



Vermont Downtown Action Team Report
August 1, 2014

Warren, Vermont

Contents

1.0 Introduction 5

 1.1 The Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) 6

 1.2 Process 6

 1.3 Acknowledgements 7

 1.4 Introduction to Warren 8

2.0 Retail Market Study 11

 2.1 Community Input 12

 2.2 Market Definition. 13

 2.3 Retail Market Analysis 15

 2.4 Key Market Conclusions and Opportunities 19

3.0 Physical Plan 21

 3.1 Introduction 22

 3.2 Public Realm. 23

 3.3 Development/Redevelopment Sites. 29

4.0 Organization & Funding 37

 4.1 Organization. 38

 4.2 Funding. 38

5.0 Implementation 41



Vermont Downtown Action Team Report

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT)

The Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) was hired by the State of Vermont, Department of Housing and Community Development, Vermont Downtown Program in May 2013 to conduct community planning and economic development charrettes for seven communities adversely affected by Tropical Storm Irene or the spring floods of 2012. Charrettes were held from August through November 2013 in Warren, Waitsfield, Barre, Brattleboro, Brandon, Waterbury, Wilmington and Northfield in April 2014. The V-DAT was comprised of experts in architecture, planning, landscape architecture, historic preservation, economic development, organizational structure, engineering and community branding.

The V-DAT team was customized for each community but included:

- Tripp Muldrow, Team Leader, Arnett Muldrow & Associates
- David Boehm, Engineering Ventures
- Heather Fontaine, Arnold & Scangus Architects
- Stephanie Francis, SouthCoast Consulting
- Tom McGilloway, Mahan Rykiel Associates
- Ben Muldrow, Arnett Muldrow & Associates
- Stacy Pair, SouthCoast Consulting
- Laz Scangus, Arnold & Scangus Architects
- Nate Scott, Mahan Rykiel Associates
- Randy Wilson, Community Design Solutions
- Leanne Tingay, State of Vermont, Housing and Community Development, Vermont Downtown Program
- Richard Amore, State of Vermont, Housing and Community Development, Vermont Downtown Program

1.2 Process

The V-DAT planning charrettes operate on three key tenants: utilizing an asset based approach, addressing the community in a holistic manner, and conducting the exercise in a public forum. First, an asset based planning approach builds upon the unique assets and qualities a community possesses without trying to make them into some place they are not. Ultimately, this ensures that the plan will be authentic in its nature and affordable in its execution. Second the holistic approach utilized in the V-DAT charrette includes varying degrees of emphasis on four components:

- Market Analysis – to understand the market forces affecting a community. For Warren the market study is designed to provide a regional overview to help place Warren in context with the overall Mad River Valley.
- Design, planning and preservation – to protect and enhance the physical appearance and function of the community
- Branding and marketing – to aid the community in communicating its unique promotional messages in a compelling, consistent and effective way. For Warren, branding and marketing were not part of the scope as the village is small and has no direct marketing budget.
- Implementation strategies – to ensure the recommendations of the plan include a road map to turn them into reality

However, it is the participatory nature of the planning exercise that makes them maximally effective. Since the plans are created on-site within a three-day time period with input from the communities' citizens, the charrette ensures a level of community-wide buy-in and enthusiasm that leads to an unprecedented level of implementation.

1.3 Acknowledgements

The Vermont Downtown Action Team [V-DAT] Warren plan would not be possible without the support, expertise and input from the following people and organizations.

State of Vermont, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

Noelle Mackay, Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development

Jennifer Hollar, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development

Mad River Valley Planning District

Joshua Schwartz, Executive Director

The Mad River Valley Planning District served as primary contact for the project, with input and feedback provided by an advisory group. The advisory group was assembled specifically for this project, representing village businesses, property owners, the municipality, MRV Chamber of Commerce, and the elementary school.

The Town of Warren Advisory Committee

Jack Garvin

Virginia Roth

Dave Sellers

Lucy O'Brian

Craig Klofach

Rosemarie White

Mike Ketchel

Win Smith

Special thanks to all the participants during the V-DAT charrette that occurred on October 14-18, 2013

Project Funding and Support

This project was supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery. The plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the State of Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, the Division of Community Planning and Revitalization and the Village of Warren. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of HUD or the State of Vermont. For more information on the Vermont Downtown Action Team [V-DAT] program, please visit http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/vdat or call (802) 828-5229.

