



TOWN OF LONDONDERRY, VT  
THE SOUTH LONDONDERRY VILLAGE  
STUDY & MASTER PLAN  
DECEMBER 6, 2024

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

Similar to the North Londonderry Study, the potential for continued reinvestment, redevelopment and reconfiguration of the South Londonderry Village presents a unique opportunity for the Town of Londonderry and the entire Southern Vermont Region. 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.

The once-thriving village area has seen significant damage and loss of buildings and business over the last 50 years, including losses 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 like the Fire Department, lies within the floodway or the flood zone of the West River.
- Traffic – Currently, traffic in the Route 100 and Main Street area limits the walkability and impacts the character of the village. Vehicles, including large construction related vehicles, 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.
- Sidewalks & Parking – Pedestrian infrastructure in the South Londonderry Village is virtually non-existent and combined with the existing traffic issues create a Village that does not promote foot traffic. Parking in the South Village is also limited which creates issues for residents and guests.

While understanding some of the existing issues, the South Village has the physical features, existing businesses, history, and community interest make this an interesting and attractive place that, in many ways, is primed for restoration and reinvestment. These include:

- The beautiful, picturesque, West River provides opportunities for walking, sitting, viewing, along with other recreational and restorative activities.
- Existing business such as the SoLo restaurant, Corner Market, Londonderry Inn and community places like the Library, Town Hall, West River Trail Building, Fire Department are all 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, 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 to 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 in the village area.
- Increase access to the West River Trail.
- Improve the character of the built environment.
- Create a mixed-use village that will support new residential opportunities, new business opportunities, new community spaces.
  - Which will then increase the tax base and increase tax receipts.

### **The Study Process**

This study has worked to understand the village and its unique character and challenges. It has explored a number of 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. Two 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 on the Town website. Many people provided feedback, both positive and negative, directly to these posts.

As with most planning studies, the plan sets out ideas and 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 future of the village 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 service and facilities, a range of recreational opportunities, and increasing the tax base.

The ideas are 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.
  - Development in areas outside of the floodway.
  - Development 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.
- Take advantage of recreational, historic, and cultural resources of the study area and the surrounding community.

These ideas are the cornerstones of this plan and should be the cornerstone for future decisions related to the South Village Master Plan moving forward. This study worked to develop alternative solutions that mix these priorities in a variety of ways and a final plan that expresses the preferences of the community. 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

Like many Vermont Towns, Londonderry has experienced flooding at an increased frequency. The flooding in South Londonderry is caused by the West River and in particular the floods of 2011, 2022, and 2023 have resulted in significant damage to the study area and repeated damage to buildings. This has caused a reduction in the quality of the built environment as well as 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.

Other issues such as the Route 100 bridge, limited horizontal space between buildings and the steep banks of the West River and significant elevation changes diminishes the pedestrian experience and makes walking along Main Street a hazardous and infrequent mode of transportation.

Vehicle traffic also impacts the safety and character of the village area. State Route 100 intersects the Main Street of the South Village. Vehicles, including tractor trailers and construction related equipment flow through the village area with no 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.

The area has been part of planning efforts in the past, including information included in the Town Plan (last updated in 2017) and recent zoning discussions which include amending the Zoning Bylaw. The Town also recently approved zoning district changes to adopt a Village Center that includes the South Village. The wastewater feasibility study has also been on-going and includes the South Village in its study area.

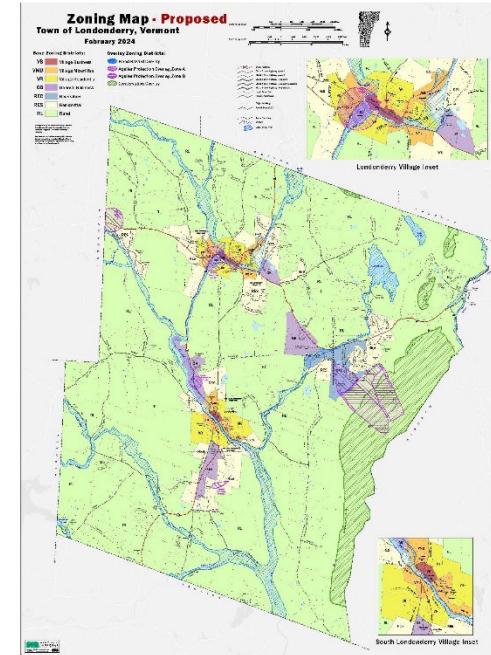
This project came about primarily through the efforts of a group of citizens who are concerned about the future of their beloved South Village. The community developed a grant application to Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development for a Municipal Planning Grant to help study the area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

