

Front Porch Forum

2019 Annual Benefit Corporation Report

Leadership statements

"The team at Front Porch Forum continued to deliver on our mission in 2019, helping neighbors connect and increase community resiliency across all of Vermont and 30 towns in upstate New York. This report highlights our 2019 goals and accomplishments, and points toward our goals for 2020 and beyond."

Michael Wood-Lewis
FPF Co-Founder and CEO

"I believe that Front Porch Forum has acted in accordance with its benefit purpose and demonstrated the Benefit Corporation standards during fiscal year 2019. I am pleased with FPF's continued commitment and progress, and I look forward to additional improvements going forward."

Susan A. Comerford, Ph.D.
FPF Benefit Director

Mission - FPF's reason for existence

FPF's mission is to help neighbors connect and build community, thereby increasing local resiliency. We do that by hosting a network of online local forums covering all of Vermont, where neighbors share postings about a wide variety of topics. The resulting increase in social capital benefits citizens, public officials, local businesses, nonprofits and local media.

Vision - How FPF-served communities will appear in the future

FPF's vision is of thriving and resilient communities inhabited by informed citizens who know and support their neighbors, participate in local democracy and community projects, support area nonprofits, and spend their money with local businesses. These communities are served by informed and engaged political and local government leaders, as well as mission-driven nonprofits, robust local journalism, and a thriving local economy.

FPF 2019 goals

- **Better results - benefit goals**
 - Increased social capital for neighbors, leading to more resilient neighborhoods
 - More healthy local businesses, leading to stronger local economies
 - More nonprofits fulfilling their social missions, leading to stronger local social safety nets
 - More local journalism, leading to sound local democracies
 - Healthier local elections, leading to sound local democracies
 - More effective local government, leading to well-run municipalities
 - More effective school districts, leading to successful public schools
- **More reach**
 - Solid growth in member count across all member types and across our entire region
 - Easy-to-use UI, regardless of tech skills, connectivity, demographics, or location
 - Modest expansion that demonstrates FPF's viability beyond Vermont's borders
- **Enhanced visibility and stature**
 - Increased FPF public visibility in current service area, with a focus on low-traction areas
 - Up-to-date public perception of FPF as a dynamic and creative business
 - Recognition of FPF as a necessary partner for those aiming to connect with Vermonters at the community level
 - Sustained engagement with a network of peers, across Vermont and beyond
- **Strong financial footing**
 - Diversified revenue streams
 - Increased revenue-to-member ratio
 - Increased profits
 - Affordable and timely access to mission-aligned capital
- **Effective and motivated team**
 - New hires that fill key gaps in our team
 - Competitive compensation
 - A healthy and supportive work environment
 - Tech tools that increase staff efficiency and reduce repetitive tasks

FPF 2019 accomplishments

Front Porch Forum continued to serve its social mission and the communities of Vermont through all of 2019. This service grew on many fronts, as demonstrated by these statistics:

- 176,000 members (out of Vermont's 260,000 households)
- 6% growth in total number of postings submitted by members
- 34,000 events added by members to their local FPF community calendars
- 59 million email newsletters sent to members (14% growth over previous year)
- 92% growth in clicks on local business advertisements
- 9% growth in website pageviews
- 9% growth in revenue
- 18-person engaged and stable staff

We hear thousands of stories from members about FPF's public benefit. Here are some samples from 2019:

"Last month Rachel, who is a teacher, requested Legos on our Front Porch Forum. I had a large bin of them from my grandchildren. They hadn't played with them for years, so I thought it would be a good thing to donate them to Rachel, for her students. Well, yesterday I received a thick envelope, in the mail. Seven students, from her 5/6th grade class wrote me thank you letters. What a heartwarming surprise! The saying goes, 'in giving, you will receive' how true that is."

• Carmen in Burlington

"I recently posted a query for someone to give us quotes on a culvert installation. I was overwhelmed by the number of responses I got – both recommendations and direct outreach from providers. Where else but FPF does this kind of neighborly conversation happen?"

• Cindy in Westford

"If you are ever feeling lonely, just post on FPF for crutches. You'll get lots of emails and you can roam through the valley visiting and picking them up. And a week later you get to visit again to return them. Thank you all for the offers."

• Ken in Warren

"I am hoping this is a misunderstanding, but I posted a listing on FPF advertising free lawn mowers to give away. Several folks contacted me and one person picked up 2 mowers that I meant to keep. If you took them thinking they were free, contact me and return them, no questions asked."

Followed by: *"The mowers were returned and my faith in my neighbors has been confirmed!! Thank you to the person that returned them and, again, I am sorry for the confusion!!! Thank God for good people and Front Porch Forum!!!!"*

• Bill in Hyde Park

"I just have to say that I have had such amazing people reach out to me since I moved here. My cousin has lived here in Morrisville for the past 30 years. Anytime I have needed help, she has referred me to this wonderful community here on Front Porch Forum. I have gotten free snow tires, a free haircut, furniture, and anonymous people helping me out. I am 61, a widow, and have disabilities. People are reaching out to me now offering me help to dig out my buried car. I am so grateful to all of you. Thank you for your generosity and caring. Hopefully some day, I can be of service somehow to someone. God bless you, and thanks to Front Porch Forum for existing."

• Gloria in Morrisville

Additionally, FPF was recognized in 2019 by various organizations and publications for its work to make Vermont communities more resilient. These included:

- [How a Vermont Social Network Became a Model for Online Communities](#)
By Andrew Liptak, *The Verge*, January 24, 2019
- [FrontPorchForum: Social Impact Thru Connecting Neighbors](#)
SXSW, March 13, 2019
- [How Front Porch Forum is Empowering the Citizens of Vermont](#)
Community Signal, April 8, 2019
- [In Vermont, a unique social media to bring the community together](#)
Radio Canada, by Janic Tremblay, May 4, 2019
- [Community in Action Keynote](#)
The Community Roundtable: TheCR Connect 2019, September 25, 2019
- [Start Here Ep. 43: Michael Wood-Lewis / Front Porch Forum](#)
Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies, November 19, 2019

2020 plans

Our goals for 2020 are to transform FPF into a vibrant multi-faceted platform -- including neighborhood forums, local news, community calendar, and business directory -- on mobile, web and email, that becomes the de facto way to connect and engage within every town in Vermont, filling the vacuum left by declining local institutions and offering a positive alternative to Big Tech. To this end, our goals for 2020 are as follows:

- Make Vermont demonstrably more resilient by FPF's efforts
- Increase member traction, engagement and satisfaction
- Build new services on top of the daily flow
- Make FPF a "force" in Vermont
- Evolve tech resiliency
- Remain open to geographic expansion opportunities
- Continually improve workplace
- Strengthen financials
- Build succession plan that maintains local ownership and control

FPF board of directors

- Michael Wood-Lewis, Board Chair, Owner, Co-Founder, CEO
- Valerie Wood-Lewis, Board Member, Owner, Co-Founder
- Susan A. Comerford, PhD, Benefit Director