

Five Communities Embark on Unique Values-Driven Initiative

New England and Rocky Mountain towns to launch groundbreaking Heart & Soul Community Planning projects

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Middlebury, VT—The Orton Family Foundation announced today its selection of five communities across the country to receive \$100,000 each over two years to pursue values-based community planning initiatives. As part of the Foundation's Heart & Soul Community Planning grant, each town will also receive staff support, tools, trainings and other resources to attain their goal of building enduring, vibrant futures.

The five communities exhibited an acute awareness of their issues and a desire to shake up the status quo, reinvent their planning processes and chart a course toward cultural and economic renewal:

- Cortez, Colorado (pop. 8,482)
- Town of Essex & Village of Essex Junction, Vermont (combined pop. 19,587)
- Gardiner, Maine (pop. 5,800)
- North Fork Valley of the Gunnison River (towns of Paonia, Hotchkiss, and Crawford), Colorado (combined pop. 7,000)
- Polson, Montana (pop. 5,000)

"We are very excited to partner with these communities. The opportunities they offer to model civic engagement and steer change based on each town's values are unparalleled," said Bill Roper, President and CEO of the Foundation. "Over the course of these projects, the Foundation will complete development of our Heart & Soul framework that will help small towns across America take charge of their futures."

The Foundation is also pleased to announce that these projects will receive additional financial support from other philanthropic organizations. The Gates Family Foundation in Denver will support the City of Cortez, Colorado; The Montana Community Foundation will support Polson, Montana; The L.P. Brown Foundation will support the North Fork Valley, Colorado; The Vermont Community Foundation will support the Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction, Vermont.

Selection of these towns is the second phase of the Foundation's five-year, \$10 million Heart & Soul Community Planning initiative to unlock citizens' potential to participate in planning, bridge differences and affect change. The projects are predicated on building a shared expectation for civic engagement and transparency in local government. Throughout the Heart & Soul process, citizens not only

discover and describe what makes their place special; they also share the responsibility for acting on those values and stewarding that vision over time.

For more information on each of the five towns, visit us at

<http://www.orton.org/projects/current>.

Beginning in April, the Orton Family Foundation will begin a guest blog series, Seeking Heart & Soul, featuring stories from each of the new towns. To receive updates on this and other news from the Foundation, join our e-mail list at <http://bit.ly/dCrug6>. Tweeters can keep up with news about the towns by following @ortonfoundation and using the hashtag #hstowns.

The Orton Family Foundation, based in Middlebury, Vermont and Denver, Colorado, seeks to help small cities and towns discover and describe their heart and soul—the collective attributes that make communities unique—and build on those attributes in planning toward a vibrant, enduring future.