

Local Democracy and Front Porch Forum

Neighbors using FPF become better informed and more engaged.

A neighbor's story from Heidi Ballentine in Newfane, Vermont:

"Recently, a neighbor posted an invitation on Front Porch Forum (FPF) for people in our town to gather in questioning how we can become more informed and better able to respond to current social issues. From that one post, 40 people showed up, including many local legislators. Without FPF's community-building infrastructure, this would not have occurred."

What fuels a healthy democracy? Informed and engaged citizens.

Today, technology can impede communication with an overload of noise and misinformation, while spurring often disrespectful screen-to-screen debates. In contrast, Vermont neighbors and thousands of their local public officials post and read about local issues and political matters on Front Porch Forum. Open and civil discussion on FPF leads to people being better informed and getting more involved in their communities. This helps support a healthy local democracy.

According to FPF co-founder Michael Wood-Lewis, "FPF was created with the idea of supporting and encouraging vibrant communities. A big part of that vibrancy comes from a strong local democracy and open communication with our public officials, who we've welcomed to the forum since its beginning in 2006."

Every day on Front Porch Forum we see actions, small and large, taken by empowered and informed individuals who have a stake in the future and well-being of their neighborhoods. The result is a stronger community and stronger local democracy. **Stay informed about local issues on FPF. Speak up. Act.**

"Technology as a tool can be used to divide us or to bring us together, and it just depends on who's using the tool and how it's wielded," says Middlesex Town Moderator Susan Clark. "I really admire the way Front Porch Forum uses the Internet, but does not try to keep you on the screen for hours. It urges you to read it and then get going, and go out and be with your neighbors. That is really important and constructive in terms of building community and building democracy"

Front Porch Forum is a statewide network of online local forums, where neighbors post about a wide variety of topics. In many Vermont communities, more than 75% of local households participate. Learn more at frontporchforum.com.



front porch forum[®]

HELPING NEIGHBORS CONNECT

Did you know that due to FPF*..

- **91%** of FPF members are more informed about **local community issues**
- **77%** are more informed about their **neighbors' points of view** on local issues
- **67%** are more informed about **local government services**
- **73%** are more likely to cooperate on a **shared community need**
- **71%** are more likely to **discuss local issues with a neighbor**
- **71%** are more likely to **attend a local public meeting**
- **60%** are more likely to **contact a local public official**
- **40%** of FPF members can cite examples of **neighbors getting engaged in the local political process** due to public officials participating on FPF
- **31%** of FPF members can cite examples of **more trust between citizens and elected officials** due to public officials participating on FPF



*The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded an independent third-party, Network Impact, to design, implement and analyze an online survey of 132,188 Front Porch Forum members in March 2017. 13,086 Vermonters completed this 20-minute survey. With a 99% confidence level, the survey results represent the full FPF membership.