1.4 Introduction to Warren

1.4.1 Downtown Profile

Warren, VT is at the Southern end of the Mad River Valley. It is a small rural village known for its beautiful countryside, unique natural features and historic village center. Warren has a very small commercial and institutional district that blends seamlessly with the residential area of the village. Most of the land surrounding the village is comprised of large-lot residences, agricultural, and open or forested areas.

The Town of Warren is home to a large portion of the Sugarbush Ski Resort creating a dichotomy of residential areas in the larger area. Much of the housing stock centers around the resort area and is mainly used seasonally. The 2010 Census indicates that 60% of the housing stock are second homes. Unlike many Vermont towns (and the state as a whole) there is a youthful population moving into Warren because of the excellent elementary school. There has recently been an influx of families who choose to move to Warren and either commute to jobs via car or telecommute. Still others maintain second homes in the village.

1.4.2 Catastrophic Event

On August 28, 2011, Tropical Storm Irene dropped massive amounts of rain on the Mad River Valley causing the river and local tributaries to break their banks. The Pitcher Inn was severely damaged, homes were flooded, and several streets damaged in the Village. Route 100, which provides the major access to Warren Village, was also damaged.

1.4.3 Recovery

To date, much has happened in Warren to recover. The Pitcher Inn has reopened, streets have been repaired, and the tributary banks have been reinforced to fight future erosion. The Town has also approved a village commercial zoning district that maintains the character and historic settlement pattern of Warren Village, while encouraging a mix of commercial, residential and civic uses within the Village core.

1.4.4 Identified Needs

“These are all of the issues identified by community stakeholders during the assessment visit. All of these issues cannot necessarily be addressed by the VDAT team.”

- Desire for minimal retail growth
- Attracting young families to the village center
- Rock build up in the river
- Bypass around the village
- Workforce Housing
- Co-work and meeting space
- Appropriate street lighting
- Increased cell service
- Fiber optic broadband

1.4.5 Vermont Downtown Action Team Outcomes

- Create Village Center Plan vignettes that identify the following: infill opportunities, configuration of a potential Village Green along with civic buildings in the community, traffic calming options, streetscape and pedestrian connectivity (connecting residential neighborhoods to village and to elementary school).
- Business consultation and strategy to address workforce housing and co-work spaces while maintaining town character.



Vermont Downtown Action Team Report

Retail Market Study

2.0 Retail Market Study

This section of the report presents the findings of the market research for the Mad River Valley and sets the stage for further analysis that can be used to recruit businesses, residents, investors, and visitors. It is also designed to help businesses retain existing and target new customers. For Warren, this information is designed to place the community in the context of the overall area and not to suggest significant retail growth in the community.

This chapter is divided into three sections:

Section 2.1 is a distillation of the community input gathered in a series of one-on-one interviews conducted and a public input session. This section describes the assets, opportunities, and challenges as described by community leaders and other stakeholders. This input is the “unvarnished” input provided by community stakeholders.

Section 2.2 is Warren’s market definition based on zip code survey work completed by businesses in the community in early October, 2013 and January, 2014. It also provides insight into Warren’s trade area demographics and presents market data related to the Town of Warren’s retail trade areas.

Section 2.3 presents the retail market analysis that shows the market potential for the retail trade areas. This information is based on the most recent data available and is a reliable source for understanding overall market patterns. This section concludes with some key opportunities for retail that could be used to both enhance existing businesses and recruit additional businesses to the community.

2.1 Community Input

The V-DAT team conducted a public input meeting, roundtable sessions with special interest groups, and one-on-one interviews with a variety of stakeholders. The input documented below is not designed to be exhaustive but rather to provide an overview of what we heard. Please note that the opinions stated here do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the V-DAT team or the Town of Warren.

2.1.1 Warren’s Strengths

- Eclectic
- Interest in design and innovation – People have it
- Interest in non-motorized recreation activities – cross country, snow shoeing etc, cycling
- Some motorized winter recreation
- Physically – town square – between the store and the Pitcher Inn and that is effectively a pedestrian area
- Dual community – resident and second homeowner population
- Each building has distinct architecture – making changes that bring those three buildings together more
- Dam as the center of the town
- River – nature immersed in the human scaled environment
- Pragmatic without being frou-frou

- It is a REAL community – it is a place where people live even though there is a mix of part-time/full-time people

2.1.2 Opportunities/Challenges

- Being able to fix the dam because it is connected to the covered bridge
- Struggle with how to resolve location of road/traffic
- So many signs all over the place – condensed or put in one area.
- Village is fragmented – small area but none of it is connected – community that isn't far apart but it is fragmented.

