

MAIN STREET RESTORATION STUDY AND REDEVELOPMENT MASTER PLAN FOR LONDONDERRY'S NORTH VILLAGE CENTER

MAY 11, 2022

PREPARED FOR:

LONDONDERRY PLANNING COMMISSION

100 Old School Street, South Londonderry, VT 05155

802-824-3356

planningcom@londonderryvt.org

SUBMITTED BY:



STEVENS & ASSOCIATES, P.C.

95 MAIN STREET, PO BOX 1586, BRATTLEBORO, VT 05302

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Summary	1
Project Background.....	4
Site Visit.....	6
Site Understanding	7
Public Meeting #1.....	8
Early Concepts	9
Public Meeting #2.....	11
Draft Preferred Master Plan.....	13
Public Meeting #3.....	15
Final Elements and Review	16
Conclusions	18
Next Steps.....	19

Appendices:

Appendix A: Base Maps and ANR Mapping

Appendix B: Early Concepts

Appendix C: Draft Final Master Plan

Appendix D: Project Description

Appendix E: Phasing Plan

Appendix F: 3D Sketches

PROJECT SUMMARY

The potential to restore, reinvigorate, and reinvest in Londonderry's North Village Main Street presents a unique opportunity for the Town of Londonderry and the entire region of Southern Vermont. It is an opportunity to address several critical concerns that have reduced the viability and vitality of this village and to develop a new vision for the future of this historic village area.

It is important to note that if no action is taken to address these concerns it is likely that the North Village area will continue to decline in both vibrancy and economic impact. The once-thriving village area has seen significant damage and loss of buildings and business over the last 50 years, including losses that happened during the course of this study.

There are at least three significant issues that are currently impacting existing buildings, properties, landowners, and business owners, as well as limiting interest in investment in the area. These include:

- Flooding – a significant portion of the study area (including existing buildings) lies within the floodway or the flood zone of the West River and Utley Brook.
- Traffic – currently, traffic in the Main Street area limits the walkability and impacts the village's character. Vehicles, including large tractor trailers, move through the village area at a speed that is perceived as dangerous, above the posted limit, and not fitting with the function and character of a traditional village.
- Wastewater – currently, there is very limited capacity for wastewater treatment in the study area. Without a viable solution to increase capacity, the ability for the creation of businesses, residences or community facilities in the area is unlikely.

Despite these limitations, the physical features, existing businesses, history, and community affection in the North Village area make this an interesting and attractive place that, in many ways, is primed for restoration and reinvestment. These include:

- The beautiful, picturesque streams that are opportunities for walking, sitting, viewing, along with other recreational and restorative activities.
- The history of mills and other water-related uses.
- Existing business and community places that are important to the community and the region.
- Connections to the development of snowboarding, skiing, and other outdoor activities.

In addition to these, the regional context of the village suggests the potential for a wide range of uses. These regional assets and destinations include nearby outdoor destinations of Magic Mountain, Stratton Mountain, Bromley Mountain, Okemo Mountain, Viking Nordic Center,

Wild Wings Ski Touring Center, Lowell Lake State Park, the Green Mountain National Forest, as well as the nearby villages of Manchester Center, Weston, Ludlow, and Chester.

Implementation of this plan would result in several significant outcomes, address concerns, and take advantage of the assets of the area.

- Limit the damage from flooding in the village area
- Reduce the impact of traffic on the village
- Increase walkability and bikeability in the village area
- Improve the character of the built environment
- Create a mixed-use village that will support new residential opportunities, new business opportunities, new community spaces
- Increase tax base and increase tax receipts by as much as \$1 million per year

The Study Process

This study has worked to understand the village and its unique character and challenges. It has explored several options or alternatives for how the project area could be restored, reused or redeveloped in ways that are beneficial to the village, the Town as a whole, and the Region.

Input from the community was very important to the project. Three rounds of public meetings were held with substantial participation, and each meeting was video recorded. These videos, along with PDF documents, were made publicly available for viewing and for input. Many people provided feedback (both positive and negative) directly to these posts and through other community forums.

In addition, a draft of the final plan was discussed during a Planning Commission meeting on April 6th, 2022 and then a Selectboard meeting on April 18th, 2022 to allow additional discussion and public input.

As with most planning studies, the plan sets out ideas (or concepts) for the future of the study area as a whole. In many cases the depiction of these ideas includes private land as it illustrates the overall concept. It is important to note that this study recognizes the property rights of individuals and families. Landowners are in no way required to participate in this plan. It is believed that most or all would benefit from the plan and participation would strengthen the community, however property rights are understood and respected.

Study Results

The result of the study is a thoughtful and feasible plan for the village's future that addresses the primary issues of the project area including flooding and traffic concerns. It also suggests

solutions that would support a wide range of community needs including commercial development, job creation, housing, community services and facilities, a range of recreational opportunities, and increasing the tax base.

As with most planning studies, the master plan sets out ideas or concepts for the future. These ideas are typically depicted in a final map that contains one version of how the concept can come to fruition.

It is also important to recognize that these plans are made at a broad scale. As the community moves forward other information will be required and will, in some cases, change the design solution for a specific area or element. In these cases, it is critical to keep the overall concepts in mind. These overall concepts include:

- Building in areas that are protected from flooding
 - Work in areas outside of the floodway
 - Work in areas outside of the flood zone, including by raising areas currently in the flood zone (and providing related compensatory flood storage)
- Encouraging a true village center
 - Safe and functional pedestrian movement
 - Safe and functional vehicle movement (especially turning and parking)
 - A mix of uses and destinations within the village
- Taking advantage of recreational, historic, and cultural resources of the study area and the surrounding community
- Accommodating development to help fund water and wastewater improvements needed to allow for any improvements to the village area

These ideas are the four cornerstones of this plan and should be the cornerstone for future decisions related to the North Village. This study worked to develop alternative solutions that mix these priorities in a variety of ways along with a final plan that expresses the community's preferences. The plan weaves these ideas together in a coherent and reasonable way that is meant to guide thinking and decisions for the near future.

This project was produced in part by a Municipal Planning Grant from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Flooding caused by the West River and Utley Brook, and in particular the flood of 2011, has caused significant damage to the study area including the removal of several buildings in the North Village and repeated damage to other buildings. This has caused a reduction in the quality of the built environment as well as reduced the function and character of the area. It is expected that this level of flooding will continue in the future and may increase in frequency and damage.