## Town Plan | October 2017



Londonderry, Vermont

LONDONDERRY TOWN PLAN



UPDATED ZONING MAP



LONDONDERRY WASTEWATER STUDY

## SITE VISIT

On March 7, 2024, the project started in earnest with a kickoff meeting that included a site visit to Londonderry's South 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 a stretch of Main Street, Middletown Road, Crescent Street and other 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 MARCH 7, 2024

## SITE UNDERSTANDING

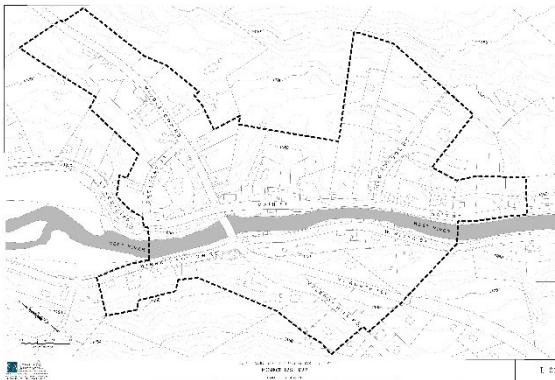
Early in the process Stevens & Associates developed a series of maps to better understand the site and context. This included a base map that depicted property boundaries and topography, and included recent high-resolution aerial photography. A second, similar map used an aerial image from the early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

In addition, maps were created to identify opportunities and constraints. The Opportunity Map looked at items on the site that were considered assets for the community or items that were opportunities for development. The Constraints Maps depicted restrictions to development or concerns expressed in discussions with the community or items would restrict use in some way.

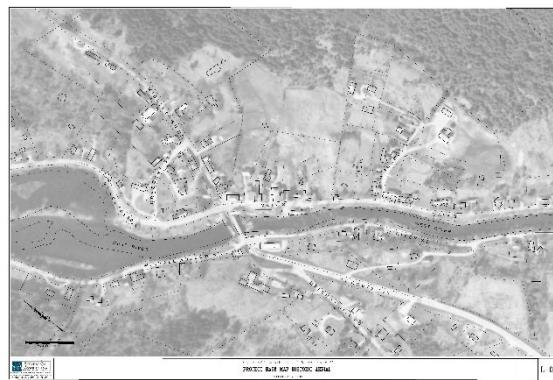
A walkability map for the South Village was also created to show areas which could be included in the village center. As a general design guideline, areas within a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius are generally considered walkable. This map picked the Post Office as the center and projected a  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile radius to better understand what areas in the South Village would be perceived as walkable for future design considerations. A half mile radius was also shown for context. It is important to note that these maps generally do not take into account factors such as elevation changes or existing pedestrian infrastructure.

During our kickoff meeting with the Task Force, it was identified that there was a small burgeoning commercial area by the Prouty property. This is outside of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radius from the Post Office and because of this it was excluded from this study. We discussed the concept of nodes of development with transportation links between them and can see that the North Village, South Village, and Prouty property could be three nodes within Londonderry. The Town would benefit if these nodes were connected with public transportation.

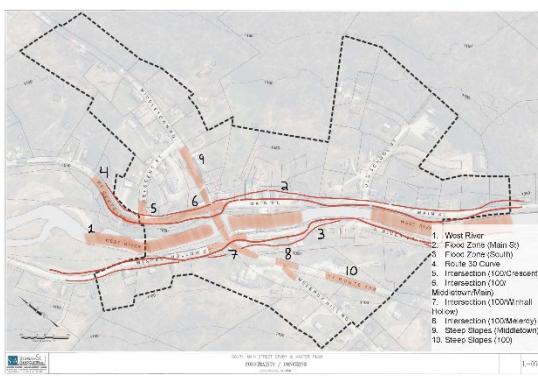
In addition to these maps, mapping from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources was downloaded to better understand the typical land development restrictions that are considered on these types of projects. This included mapping of wetlands; floodplains; rare, threatened, and endangered species; and other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



