



Village Greens Initiative

The Vermont Village Greens Initiative is reviving awareness about Vermont's village greens and the important cultural and economic role they play. Vermont's village greens (and commons) serve as the physical, historic and cultural heart of many communities, hosting concerts, fairs, parades, seasonal festivals and farmers' markets. They provide residents and visitors a place to gather, exercise, recreate, celebrate, and engage in commerce and community. Integral to the Vermont brand and quality of life, village greens anchor and strengthen our communities, and make our cities and towns more attractive places to live and work. Nevertheless, many of the 148 village greens around Vermont suffer from deferred maintenance and lack of investment. To address this issue, a partnership is working to document, showcase, and revitalize these shared public spaces for future generations.

Overview

Located in Caledonia County, Danville is known as the "Village in the Hills" due to its proximity to both the Green and White Mountains. Danville has been a state designated Village Center since 2005 and is home to many attractions including Joe's Pond, the Great Vermont Corn Maze, the Danville Fair, the Lamoille Valley Rail Trailhead and a picturesque historic green. The Danville Green hosts many cultural and community events, including a weekly Farmers' Market, the Danville Fair, Autumn on the Green, concerts in the bandstand, a July 4th celebration and parade, and a Memorial Day celebration.

The Challenge

Vermont Route 2 serves as Danville's 'main street' through the village. As a major state highway, high travel speeds and heavy truck traffic were a safety concern for many residents. In the 1970s, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) proposed a bypass around the town to address these concerns and preserve the small-town feel of Danville. However, residents were apprehensive about the potential economic impacts of the bypass on small businesses in the village. Ultimately, the town and VTrans chose to abandon the bypass in favor of a road improvement project that valued the historic character of the village and balanced the needs of cars and trucks with the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. The community saw the highway project as an opportunity to not only improve road access for all users – but also revitalize the community and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

The Solution

Departing from the traditional design process, VTrans partnered with the Vermont Arts Council and the community to engage in the project design. A Local Review Committee led by the Vermont Arts Council, and comprised of local representatives and VTrans staff, identified specific community goals for the project which included, among others:

- Creating and supporting a safe pedestrian friendly environment;
- Celebrating the unique history and character of the community with public art;
- Preserving and revitalizing the Green as an open public space;
- Providing adequate parking to support visitors and to ensure the economic viability of businesses in the village;
- Supporting the 'pride of place' for residents and business owners.

Sidewalks, crosswalks, a traffic light and traffic islands were installed to slow traffic on Route 2 and to make the village more inviting to pedestrians. New street trees and gateway signs strengthen the village's identity as a destination and invite visitors to slow down and explore the community and enjoy the Danville Green. To encourage visitors to the Green, traffic was routed one-way around the green to create more on-street parking opportunities. In addition, a road was removed that split the Green into three separate areas. The edge of the Green was also defined with curbs, and pathways were formalized with sidewalks and landscaped features such as stone walls and staircases. Other changes include the construction of a new bandstand, installation of decorative lamp posts, and tree plantings. Finally, public art featured on the Green celebrate local heritage at the Danville Circle - an amphitheater with landscaping, a thermometer, historic water trough, multiple photo albums, sculptures, and poems inscribed on granite posts.



For more information contact:

Richard Amore, richard.amore@vermont.gov or (802) 828-5229

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/village_greens



The Result

The project achieved its goals and created new ways to see transportation and infrastructure improvements as opportunities to support economic development and restore community vitality. In 2014, the Danville Green re-opened following the completion of the Route 2 renovations. The reduced traffic speeds on Route 2 increased safety and encouraged visitors and residents to visit the green and cultural events draw visitors from across the state and New England. A number of businesses and residences surrounding the Green have been renovated and businesses in Danville's village center have flourished. The Town of Danville has made walking a priority and they received a VTrans grant to extend the sidewalks to a second public park on Hill Street and purchased a sidewalk snow plow so pedestrians have sidewalk access year-round.

Funding

VTrans managed the project, including the construction and permitting process. The total project cost for the reconstruction of Route 2 through the village was \$14.7 million, including design, permitting, property acquisition, utility relocation, construction, green improvements and streetscape enhancements. Funding for the public art components of the project, was approximately \$275,000.

Project Contacts

Sharon Lakey, Director, Danville Historical Society, historicalsociety.director.dan@gmail.com
Eric Bach, Danville Chamber of Commerce, eric.bach@vermont.gov
Michele Bailey, Vermont Arts Council, MBailey@vermontartscouncil.org



For more information contact:

Richard Amore, richard.amore@vermont.gov or (802) 828-5229

http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/village_greens