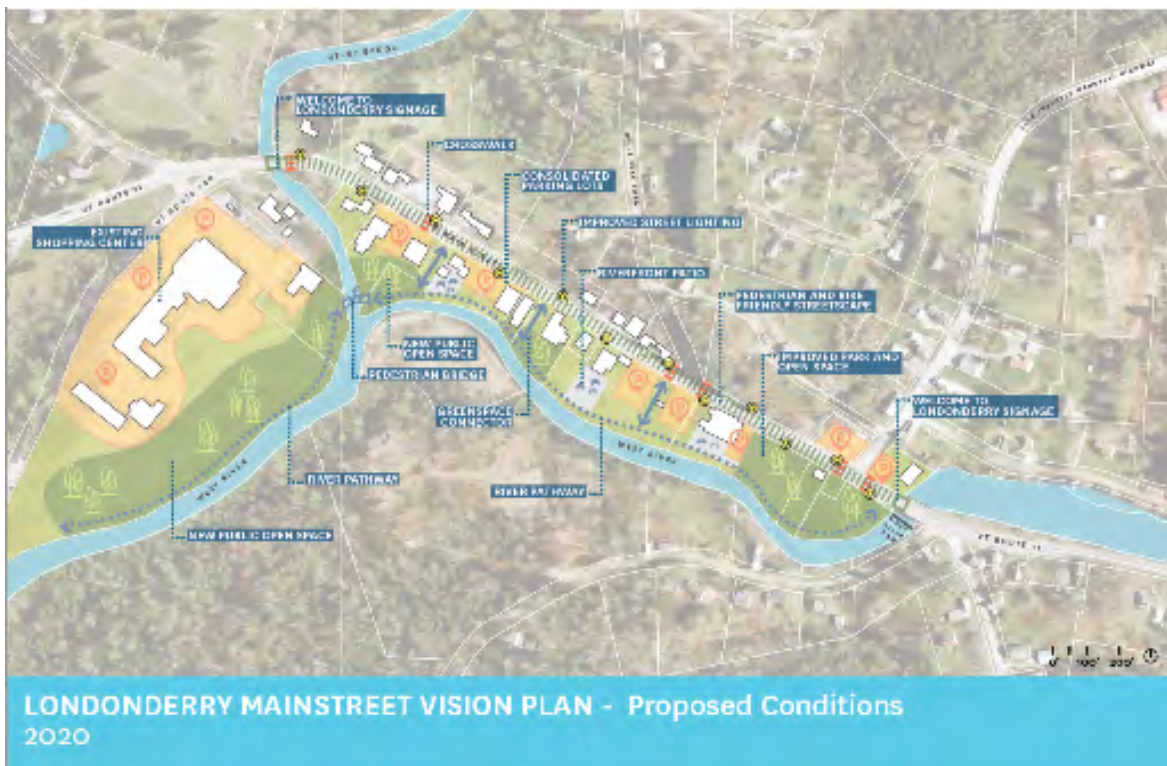
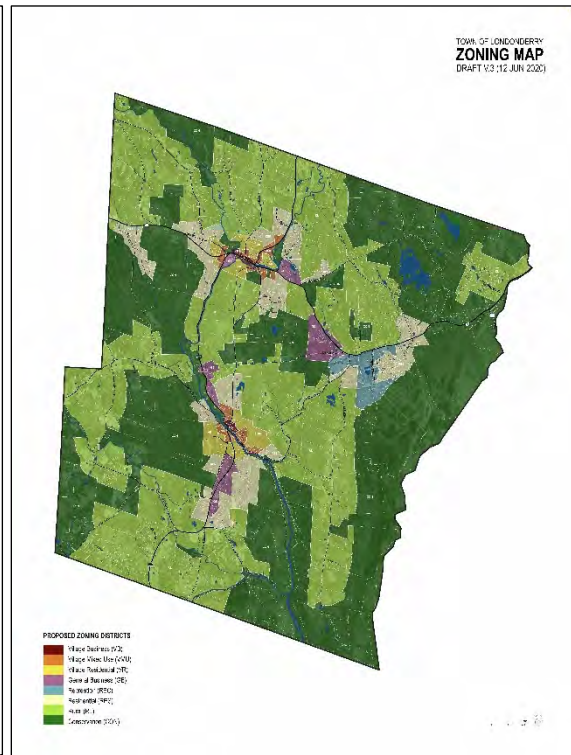
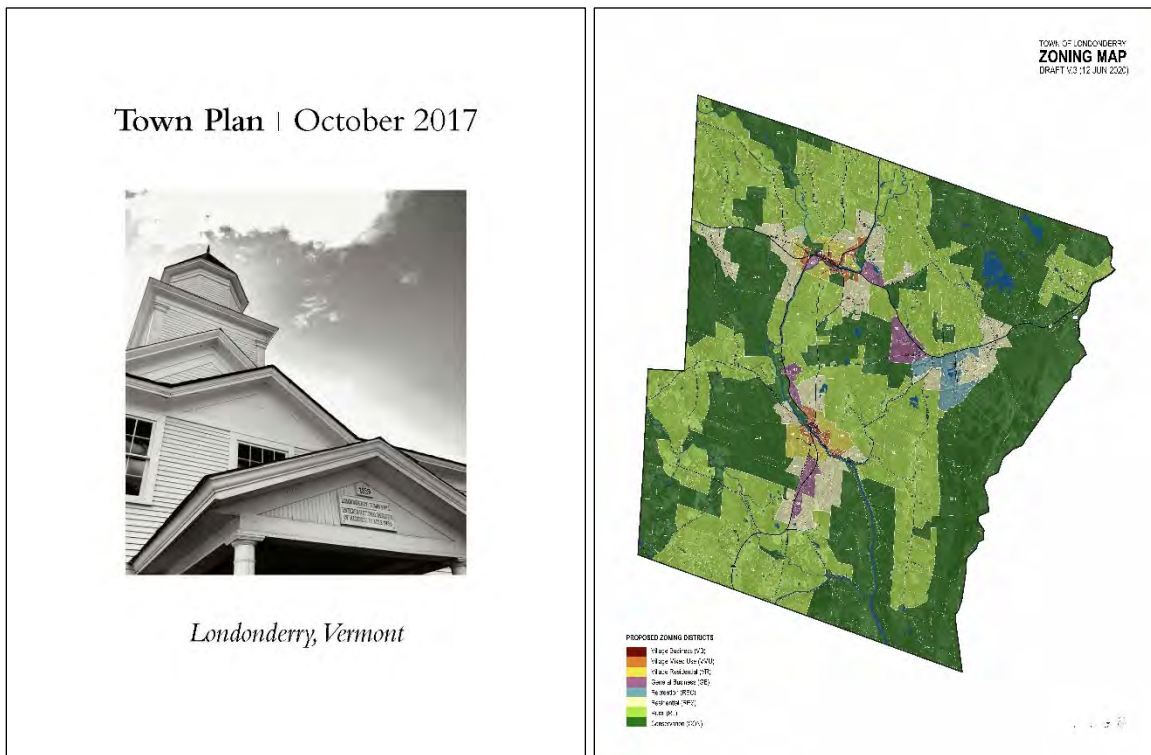
Vehicle traffic also impacts the safety and character of the village area. State Routes 100 and 11 are the Main Street of the North Village. Vehicles, including tractor trailers, flow through the village area without significant traffic or speed control. As with many places which combine a State Route with a Main Street / village setting the demands of a walkable, pedestrian oriented village does not work well with the vehicular demands of a State Route. However, significant design and engineering effort can overcome this and create the conditions for a thriving village.