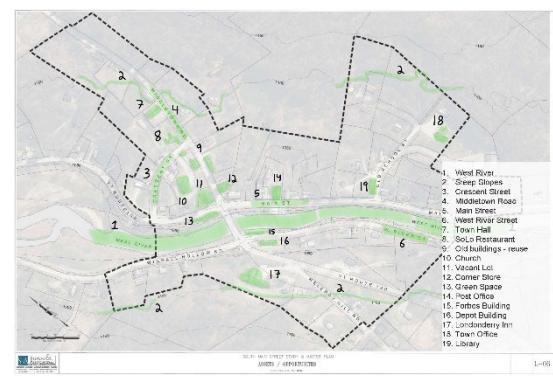
EXISTING SITE: OVERALL BASE MAP



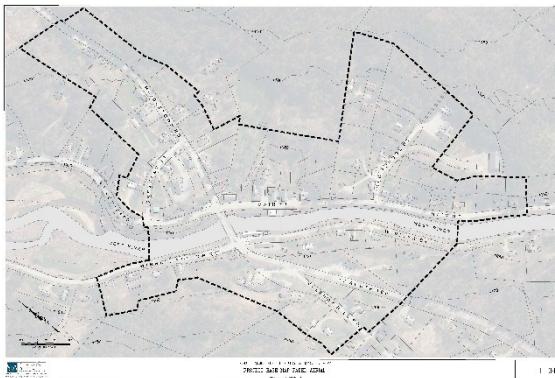
HISTORICAL AERIAL: HISTORIC BASE MAP



SITE CONSTRAINTS



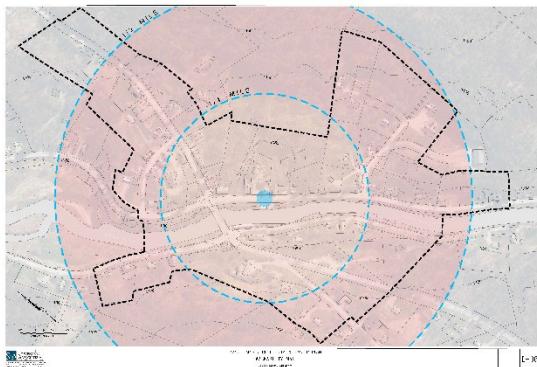
SITE OPPORTUNITIES



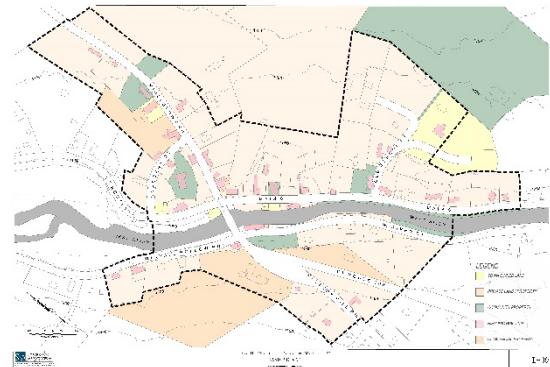
FADED AERIAL OF EXISTING SITE: OVERALL BASE MAP



ANR FLOOD MAP



WALKABILITY MAP



LANDUSE MAP

## PUBLIC MEETING #1

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 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. This meeting was hosted in person and online using zoom. The meeting was 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. As part of the community engagement, an image board showing potential ideas for the study area was used for meeting attendees to be able to 'vote' for their preferred land uses.

The community 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 lighting along Main Street, and developing outdoor spaces along the river.

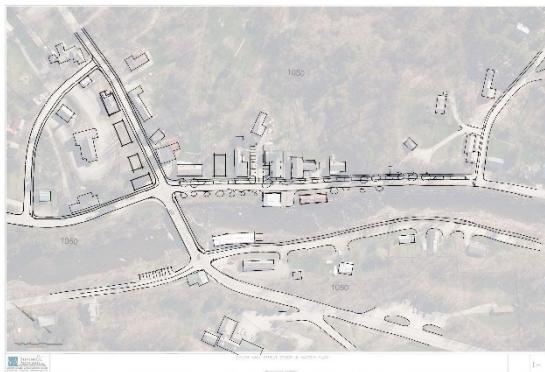
						<p>SMART DESIGN FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES</p> <p><b>S&amp;A</b></p> <p>STEVENS &amp; ASSOCIATES, P.C.</p> <p>ARCHITECTS   ENGINEERS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS</p> <p>95 MAIN STREET PO BOX 1528 BRATTLEBORO, VT 05302 802.257.9329</p> <p>WWW.STEVENS-ASSOC.COM</p>	
							
