



Vermont Farmers Food Center



Watercolor by Vermont Artist, Peter Huntoon

February 16, 2017

House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

- Organization Summary
- Property Map, Buildings, Description
- Farmers Hall and Event Center Projects
- VFFC's Health Care Share
- Web site link: <http://www.vermontfarmersfoodcenter.org/>
 - The video and the link to the Rutland Historical Society, *The Story of the Lincoln Iron Works*, by Jack Crowther, may be of particular interest, along with anything else on the site

Documents and testimony provided by VFFC Board President,
Greg Cox (Telephone 802-683-4606)



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Vermont Farmers Food Center (VFFC) began as a grassroots, volunteer-led project and is spearheading the rebuilding of infrastructure necessary for agriculture to serve as a regional economic engine through the development of 2.93 acres of industrially zoned land with four existing buildings in the heart of Downtown Rutland.

VFFC increases access and availability of locally produced food in the Rutland Region by expanding markets and market access, aggregation, and distribution of locally produced and value added agricultural products. VFFC is the initiative of the Vermont Farmers Market Education Center, Inc., a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in Rutland, Vermont, in 2012.

Several years of discussions involving farmers, value-added producers, local food consumers, and community organizations, regarding the success of the Rutland Summer Farmers Market, led to discussion for the demand for a Rutland Winter Farmers Market, and the desire to increase access and availability of locally produced food.

VFFC is developing an agricultural center to create opportunities and economic viability to mentor and sustain emerging agricultural-based businesses, resulting in building a local food system around sustainable farming practices. VFFC's agricultural center will create opportunities for farm production and marketing expansion by providing the storage, aggregation, and efficiencies to tap larger markets. VFFC's agricultural center's storage infrastructure will also address the Rutland Region's food security challenges. A shared-use commercial kitchen will serve as a regulatory umbrella for value added agricultural businesses with workforce development capacity to address economic security and societal needs. VFFC's vision includes a Community Kitchen Institute – a training program for unemployed and underemployed Vermonters who are interested in food-related careers - as well as, educational agricultural seminars and workshops, which provide information and demonstrate agricultural techniques. VFFC is exploring the development of an export agricultural market to Manhattan and Boston.

VFFC's agricultural center's Farmers Hall, with a Community Learning Kitchen, and second floor Educational Classroom and balcony, not only serves as home to the Winter Farmers Market, but also serves as an event center year 'round.

VFFC's Health Care Share (HCS), in its third year, is increasing access and consumption of healthy foods for at-risk health families in Rutland County. The HCS is an innovative collaboration working at the intersection of agriculture, public health, and economic development. The HCS partners with economically challenged new and emerging local farms, primary health care providers, and educators. VFFC HCS offers an actionable preventative health initiative while involving local underserved youth through summer employment opportunities engaging community volunteers, farmers, and HCS Members as part of the regional food network.

VFFC is a visionary, entrepreneurial organization, committed to an agricultural economy, which grows local foods and creates jobs, promoting community economic development. VFFC's agricultural infrastructure provides the region economic stimulus that adds jobs in diverse sectors as dollars become more available on a regional basis. The result is a vibrant and sustainable regional agricultural system, preserving the working landscape, while improving the capacity to feed Vermonters, regardless of economic status, improving health, and enhancing the Rutland Region's economic wellbeing.

VFFC will build wealth through economic activity generated by local food systems; promote health and food security through the connection to food and community; art, history, and learning connection to working landscape and Vermont heritage; operational and energy efficiency and sustainability; entrepreneurial, creative solutions; respect and involvement of individuals, community, and environment.