Other issues such as large expanses of pavement fronting Main Street, often with little or no management of access to the roadway, diminishes the pedestrian experience and makes walking along Main Street a hazardous and rare mode of transportation.

The current Google street view sequence from the bridge over the Utley Brook to the bridge over the West River is a good example of this situation. In this short stretch of road, a viewer can see 11 cars or light trucks on the road, three large trucks, and zero pedestrians. In addition, a viewer can see over 30 parked vehicles but only one person in nearby areas.

The area has been part of planning efforts in the past, including the study “After the Flood — Londonderry, Vermont (2013),” as well as information included in the Town Plan (last updated in 2017), and recent zoning discussions. In addition, a plan titled *The Londonderry Main Street Vision Plan* was produced for the area in 2020 through a volunteer effort by several visiting architects. The Planning Commission and community also engaged the Vermont Council on Rural Development for a community visit. The effort, which occurred during COVID, drew attendance and thinking of over 150 people.

This project came about primarily through the efforts of the Planning Commission and a group of citizens who are concerned about the future of their beloved North Village. The community developed a grant application to the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development for a Municipal Planning Grant to help study the area and develop solutions.



SITE VISIT

On July 22, 2021, the project started in earnest with a kickoff meeting that included a site visit to the Londonderry's North Village area. Several project advocates met with the consultant team from Stevens & Associates and provided a wealth of information related to the study area, the history of the town, other concurrent studies, and the current state of the redevelopment efforts.

The team walked the site to view and photograph the half-mile stretch of Main Street as well as adjacent areas. This was an important opportunity to understand first-hand the scale of the project area, as well as to see the issues and concerns that had been discussed in the Request for Proposal for the project and discussed with members of the community prior to the visit.



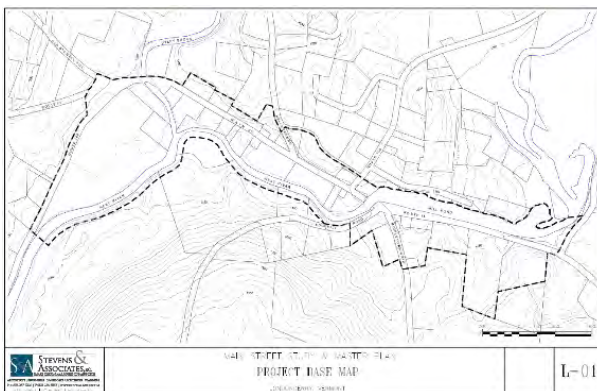
ABOVE: SITE VISIT CONDUCTED JULY 22, 2021

SITE UNDERSTANDING

Early in the process, Stevens & Associates developed a series of maps to better understand the site and context. This included a base map that depicted property boundaries and topography and included recent high-resolution aerial photography. A second, similar map used an aerial image from the early 1960s to help understand changes in the study area over the last 50 years.

A set of maps were developed to help document and discuss the project area. The first looked at items on the site that were considered assets for the community or items that were opportunities for development. The second depicted items that would constrain development or restrict use in some way, and illustrated concerns expressed during community discussions.

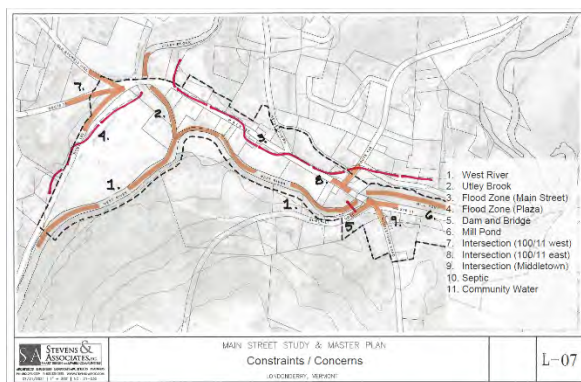
In addition to these maps, mapping from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources was downloaded to better understand the typical land development restrictions that are considered on these types of projects. This included mapping of wetlands; floodplains; rare, threatened, and endangered species; and other important land development considerations.