						<p>MAIN STREET &amp; MASTER PLAN</p> <p><b>MAIN STREET</b></p> <p><b>WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE IT TO BE?</b></p> <p>LONDONDERRY, VERMONT</p>	
							
<p>L-08</p> <p>March 21, 2023   NO. 21-030</p>							

## EARLY CONCEPTS

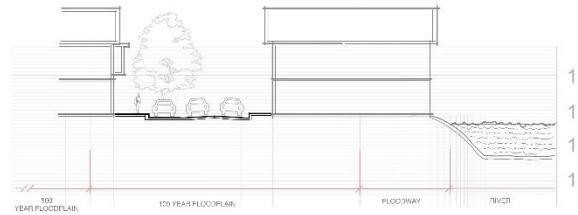
Early in the project process a series of ideas were discussed and then sketched out in plan view to better understand the site and begin to understand the “fit” between ideas and the space that could be available to accomplish them.

A good example of this took place in early discussions with task force members—the idea of implementing traffic calming; reducing vehicle travel lanes, adding sidewalks and crosswalks, and adding on-street parking options 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 raising buildings above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) and creating compensatory flood storage along the river bank 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.



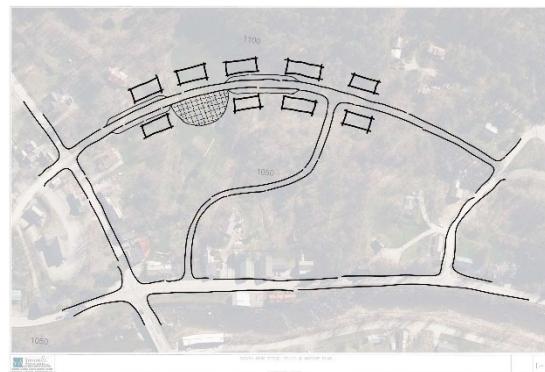
PEDESTRIAN FOCUS SKETCH



PEDESTRIAN FOCUS SECTION SKETCH



BRIDGE RELOCATION SKETCH



NEW TOWN CENTER SKETCH

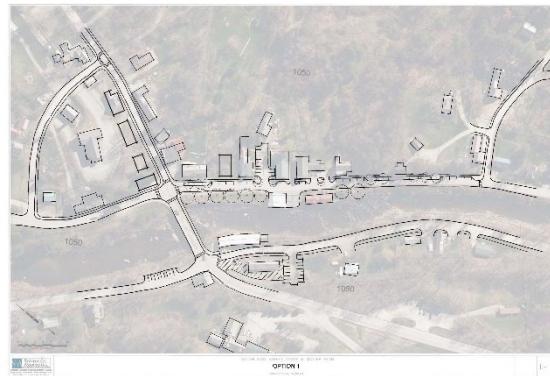
## Concept Plans

From the early ideas discussed with the community and the initial sketches, four 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:

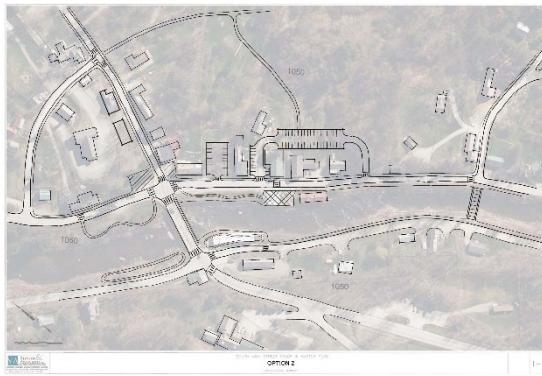
- Developing multiple solutions forces a level of exploration and creative problem solving beyond the initial “obvious” design solution.
- It allows the community to compare and contrast ideas, which can spur input and discussion that does not happen when a single option is presented.
- Multiple ideas 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.



