. Within the town, the land trust built on its successes to assume a leadership position in the community. As members became leaders in the governing structure, their ideas and concerns were placed on the public agenda, supported by internal and external networks established by the land trust.

Organizationally, the land trust demonstrated the strength of situational leadership as various members came forward in response to project needs. For example when the land trust was struggling to create an acquisition strategy, on one occasion a banker stepped up to lead the group to a creative solution, on another, it was a builder. Leadership vested in individuals and in the group proved to be a vital social capital asset.
Civic Learning

How do people learn how to use governance systems to bring ideas into the public agenda? How do they learn to lead? Learnings from the Rivervale experience point to the role of observation, practice and connections. By attending Selectboard and Planning Commission meetings the mystery of town governance soon disappeared. One of the things I learned was that the powers that be, were whomever they are in any given room. A lot of the people weren't necessarily any smarter than I was or knew any more, they were just in a different seat. (Hank) At the same time the observer could see the value of sitting in that seat. After an individual gained access to a town board, he or she gained first hand knowledge about the policy interplay among boards. In time that led the individual to involvement in other parts of the governance system. Insight from the inside was shared among people in the emerging network to advance their understanding of how to make the system work.

Involvement in civic action provided powerful learning experiences. Participants learned the value of public discussion, of the need to listen to opposing arguments, of the need to inform in a clear and understandable manner. Through experience people learned not to assume a message was being delivered, but to follow up with phone calls and notes. Effective citizen action required organization and attention to detail. It required people willing to attend meetings, willing to stuff envelopes, willing to pay for paper and postage. And not everyone had to be willing to do the same tasks.

Early on, the land trust had the benefit of a member who had served on the Selectboard and understood the ins and outs of using town meeting as a forum for public decision-making. The experience of many of the founding members in successfully
winning town meeting approval to consider their town center proposal provided valuable civic practice. The organization skillfully used town meeting to put items on the town warrant for discussion and vote. A related tool was the use of petitions to gain support for initiatives. Besides forcing issues on to the official decision making agenda, signature gathering was a useful educational/communication/support building opportunity.

The urgency for action around pending issues such as the truck stop, the town center and the Chinburg housing development, forced organizers quickly up the learning curve. Social capital played a role here as well since several of the founding members were builders who had participated in local and state regulatory systems and thus had familiarity with the process. Another member had professional connections to the state’s Act 250 environmental review agency; while yet another was an environmental lawyer. Learning was greatly facilitated by member skills and networks.

Communication

The case demonstrated that diverse means of communication are critical to engaging people in community issues. People need to know what is going on in their town in order to form opinions or get involved. In spreading information throughout the town, the land trust community made extensive use of formal and informal channels of communications. Of considerable importance was the local non-profit community newspaper. It was a trusted source of information, delivered free to every household. The News provided a monthly window into the activities of local government, commentary on community issues and a forum for civic discussion.
An unexpected finding was the extensive communications resource found in the social capital of the town’s economic center. Local businesses provided venues for chance encounters among townspeople to share news and get to know one another. As a person began to recognize post office, bank or hardware staff, and vice versa, feelings of belonging to the community were strengthened.

The availability of gathering places in the business center was a related communications asset. The bakery cafe became a popular meeting place, what the land trust board dubbed as its office. The restaurant across the street was frequented by other social groups. The town center, which grouped the library, the post office and town and school administrative offices around a common parking lot, created a village destination, drawing people into the business district. In the summer the Farmers’ Market and recreation activities in the town park added further reasons to come into social contact with other residents. These social capital assets added to the value of the local commercial center.

The willingness of individuals to use their social capital to communicate ideas proved to be a powerful resource. The success of the land trust’s information campaigns rested on detailed, well-planned and orchestrated organizational strategies, personal contributions of funds, skills and time, as well as personal commitments to contact people in their social circles. In addition to well-timed flyers, letters to the editor and advertising, the combination of a phone call or door to door canvassing with a follow-up postcard made a big difference in gaining public approval for land use initiatives.
Creativity in communication was important. The painting of the church tower, a symbolic gesture observed daily by residents driving through town, was worth thousands of words and flyers.

Communication through social networks served other uses. These informal connections brought the land trust its first conservation project. And they were used to raise financial capital for land and easement purchases.

Communication through professional networks connected the land trust to grant resources, technical assistance and other organizations. These were also used to develop conservation partnerships within extended networks, such as those made with the Youth Corps and the Farm Bureau.

**Controversy**

The Rivervale experience brings forward the lesson that while conflict can be harmful, as in the stalemate period, controversy as seen in the land trust period is productive. Controversy helped the town discuss old ways of doing things and allowed examination of new ones. It stirred interest and got people to pay attention.