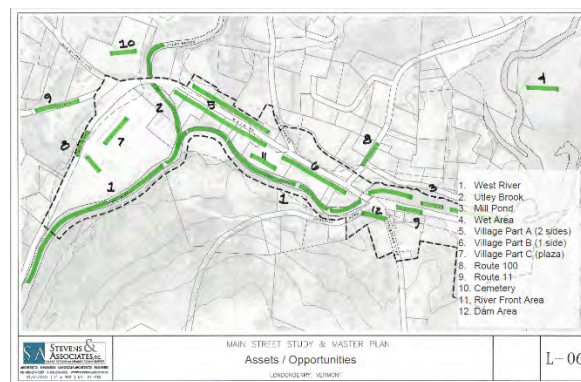
AERIAL OF EXISTING SITE: OVERALL BASE MAP



HISTORICAL AERIAL: HISTORIC BASE MAP



SITE CONSTRAINTS



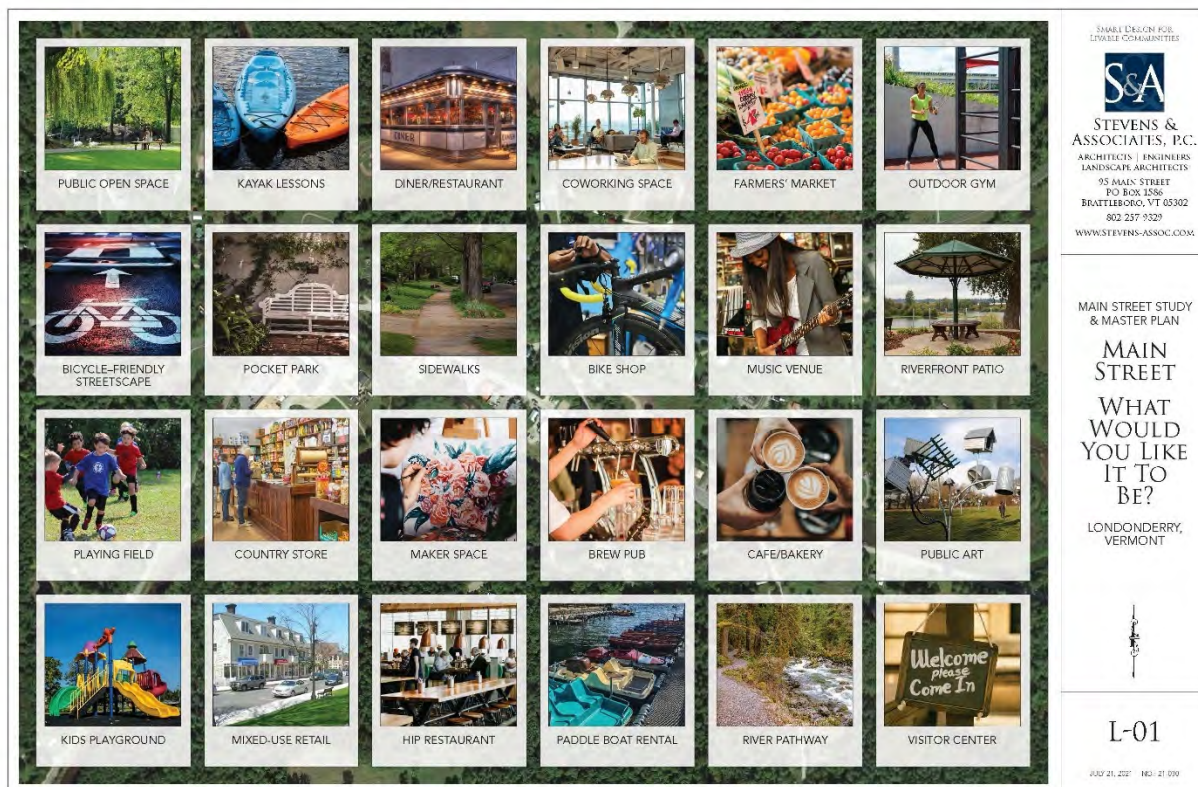
VALUED ASPECTS

PUBLIC MEETING #1

On October 7th, 2021, a public meeting was held to inform the community about the project, discuss base mapping and the site evaluation shown above, and to discuss ideas and priorities for uses in the study area. Due in part to COVID 19 pandemic, two meetings were coordinated with the afternoon meeting focused on participation via Zoom and the evening meeting focused on in-person participation. These meetings were well advertised and well attended.

The agenda included review and input on the mapping produced to date and discussion of critical issues that needed to be considered during the planning study. An image board showing potential ideas for area was used to help foster discussion and input.

Those in attendance provided excellent feedback on the mapping and there were several very good discussions about the future of this area. A few items that were strongly expressed were the need for a more walkable Main Street, reconfiguring intersections to slow traffic, adding sidewalks and street trees along Main Street, and developing a pathway along the river. Additional feedback and perspectives were gleaned from an on-line Town feedback survey.

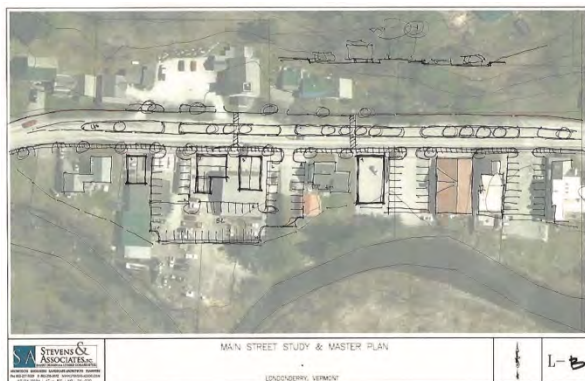


EARLY CONCEPTS

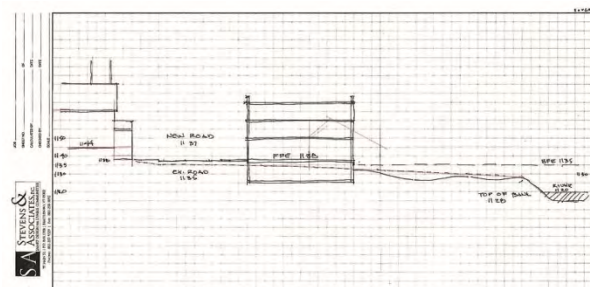
Early in the project process, a series of ideas were discussed and then sketched out in plan view to better understand the site and begin to understand the “fit” between ideas and the space that could be available to accomplish them.

A good example of this took place in early discussions with community members—the idea of bringing buildings more towards the street with parking lots at the side or preferably to the rear of buildings was discussed. Given the constraints of the land, however, it was not clear how that might work. Quick site sketches were used to help understand the situation.