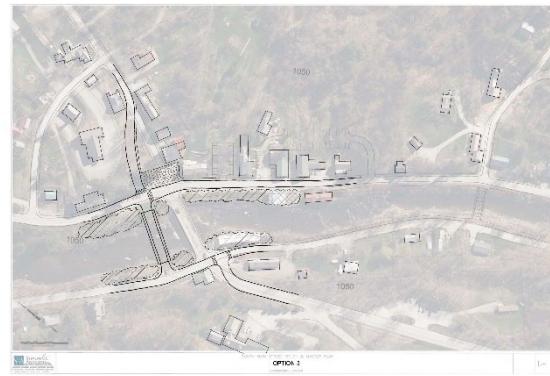
SITE AREAS / ZONES AREAS



OPTION 1



OPTION 2



OPTION 3

## PROJECT INTERMISSION

To allow for increased public input and participation the project was paused for the summer and resumed in the fall. This break in schedule allowed the Task Force to provide ample notice of upcoming meetings and to coordinate with other Town Committees. It is shown that public participation generates more support during the Spring, Fall and Winter months when school is back in session and Town members are not coordinating around vacations.

## PUBLIC MEETING #2

On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, a second public meeting was held. Similar to the first meeting there was an option to attend in person and digitally via Zoom.

To begin the concept review process existing conditions plans were shown, however, the focus of these meeting was to discuss the development of four, planning level alternatives for the study area. This included the review of previous public meeting and the development of study sketches.

Meeting participants were invited to vote on their favorite concept option and on certain plan elements they liked. To vote, attendees placed colored dots to help express their preferences.

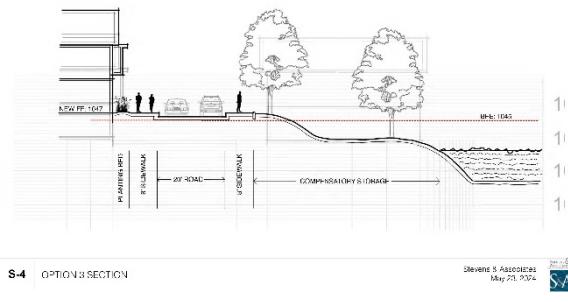
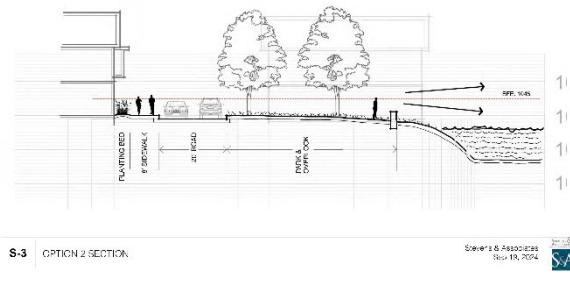
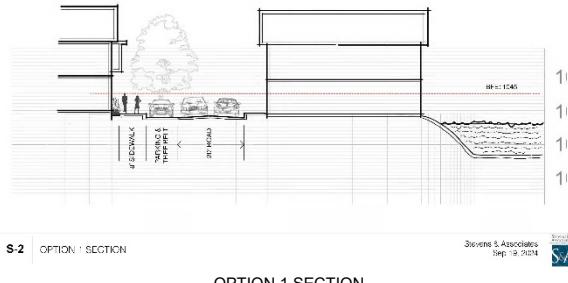
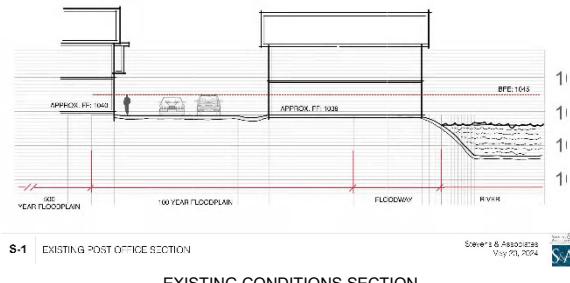
A quick summary of the concept options and their descriptions are included here:

- Option 1 – Light Infill with Streetscape Improvements
  - Sidewalks, parallel parking and tree belt on Main Street to slow traffic.
  - Meeting space and parking area by West River Trail building.
  - Infill building at Middletown Road intersection.
- Option 2 – Pedestrian Focus
  - Create series of riverfront parks and walking loops. Install pedestrian bridge in southeast of village.
  - Re-locate Fire Department building and create park space in old footprint.
  - Plaza spaces by Corner Market and across street.
  - Large parking area behind and to the side of Post Office.
  - Walking trail connections from Crescent Street.
- Option 3 – Move Bridge and Provide Compensatory Storage
  - Raise downtown buildings within floodplain to above BFE.
  - Move Route 100 bridge and re-configure Middletown Road to align with new bridge.
  - Cut into river bank to provide compensatory flood storage and outdoor riverfront space.