The debate became most helpful to issue resolution when it was conducted with civility. Through its information campaigns the land trust community framed the public discussion in the newspaper, at hearings and town meeting. Professionally prepared Q & A handouts, visuals and white papers used to explain complex issues, set a tone of rational discourse.
Community Advocacy and the Land Trust

Notably, with the exception of the truck stop fight which launched the organization, involvement in controversial issues was not continued by the land trust as an institution, but instead as an informal community of members and supporters. This was another unanticipated learning. The land trust learned from the truck stop experience that action in opposition to a development proposal of a local landowner, a farmer, was to put itself in conflict with its land conservation goals. It was important for an organization that wanted to act in the public interest not have a partisan political identity. Besides as one board member noted, funds were too hard to raise to be spent on legal bills.

On the other hand, advocacy had positive impacts. It established the land trust as an action-oriented conservation group that acted on its convictions. It made the land trust recognizable to and respected by like-minded people. Together these factors helped the land trust attract members and supporters.

Civic infrastructure

The study affirmed that an open, accessible, responsive civic infrastructure is necessary to the productive engagement of citizens in governance. When the civic infrastructure reaches out to involve people, the community gains the benefit of diverse personal and professional networks, bringing invaluable expertise and other resources to bear on community issues. The result is improved capacity to deal with the community issues.
**Value of Social Capital**

Without question, the claim that social capital "enhances the benefits of investment" in other forms of capital (Putnam 1995: 63) was a valuable learning. In its acquisition strategies, the land trust used its social capital to leverage multiple sources of economic capital, from private investors, foundations and government, to protect private environmental capital for the public good. Investment of social capital in the development of new social networks multiplied its impact on community building. Investment of social capital in local governance (political capital) increased its effectiveness. Investment of social capital in education programs about natural history and land use planning increased intellectual capital. Investment of social capital in the town center, not only leveraged economic capital in the form of grants and political capital in the form of Congressional support for the post office move, it increased the economic and social value of the village. And if all goes as planned, the land trust's social and economic investment in the historic barns project will not only increase public environmental capital, but will also add to and diversify economic opportunity in the community.

That other forms of capital enhanced the benefit of social capital was an unexpected learning. As noted above, the economic capital invested in the community's business center also increased social capital. The economic investment in a town newspaper increased social capital. Investments in land conservation increased its environmental value to the public, as well as creating places to gather and places of pride, thereby increasing social capital. Altogether these learnings point to the integrated, interlinked, multiplier nature of investment in social capital.

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Land Trusts and Sustainable Community Development

That land trusts are a resource for sustainable community development through conservation is well known. That they also can play a key role in building a constituency for encompassing issues of sustainability is less well known. Because of the link between conservation and sustainability, a land trust is an institution where people with these common sentiments come together in a community of interest. As the organization extends out into a town through the social networks of its directors and members it facilitates the building of larger network of like-minded people that can be mobilized in support of land trust projects as well as broader initiatives that support institutional goals.

In this way, while avoiding direct engagement in specific land use conflicts, land trusts can be instrumental in moving the sustainable agenda forward in their target communities. As an aside it should be noted that the term ‘sustainability’ was seldom used by those interviewed or in town and land trust documents. Rather sustainability results from land use planning, regulatory frameworks and other steps communities take to balance economic, social and environmental impact of community development. All are issues that a land trust formally as an institution or informally through its networks can take leadership in directing or supporting.

Land Trust Member Commitment

Commitment to the mission of the organization was a key factor in the successes of the Rivervale Land Trust and its extended community. Commitment made members willing to pick up the phone and call a professional contact, a neighbor, a potential funder
Commitment made members stick with the organization through lengthy and difficult negotiations or civic actions.

Commitment comes in part because members feel the work of the land trust is satisfying, rewarding, productive and important. Skills and contributions are affirmed. The “fleetness” with which a private board can move, after reaching a well discussed and thought out decision is an invaluable asset. Attention to process leads to another attribute: participants enjoy each other’s company; board meetings are ‘fun.’ There is a shared value for problem-solving and action.

Commitment also relates to lifestyle. For those most involved with the organization, the work of the land trust is linked to the person’s life. There is a flow, a continuity between the person’s job, family and his or her participation in the land trust.

Further Research

As is ever the case, this study naturally leads to more questions, more areas of investigation to add our understanding of people and the quest for sustainability.

Extent of Community Change

Did the town implement its new regulatory framework in its enforcement actions? This research did not extend into whether the town by adopting systems to set itself on a path to sustainability, actually took the path. Additional research into enforcement, as seen in decisions made by Development Review Board, the Selectboard, the Conservation Commission and the Planning Commission would add to our understanding.
of the dynamics of change within the system and the extent of the sustainability commitment made by townspeople.

**Uniqueness of the Rivervale Experience**

How unique is the Rivervale experience? While the within case methodology served to isolate the importance of different macro and micro variables, how would a successful experience in a different type of community compare? How would an unsuccessful community compare? Is community size a critical variable?