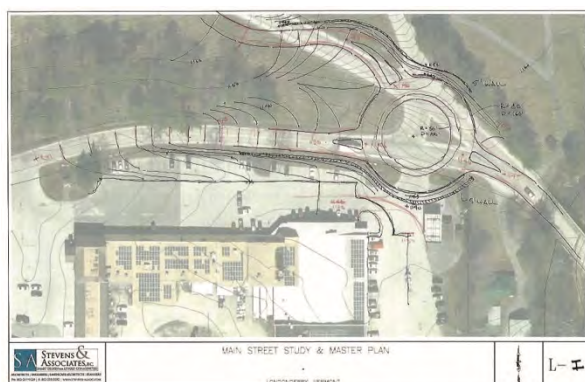
Similarly, ideas about changes to the roadway, including roundabouts, medians and on-street parking were also part of early discussions. Exploring and documenting what changes might be viable within the existing road right-of-way (or outside of the right-of-way) needed to be considered and documented. In most cases, quick grading studies were also undertaken to understand if the topography of the land would allow the ideas to be built.



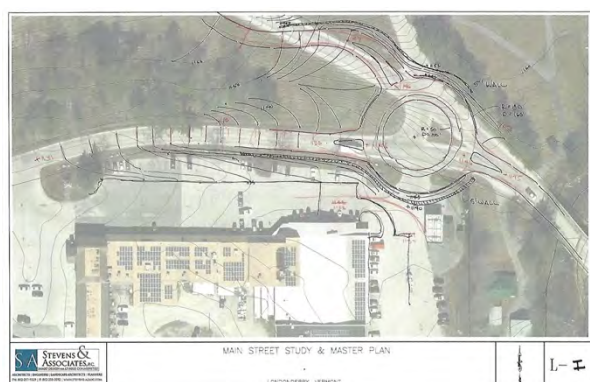
TOWN CENTER INFILL SKETCH



SKETCH SECTION F



ROUNDABOUT SKETCH

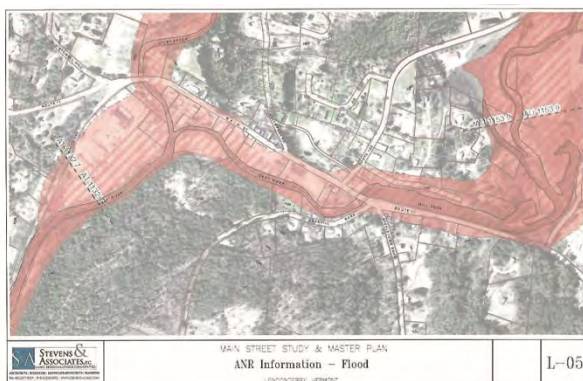


DESIGN SKETCH

Concept Plans

From the early ideas discussed with the community and the initial sketches, three concept plans were developed. These explored ways to solve the problems and concerns related to the project area as well as ways to develop and include the ideas supported by the community. Along with the need to explore a range of solutions, there are several reasons to develop multiple concept plans for a project, these include:

- Developing multiple solutions forces a level of exploration and creative problem solving beyond the initial “obvious” design solution.
- It allows the community to compare and contrast ideas, which can spur input and discussion that does not happen when a single option is presented.
- Multiple ideas often allow community members to feel that they can contribute other additional ideas, which are often valuable because of local knowledge.
- It allows for the best ideas from each option to be mixed and matched in the next round of plan development
- It shows that multiple solutions are viable, which may become important if the preferred solution proves unattainable.



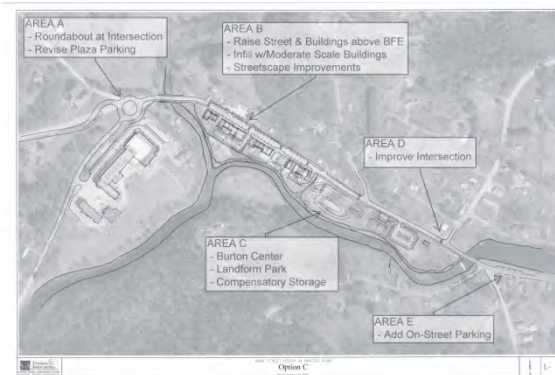
SITE AREAS / ZONES AREAS



OPTION A



OPTION B



OPTION C

PUBLIC MEETING #2

On November 18th, 2021, a second public meeting was held. Similar to the first round of meetings there was both an afternoon held via Zoom and an evening session held in-person.

The focus of these meetings was to discuss the development of three planning level alternatives for the study area. This included the review of previous public meetings and the development of study sketches.

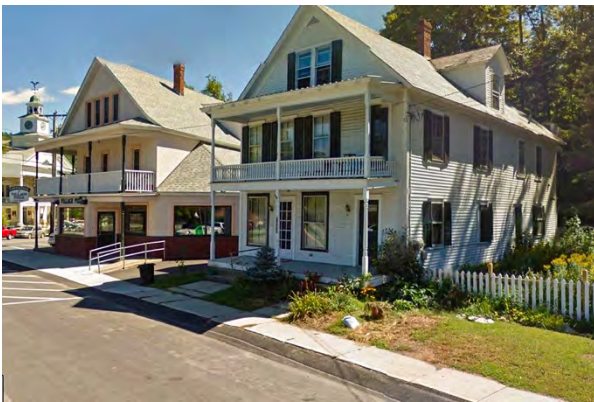
Often, in these types of meetings, the public is invited to place colored dots to help express their preferences. Because of the use of Zoom and concerns about COVID we did not complete this voting exercise, but the community did express their opinions and preferences for each of the sub areas at the public meeting and through the on-line survey.

Along with the plans for various options there was a written description of each option (appendix D). A quick summary of those descriptions are included here:

- Option A – Light Infill with Streetscape Improvements
 - Area A - Small boulevard dividers to announce village at each entry point
 - Area B - Small scale infill and streetscape improvements
 - Area E - Small boulevard dividers to announce village at each entry point
 - Area E - Dredge Mill Pond
- Option B – New Town Center and Riverside Park
 - Area A - Move Route 100 to existing plaza parking lot to allow for development
 - Area A - Install a four-way intersection at the junction of route 11 and 100
 - Area B - Infill with moderately scaled building (2-3 stories)
 - Area C - Create a riverside park
 - Waterfront trail
- Option C – Moderate Infill and Burton Center
 - Area A - Create a roundabout at the intersection of route 11 and 100
 - Area B - Raise Street and adjacent area above Base Flood Elevation
 - Area C - Create a sledding hill that can also serve as an amphitheater type space
 - Area C- Visitors Center
 - Waterfront Trail

In addition to the plans and written description, a series of images for buildings were shown with each alternative to allow for discussion and input on what the community would consider appropriate for the area. These included a range for small scale building with traditional design and materials to moderately scaled buildings with more modern materials.