### Option 3A – Alternate Bridge Relocation

- This option was similar to Option 3 with the Route 100 bridge being proposed to be moved north to align with Crescent Street and Route 100 Intersection.

In addition to the concept options, a series of section elevations were shown with each option to allow for better understanding of the vertical elements. These sections included information about the 100 and 500 year flood and the BFE. Here are the sections:



## 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.

There was strong support for two of the concept options which were inherently different. One of the preferred plans, Master Plan #1, was focused on keeping the Village Center in the same location and adding pedestrian focused infrastructure which included traffic calming measures. On the other hand, a second concept, Master Plan #2, which presented moving the Town Center to the hillside which takes advantage of the existing grades to bring development outside of the floodway and floodplain was widely supported.

Due to the support for each of the above options we have included two Preferred Master Plans for this study.

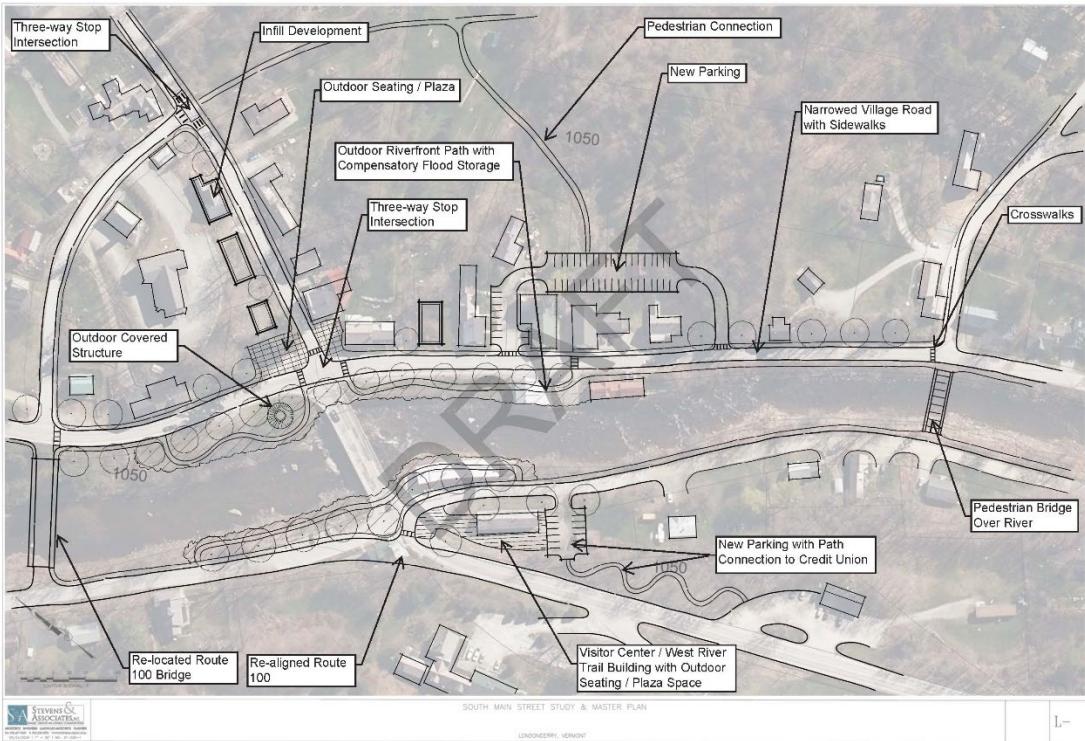
Master Plan #1 took elements from each of the previous alternatives and knit them together, these include:

- Route 100 Bridge
  - Re-align Route 100 near old bridge abutment to allow for wide curve.
  - Move Route 100 bridge to north the align with Crescent Street intersection.
  - Re-align West River Street with new Route 100 curve.
  - Create true 4-way intersection.
- West River Trail Depot Building
  - Create outdoor gathering/plaza space around building.
  - Create formalized parking area.
  - Add switch back path from Depot parking lot to Credit Union building.
- Main Street
  - Align Main Street, Middletown Road and portion of Route 100 to create new intersection with stop conditions and crosswalks.
  - Infill building along Main Street in footprint of existing foundation.
  - Relocate fire department and create new waterfront plaza space.
  - Create compensatory storage areas along riverfront and infill with walking paths.
  - Create new parking areas to the side and behind post office building.
  - Create path connection from parking behind post office uphill to Crescent and Middletown Road intersections.

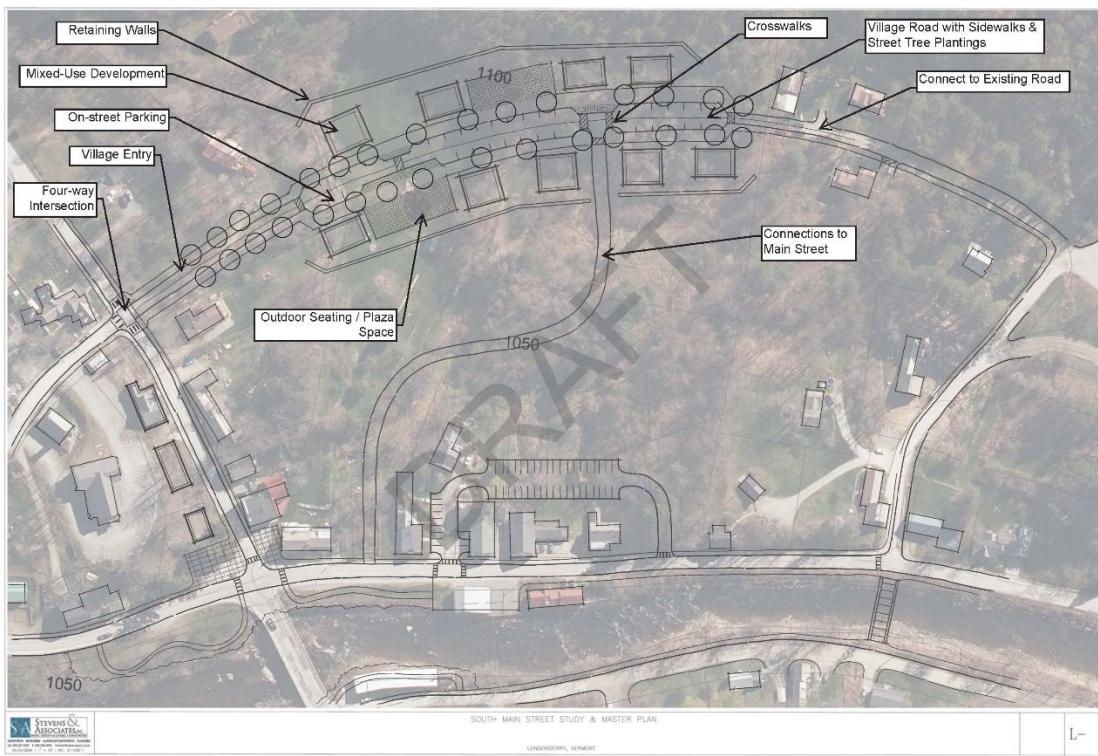
- Install pedestrian bridge at intersection of Main Street and Old School Street which will span the West River and provide connections to West River Street.
- Middletown Road
  - Sidewalks along both sides of Middletown Road extending north up the hill.
  - Infill buildings along north edge of Middletown Road.
  - Create plaza space in areas where road is re-aligned.

### Master Plan #2

- Crescent Street & Middletown Road Intersection
  - New entry road off of Middletown Road and Crescent Street intersection to new Village Center.
  - True four-way intersection with crosswalks.
  - Village road lined with street trees and sidewalks.
- New Village Center
  - Nine, two story mixed used buildings with 6,000 GSF per building.
  - On-street parallel parking.
  - New Village promotes walkability by moving out of way of Main Street and Route 100 traffic issues.
  - Multiple outdoor plaza spaces along new village road.
  - Connections down hill to Main Street.
  - Walking loop can now be achieved by going from New Village to Old School Street, Main Street and Middletown Road.
  - Retaining walls along both edges of development to handle grades.
- Old School Street
  - New Village Center connects to Old School Street.
  - Allows for connections to Town Office and Library.