2.1.3 Wants/Desires

- Have year-round neighbors
- Coffee bar or place to do emails or – the Third Place
- Fish in the river again
- Place to charge electrical vehicles
- Reliable cell service
- Warren is in a tricky place because it is a small town – how to keep as tight as possible – must support it so we keep it connected including people
- Make it affordable for young people to move here
- Traffic calming in the town center
- More complimentary retail or business –

This input provides a foundation from which to better understand the market data gathered during the study and helps round out the information gleaned from the data shown in [Section 2.2](#) below. While Warren has had considerable discussion about some of the physical and redevelopment issues for the Village, overall there is a sense that the community is recovering from Tropical Storm Irene and opportunities for future investment in Warren and the Mad River Valley abound.

2.2 Market Definition

This portion of the study will explore what the market for the Mad River Valley looks like. There are many different models for defining a market. Radial studies simply take a location and draw a radius from it. This approach is difficult for locales like the Mad River Valley where road connections lead to mountain passes, large ranges divide markets, and much of the community is linear along Route 100. Drive time studies, while sometimes useful, are also problematic for communities like Warren because of its relative proximity to larger markets such as Waterbury, Burlington, Barre and Montpelier.

Consequently, the V-DAT team used a zip code approach as its tool for analyzing a trade area. This approach has its own advantages and disadvantages. The Warren Store and the Pitcher Inn in the Town of Warren graciously participated in the zip code survey of their customers. Merchants were provided with a form to record customer zip codes and asked to keep the log for all customers during this period.

The strengths of a zip code survey include the following: it provides insight into local traffic based on actual data tracked. Zip code surveys have their own limitations in that the zip code geography can sometimes be fairly large and stretch beyond the typical market boundaries or include areas that do not relate to the community. Another limitation of the zip code survey is that it captures a snapshot in time.

In a market like Warren where visitor traffic ebbs and flows with the seasons, that zip code snapshot can vary depending on the time of year. In the case of Warren the survey was conducted during a peak visitor time during foliage season.

2.2.1 Zip Code Results

The results of the zip code surveys in October of 2013 and January of 2014 are listed below, the data pertains to Warren but some notes on the overall market are also included to put into perspective a broader view of visitation to the Mad River Valley:

The first survey was held from October 14th to October 22nd of 2013. This is one of Warren's peak seasons, providing a strong assessment of visitor traffic. The second was held from January 13th to January 20th of 2014 during high ski season, which provided insight into the shift in the nature of the visitors between the Autumn and Winter.

4 businesses participated in both surveys including the Warren Store, the Pitcher Inn and its restaurants 275 Main, and Tracks.

Participants recorded 844 customer visits just in Warren in the first survey and 365 in the second. The Warren Store was one of the key drivers of traffic throughout the Mad River Valley representing the broadest customer base in both surveys.

Combined, Warren and Waitsfield had nearly 700 unique zip codes from 37 Unique States and 8 foreign countries in October representing 43% of the market. In January the visitor market was nearly equally robust at 49% but not as broad with 18 states and 2 foreign countries tracked. The key difference is the large increase in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York customers in January.

2.2.2 Demographic Data

Demographic indicators can play a significant role in retail marketing. Smaller communities like Warren can be more selective in business recruitment to make sure that new business will thrive in the Warren retail market and that the businesses are complementing the character of the community.

In 2013, the Warren zip code had population estimated to be 1,701 (this includes the entire zip code). From 2000 to 2010, the population grew by a modest two percent. According to Neilson the growth is expected to continue but at a very slow pace of less than one percent by 2018 adding a mere 15 residents. The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development assume a much more robust growth estimate for Warren at between 9% and 11% by 2020. The median age in Warren is 45.8, which is significantly higher than that of both Vermont (42) and the US (37). In line with an older population, the median household income in Warren is \$68,196. Again, this is significantly higher than Vermont's median household income of \$53,422 and the United States median household income of \$52,762. Despite an older demographic, twenty-seven percent of Warren residents are married couples with children. But the majority (55.6%) are married with no children in the home.