Here are a few examples:

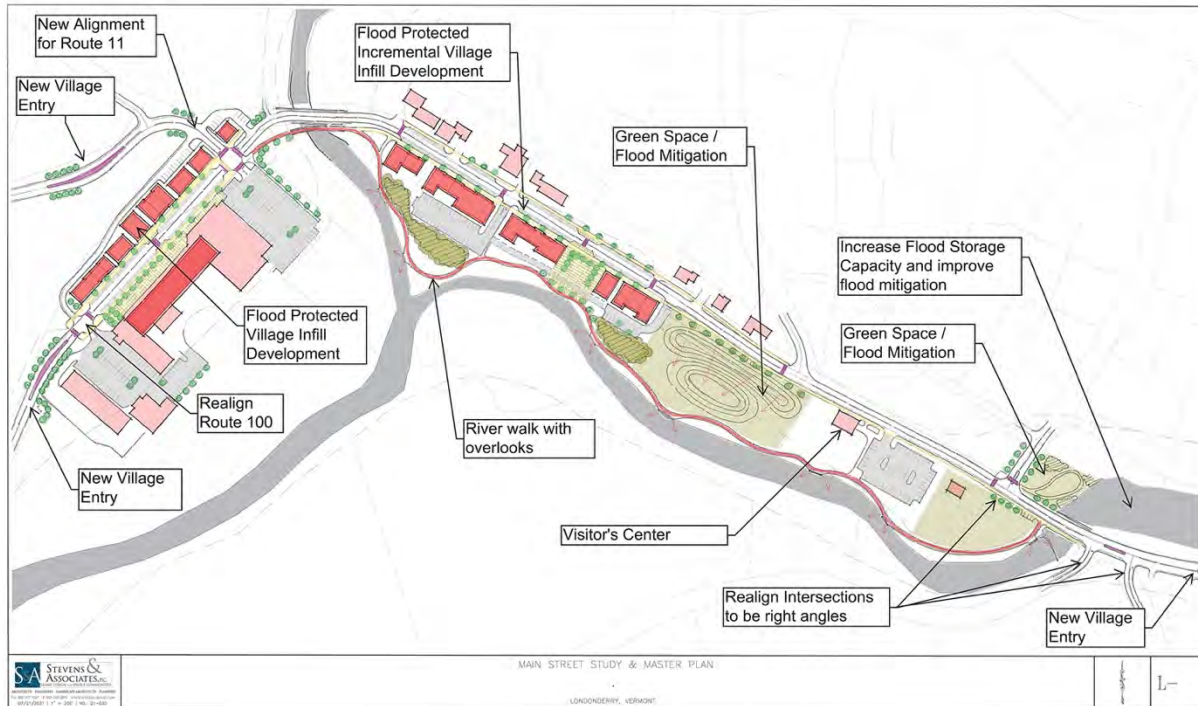


DRAFT PREFERRED MASTER PLAN

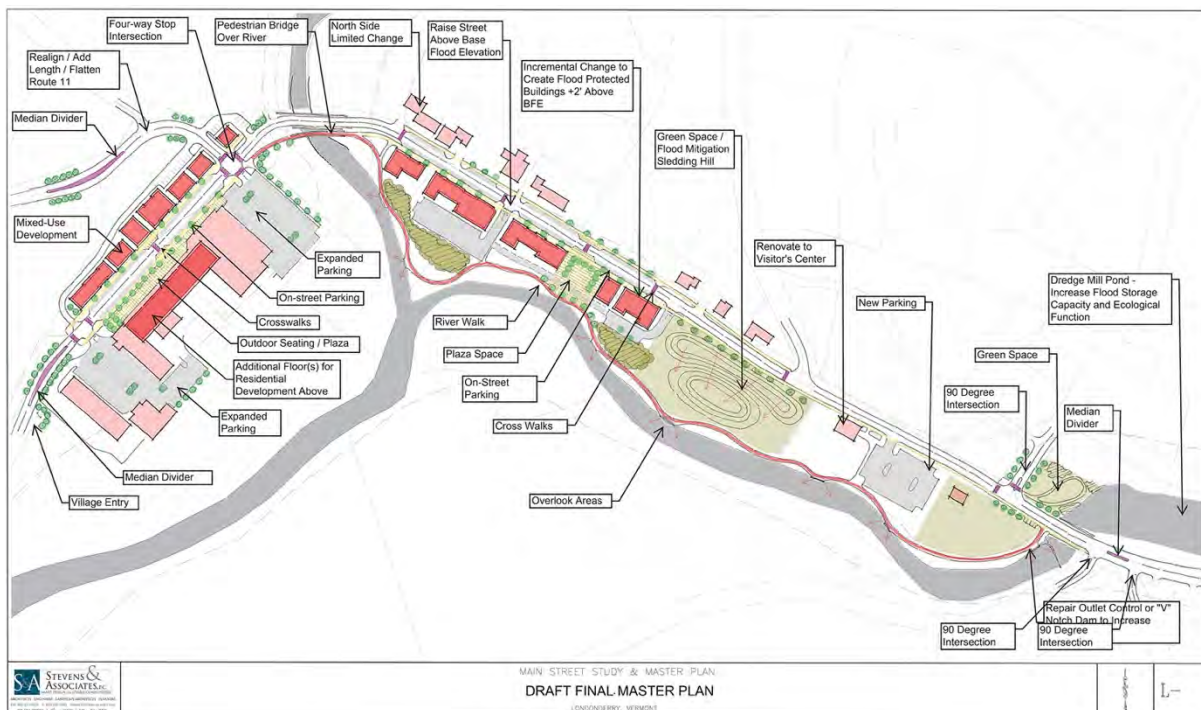
From the input received during Public Meeting #2 a Draft Master Plan was developed to document the preferences of the community and put forth a coherent plan for final input and discussion.