DRAFT MASTER PLAN #1



DRAFT MASTER PLAN #2

## PHASING PLAN

Phase 1 should be focused on reducing the base flood elevation (BFE) before investing in infrastructure that could be impacted by flooding. BFE reduction projects could include floodplain restoration and reconnection projects or designing compensatory storage. Phase 1 should also include crosswalk striping at intersections and development outside the floodplain including infill along Middletown Road, plaza space around the West River Trail Building, parking by the West River Trailhead, and pedestrian connections from the West River Trail to the bank.

Phase 2 could include replacing and potentially relocating the Route 100 bridge and realigning the Route 100 & West River Street intersection. Additionally, this phase would implement compensatory storage, which will also help reduce BFE. This phase would require relocating the Fire Department and creating park space and trails along the river.

Phase 3 includes proposed improvements in the current floodplain including narrowed village roads with sidewalks, street trees, village lighting, off street parking behind the post office, a plaza in front of the Corner Market Deli, pedestrian connectivity to trails, and a possible pedestrian bridge. It is important that this phase take place after the BFE has been reduced and the floodplain is adjusted so that the south village is no longer subject to high risk flooding.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the two preferred plan options being presented the conclusions vary regarding which option is chosen, however, both plans addresses the primary concerns related to the study.

### Master Plan #1

When implemented it is expected that, the BFE will be reduced due to the relocation of the existing undersized bridge and installation of compensatory storage areas. Furthermore, 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. The proposal to re-locate the Fire Department building will move an essential service out of the floodway and allow for compensatory storage to be created. In addition, the plan will create a vibrant, walkable traditional village with a mix of uses, on-street parking, sidewalks and crosswalks for pedestrians. The plan also supports walkability in the area with the significant addition of a riverfront trail system.

### Master Plan #2

When implemented this plan moves the entire Village Center onto the hillside and away from any areas that are subject to flooding. A primary concern among residents is rebuilding in flood prone areas does not solve the issues of on-going flooding, with this option that concern is negated. The hillside in question has some substantial grade change and is mostly privately-owned which presents a major political and financial hurdle to acquire the land. Once owned, the Town can then create a completely new Town Center with designs that have considered: pedestrian walkability, traffic calming, parking, and new business / housing opportunities. Traffic from the existing Route 100 and Main Streets can still use these aforementioned routes and make the proposed Town Center much more pedestrian friendly but removes large vehicle traffic from the Village Center.

### Public Input

The results of this study were substantially influenced by community input. The public provided input at two rounds of public meetings as well as at presentations to the Planning Commission and the Select Board.

### 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 50,000 Gross Square Feet of new building construction

- In today's construction climate this would equal at least \$26.5 million in construction value

### **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, State, and Town governments. 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.

Any costs associated with the acquisitions of land related to the implementation of Master Plan #2 have to be significantly considered due to the fact that the land is mostly privately owned. Construction costs will be significant due to the steep slopes of the hillside and the scale of the earth moving and retaining walls required.

## NEXT STEPS

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

- Complete the Wastewater Treatment Study.
- Coordinate additional related studies – During the creation of these Master Plans, additional studies were identified that would benefit the Londonderry Area and support the Master Planning Efforts. These include:
  - Fire Station Siting Study.
  - Prouty Property Village Master Plan.
  - Route 100 / Main Street Bridge Sizing & BFE Reduction Study.
  - Base Flood Elevation (BFE) Reduction Study for Floodplain Restoration and Compensatory Storage projects.
  - Building Inventory.
- 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 this 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 on Transportation (VTrans)
  - Vermont Department of Health (DOH)

- Grant opportunities – Use this master plan and report as a tool to when seeking additional grants or other funding from State and Federal groups that could support. redevelopment of the area. These include:
  - Northern Boarders 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:
  - Large employers in the region
  - The Orton Family Foundation
- Review Town Plans and Regulations - Consider steps the Town of Londonderry could take through revisions to current town plan, committee structure, regulations, connections to region groups or other efforts that might help set the stage for redevelopment of Main Street.