2.3 Retail Market Analysis

Warren is a retail center serving a strong local market. In this section, the Warren market will be examined to identify potential opportunities for new or expanded stores in the region by comparing what residents of the Warren and Waitsfield zip codes spend compared with what stores in same two zip codes sell. This will allow the community to assess what kind of additional store types might be attracted to Warren and will help existing individual businesses understand how they might diversify product lines based on the local customer traffic. It is very likely that new and expanded stores would locate inside the Waitsfield zip code rather than in Warren (particularly in the village) because of site availability and the desire of Warren to remain a small village center with limited retail.

2.3.1 Retail Market Potential in the Trade Areas

As mentioned, the retail market potential refers to the difference between retail expenditures by residents living in a particular area and the retail sales produced by the stores located in the same area. If desired products are not available within that area, consumers will travel to other places or use different methods to obtain those products. Consequently, the dollars spent outside of the area are said to be “leaking.” If a community is a major retail center with a variety of stores or a major tourism destination it will be “attracting” rather than “leaking” retail sales. Even large communities may see leakage in certain retail categories while some small communities may be attractors in categories. For the purposes of this study both the Warren and Waitsfield zip codes (05674 and 05673) were used to evaluate the market. The combined locations of Warren and Waitsfield have an overall inflow, indicating they are bringing in money from other communities. However, this represents net sales and expenditures, so individual retail categories will tell very different stories.

Such an analysis is not an exact science. In some cases, large leakage in certain categories may indicate that money is being spent elsewhere such as drug store purchases at a supermarket or apparel purchases through the internet. It is important to note that this analysis accounts best for retail categories where households (rather than businesses) are essentially the only consumer groups. For example, lumberyards may have business sales that are not accounted for in consumer expenditures. Stores such as jewelry shops and clothing stores are more accurately analyzed using this technique.

The market potential study for the Mad River Valley is a “snapshot” in time and based on local traffic as well as consumers visiting during the peak foliage season. With these factors in mind the combined Warren and Waitsfield selected store sales equaled \$126 million while consumers in the two locations spent \$85 million. As a result, the combined area is gaining \$41 million annually. With such a robust visitor market, this importation of dollars is no surprise. Yet, the Mad River Valley is not gaining sales in all retail categories. Building materials, grocery stores, and sporting goods to a lesser degree represent the great majority of the retail gain for the area likely because they are selling merchandise that other store categories would typically sell (electronics at the hardware store as an example). Other categories such as automotive dealers and general merchandise leak sales but are entirely inappropriate for Warren. Leaders in the Mad River Valley should note, however,

that the leakage of \$10.5 million in the general merchandise category could point to potential demand for a Dollar General/Family Dollar type store. As mentioned though, that existing stores selling merchandise outside of its traditional category could absorb some of that demand. The vast majority of any retail growth will cluster in Waitsfield and Irasville and NOT in Warren itself. Warren has the “luxury” of handpicking the types of retail it may want to see (galleries, highly specialized retail, etc.) because of its small size and limited sites.

2.3.2 Detailed Retail Market Opportunity Tables

Section 2.3.1 explores the retail trade patterns in aggregate, the tables on the following pages explore the individual retail categories where the two zip codes are leaking and gaining sales. This data should be used as an overall guide to retail market potential and should not substitute for detailed market research on the part of any business wishing to open in Warren. While market support for a category may be an indicator of success, there are many factors (location, business plan and financing, customer service, product selection) that can contribute to the failure of a retail enterprise. Please note that some categories are subsets of larger categories.

As mentioned before, the combined areas of Waitsfield and Warren are gaining sales in a few notable store types. These details are shown on the table on the following two pages. The source for this information is Neilson Inc. Neilson uses a complex allocation model to assign sales across a larger geography so smaller geographies often have sales reflected from businesses that are nearby but not within zip code. Consequently, a percentage of certain store type sales may be allocated to Waitsfield and Warren from adjacent geographies. It is important to note that Warren’s small size, limited sites, and community support for a deliberate policy of limited retail growth means that nearly all of the retail opportunities listed here will locate outside of the village core.