This plan took elements from each of the previous alternatives and knit them together, these include:

- Area A – Mtn. Marketplace area
 - Small boulevard dividers to announce village at each entry point
 - Move Route 100 to existing plaza parking lot to allow for development
 - Install a four-way intersection at the junction of Route 11 and 100
 - Substantial infill development on the west of Route 100
 - Addition of residential development above the Mtn. Marketplace
- Area B – Church Area
 - Raise Street and adjacent area above Base Flood Elevation
 - Infill with moderately scaled building (2-3 stories)
- Area C – Mill area
 - Create a sledding hill that can also serve as an amphitheater-type space
 - Create a Visitors Center
- Area D
 - Improve intersection of Route 11 and 100 (east) including
 - Making a 90-degree intersection
 - Create a three-way stop
- Area E
 - Small boulevard dividers to announce village at each entry point
 - Waterfront trail along the West River and the junction with Utley Brook with overlooks, picnic tables and seating opportunities



SUMMARY DRAFT MASTER PLAN



DETAILED DRAFT MASTER PLAN

PUBLIC MEETING #3

The Draft Preferred Master Plan was presented at a third and final public meeting held on January 6th, 2022. This meeting was a hybrid meeting with the public primarily able to participate on Zoom. A few community members attended in person as the presentation was underway at Neighborhood Connections.

The presentation included a review of the previous meetings and a review of alternatives A, B, and C which were discussed at the previous meeting. Also, there was discussion of a “No Action” Alternative which looked at the future of the village if no steps were taken to mitigate the impacts of flooding.

The presentation also included a discussion of the “logic” behind the draft plan and a draft of the preferred plan. In addition, many of the questions and concerns raised by the community since the previous public meeting were directly addressed through a series of slides. These concerns and responses (*shown in italics*) included:

- VTrans will not allow changes related to State Routes 11 and 100
 - *Minor changes like small boulevard dividers are commonly allowed*
 - *Changes to the location of the roads (especially Route 100) was likely not considered in earlier thinking by VTrans*
 - *The current roadway alignment does not meet today's design standards*
 - *The current roadway design detracts from the desired village character*
- Parking is being reduced, especially near the Mtn. Marketplace
 - *Approximately 400 parking spaces are shown in the plan*
 - *This is significantly more parking than is currently provided*
 - *A mixed-use village will allow for increased pedestrian movement*
 - *Car share for residents could limit vehicle needs*
- Streetscape improvements will reduce vehicle access and change the character
 - *The scale of change can be appropriate to this village*
 - *Streetscape elements can increase both pedestrian and driver safety*
 - *Streetscape improvements can improve land value and revenue*
- The project will be expensive, and the cost will be borne by current taxpayers
 - *Most of the cost would be borne by private developers on individual projects*
 - *Sources of funding for public improvement are currently available*

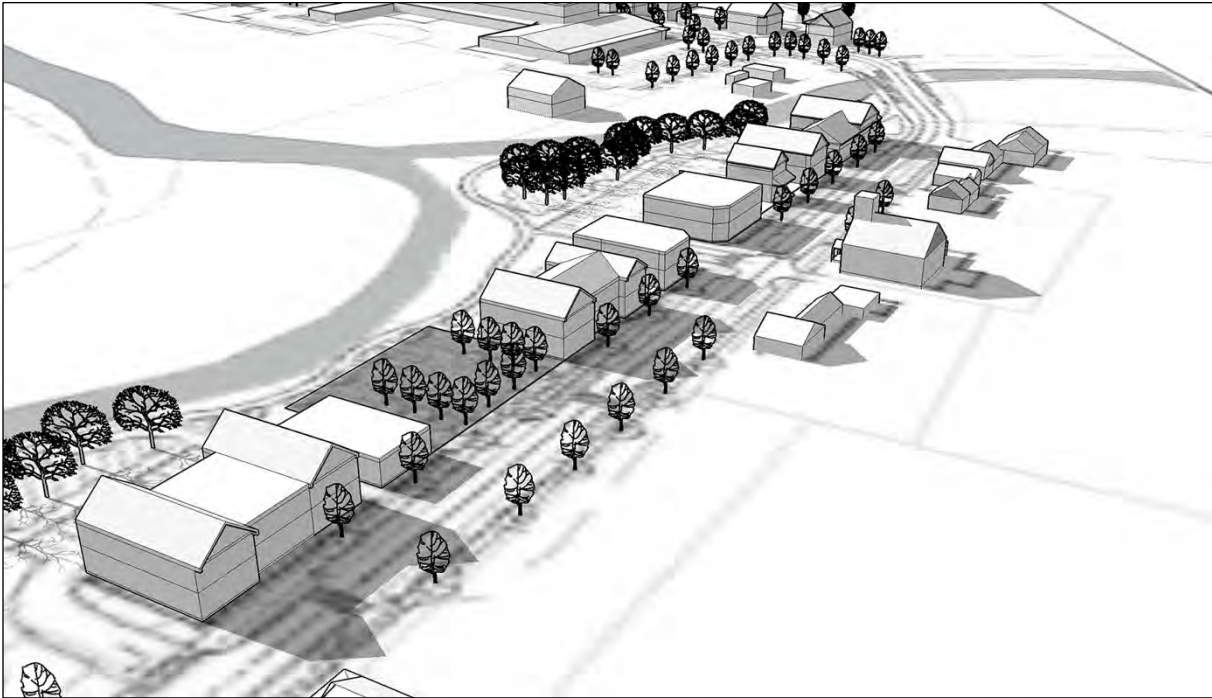
FINAL ELEMENTS AND REVIEW

After the final public meeting some additional information was developed to help clarify the intent of the plan. These included:

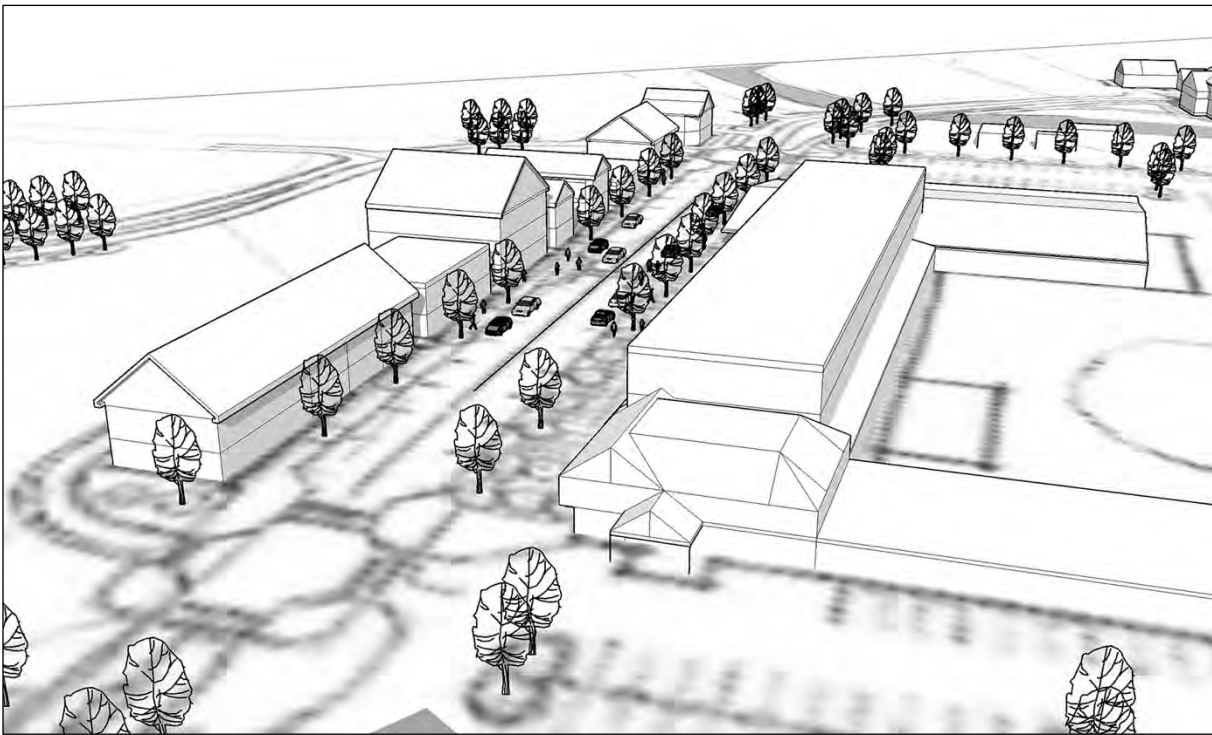
- A series of sketch plans depicting phases for the implementation of the project. The sketches indicate that:
 - Change will take place over a substantial period of time
 - There is a logical order to the timing of the implementation
 - Individual business and property owners can choose if and how they might participate in the overall plan
- A series of three-dimensional sketches to help the community better understand the plan graphic. These indicate a typical village type setting including:
 - One-, two- or three-story buildings
 - Many with pitched roofs
 - A village streetscape with on-street parking and street trees

Project information was then presented to an open meeting of the Londonderry Planning Commission on April 6th, 2022. This included a good discussion of the overall process, the draft plan, as well as the phasing plans and 3D sketches developed since the final public meeting. In addition, there was discussion about the contents of this report.

The Draft Preferred Master Plan was also presented to the Town of Londonderry Select Board on April 18th, 2022. The presentation was a fairly brief summary of the overall process with a focus on the plan itself.



SKETCH 3D IMAGE WEST



SKETCH 3D IMAGE EAST

CONCLUSIONS

This master plan addresses the primary concerns related to the study. When implemented the impact of flooding will be reduced because new buildings will be located in areas that are either currently outside of the flood zone or in areas that have been raised to be outside of the flood zone. In addition, the plan will create a vibrant, walkable traditional village with a mix of uses, on-street parking and sidewalks and crosswalks for pedestrians. The plan also supports recreation in the area with the significant addition of a sliding hill and the riverfront trail system.

Public Input

The results of this study were substantially influenced by community input. The public provided input at three rounds of public meetings as well as at presentations to the Planning Commission and the Select Board. Support for the effort and the results of the study are broad. The Town's on-line community forum will allow the conversation to continue.

Economic Impact

Another critical aspect of the plan is the economic development potential and increase to the property tax base contained in the plan.

- Over 100,000 Gross Square Feet of new building construction
- In today's construction climate this would equal at least \$40 million in construction value
- And likely generate as much as \$1 Million in property taxes per year

Cost

The cost to complete this project will be substantial, however, much or all of the costs for the building construction depicted in the study would come from property owners or developers looking to make new investments in properties. Site improvements related to these projects would also be borne by developers or the landowners involved in the improvements.

Public improvements will also be costly, however, these should be shared between the Federal government, State government, and the Town. A concerted effort should be made to involve the appropriate state agencies in projects related to flood mitigation, roadway improvements, wastewater improvements, and economic development initiatives.

NEXT STEPS

This report sets the stage for several continuing efforts that will need to happen to support the goals of this master plan effort.

- Complete other on-going studies – There are several studies / efforts related to the study area that should be completed in the near future that would help to clarify and support this master plan. These include:
 - Williams Dam Study
 - Wastewater Treatment Study
- Inform State Representatives – Support from elected officials at the state level will be critical to developing funding and working with state agencies. Meet with representatives and their staff to explain challenges impacting the study area and garner support for this master plan as a proactive solution to multiple concerns.
- Work with Regional agencies and groups – Implementation of the North Village Master Plan will require support from groups that support community planning, transportation planning, and economic development in Southern Vermont. These include:
 - Windham Regional Commission (WRC)
 - Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies (SeVEDS)
 - Windham Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT)
 - Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC)
 - Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD)
- Work with State of Vermont Agencies – Implementation of this master plan will require the buy-in and support of multiple state agencies. These include:
 - Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD)
 - Vermont Department of Tourism (Vermont Vacation)
 - Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)
 - Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans)
 - Vermont Department of Health (DOH)
- Grant opportunities – Use this master plan and report as a tool when seeking additional grants or other funding from State and Federal groups that could support redevelopment of the area. These include:
 - Northern Borders Regional Commission (NRBC)
 - United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - United States Economic Development Administration (EDA)

- Grant opportunities – Use this master plan and report as a tool to seek grants from private foundations. These include:
 - State Agencies
 - American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
 - Vermont Community Foundation (VCF)
 - The Preservation Trust of Vermont
 - Large employers in the region
 - Vail Resorts Management Company
 - The Vermont Country Store / Orton Family
 - The Orvis Company
 - RK Miles
 - And others
- Review the current Town Plans and Regulations - Consider steps the Town of Londonderry could take through revisions to current town plan, support of sub-committees or volunteer working groups, zoning regulations, connections to region groups or other efforts that might help set the stage for redevelopment of Main Street.