**Role of the Institution**

Does there need to be an institution leading change? Does the institution of change have to be a land trust? What other types of organizations might produce a similar result? Would the macro and micro variables have similar weight? Or would a different set of factors prove influential? To what extent do land trusts in other places go beyond conservation efforts to engage citizens and communities on sustainability issues?

**The Role of Volunteer Town Boards**

Citizen involvement on official and ad hoc town boards provided important opportunity for civic learning and institutional change. What is the effect of shifts from volunteers to paid staff? Expansion of town boards leads to the need to fill more volunteer positions and filling positions is a perennial concern of town officials. For maximum effectiveness volunteer boards need to be supported with technical assistance and this has implication for town budgets. Some of the learnings from this study provide
insight to how recruitment efforts could be improved and citizens could be supported.

Further focus and study is needed.

The Role of Town Meeting

Rivervale had a town meeting form of government which put voters in the policy making, regulation approving seat. This responsibility is exercised once a year in March and at other times, as requested by petition or town officials. The land trust community used town meeting on many occasions to put forward its agenda. However, it was noted by several interviewees that the traditional town meeting was changing. Many more issues were being decided by Australian ballot with the result that citizens do not have to attend the meeting to participate in a discussion and take a vote, but can stop by a polling place to cast a vote and skip the meeting altogether. As more and more items are put on the ballot reducing for some the need to get together and talk about issues, how is the role of town meeting in the governing process affected? What steps can be taken to ensure public discussion of issues?

What about places with other forms of government? How do citizens lead change in places with mayors or town councils?

Converting learning to application

Learnings from this study can assist development professionals, policy makers, funders, activists, educators and technical assistance providers in designing and implementing community level approaches to sustainable development and can enhance
efforts to support the work of community based institutions engaged in sustainable
development. Local and regional land trusts are a particular audience for study findings.

**Concluding Remarks**

The Town of Rivervale and the Rivervale Land Trust provided an experiential
lens through which to view how social capital was spent, invested and increased in efforts
to advance a public agenda for sustainable community development. The land trust
provided a forum for public education and discourse around sustainability issues, ways
for people to be involved in those issues, and a place for people to get connected to their
community. In the process a community of interest developed around the land trust with
the capacity to effectively engage and advance important issues related to land use
planning, development and conservation. Though communication, collaboration, and the
strategic use of networks, the land trust community was able to set their town on a more
sustainable path.
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Interview Consent

The research project *Social Capital and Community Development* sponsored by the Natural Resources Policy Analysis Laboratory examines how citizens develop the capacity to engage development issues in their communities. The interview will be taped and the tape will be transcribed so that the content of the interview is as accurate as possible. The researcher will seek to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research. The names and content of those interviewed will be kept anonymous through the use of pseudonyms as will the name of the town and local organizations.

While you will not receive any compensation to participate in this project, your experience will help development professionals, policy makers, funders, activists, educators and technical assistance providers better understand how to support the work of citizens and community based institutions engaged in community development. Your participation is strictly voluntary. If you agree to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw at any time during the study without prejudice.

If you have any questions about this research or would like more information before, during, or after the study, you may contact the researcher, Lynda Brushett by mail at Ten Harlan Drive, Barrington, NH, by phone at 603.664-5838 or by e-mail at Brushett@rcn.com or you may contact Dr. Mimi Becker, UNH Department of Natural Resources at 603-862-3950. If you have any questions about your involvement in a research project, you can contact Julie Simpson in the UNH Office of Sponsored Research at 603-862-2003 or Julie.Simpson@unh.edu to discuss them.

Please sign two copies of this form indicating your willingness to participate in this project. One copy is for the project records; the other is for you.

I, ____________________________________________, agree to participate in this research project.

Date________________________________________
The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46, Subsection 101 (b), category 2.

The IRB made the following comments or recommendations. They are not contingencies, and do not require a formal response from you unless otherwise noted.

- In the informed consent document, the investigator should omit the statement regarding mandatory reporting (3rd paragraph, 4th sentence) as it is not applicable to her research.

Approval is granted to conduct the study as described in your protocol. Prior to implementing any changes in your protocol, you must submit them to the IRB for review and receive written, unconditional approval. If you experience any unusual or unanticipated results with regard to the participation of human subjects, report such events to this office within one working day of occurrence. Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed pink Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

The protection of human subjects in your study is an ongoing process for which you hold primary responsibility. In receiving IRB approval for your protocol, you agree to conduct the study in accordance with the ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects in research, as described in the following three reports: Belmont Report; Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46; and UNH’s Multiple Project Assurance of Compliance. The full text of these documents is available on the Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) website at http://www.unh.edu/compliance/Regulatory_Compliance.html and by request from OSR.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 862-2003. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Regulatory Compliance Manager

cc: File
Mimi Larsen Becker, Natural Resources