RMP Opportunity Gap - Retail Stores			
Area ZIP Codes (see appendix for geographies), Total			
Retail Stores	2013 Demand (Consumer Expenditures)	2013 Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap/Surplus
Total Retail Sales Incl Eating and Drinking Places	85,420,354	126,415,370	(40,995,016)
Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers-441	16,097,139	4,001,208	12,095,931
Automotive Dealers-4411	12,262,238	551,401	11,710,837
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers-4412	2,485,908	3,068,846	(582,938)
Automotive Parts/Accsrs, Tire Stores-4413	1,348,993	380,961	968,032
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores-442	1,860,766	1,851,187	9,579
Furniture Stores-4421	995,925	631,623	364,302
Home Furnishing Stores-4422	864,841	1,219,564	(354,723)
Electronics and Appliance Stores-443	1,782,364	4,080,936	(2,298,572)
Appliances, TVs, Electronics Stores-44311	1,348,625	0	1,348,625
Household Appliances Stores-443111	246,737	0	246,737
Radio, Television, Electronics Stores-443112	1,101,888	0	1,101,888

RMP Opportunity Gap - Retail Stores			
Area ZIP Codes (see appendix for geographies), Total			
Retail Stores	2013 Demand (Consumer Expenditures)	2013 Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap/Surplus
Computer and Software Stores-44312	379,903	4,080,936	(3,701,033)
Camera and Photographic Equipment Stores-44313	53,836	0	53,836
Building Material, Garden Equip Stores -444	9,035,353	45,954,575	(36,919,222)
Building Material and Supply Dealers-4441	8,073,612	45,076,071	(37,002,459)
Home Centers-44411	3,245,104	0	3,245,104
Paint and Wallpaper Stores-44412	142,050	0	142,050
Hardware Stores-44413	758,595	26,953,169	(26,194,574)
Other Building Materials Dealers-44419	3,927,863	18,122,902	(14,195,039)
Building Materials, Lumberyards-444191	1,521,819	7,086,055	(5,564,236)
Lawn, Garden Equipment, Supplies Stores-4442	961,741	878,504	83,237
Outdoor Power Equipment Stores-44421	190,622	221,853	(31,231)
Nursery and Garden Centers-44422	771,119	656,651	114,468
Food and Beverage Stores-445	10,079,101	32,462,286	(22,383,185)
Grocery Stores-4451	8,734,682	30,356,630	(21,621,948)
Supermarkets, Grocery (Ex Conv) Stores-44511	8,315,375	26,917,400	(18,602,025)
Convenience Stores-44512	419,307	3,439,230	(3,019,923)
Specialty Food Stores-4452	728,084	2,105,656	(1,377,572)
Beer, Wine and Liquor Stores-4453	616,335	0	616,335
Health and Personal Care Stores-446	4,595,532	4,523,757	71,775
Pharmacies and Drug Stores-44611	3,634,223	4,473,652	(839,429)
Cosmetics, Beauty Supplies, Perfume Stores-44612	321,383	0	321,383
Optical Goods Stores-44613	229,500	0	229,500
Other Health and Personal Care Stores-44619	410,426	50,105	360,321
Gasoline Stations-447	8,251,149	5,397,636	2,853,513
Gasoline Stations With Conv Stores-44711	5,957,060	3,246,270	2,710,790
Other Gasoline Stations-44719	2,294,089	2,151,366	142,723
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores-448	4,112,512	1,992,934	2,119,578
Clothing Stores-4481	3,069,943	1,992,934	1,077,009
Men's Clothing Stores-44811	172,101	0	172,101
Women's Clothing Stores-44812	700,356	599,095	101,261
Childrens, Infants Clothing Stores-44813	186,488	410,312	(223,824)
Family Clothing Stores-44814	1,598,012	285,578	1,312,434
Clothing Accessories Stores-44815	134,612	0	134,612
Other Clothing Stores-44819	278,374	697,949	(419,575)
Shoe Stores-4482	438,869	0	438,869
Jewelry, Luggage, Leather Goods Stores-4483	603,700	0	603,700
Jewelry Stores-44831	565,612	0	565,612
Luggage and Leather Goods Stores-44832	38,088	0	38,088
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores-451	1,547,174	13,898,342	(12,351,168)
Sportng Goods, Hobby, Musical Inst Stores-4511	1,141,567	11,628,040	(10,486,473)
Sporting Goods Stores-45111	622,619	10,403,696	(9,781,077)

RMP Opportunity Gap - Retail Stores
Area ZIP Codes (see appendix for geographies), Total

Retail Stores	2013 Demand (Consumer Expenditures)	2013 Supply (Retail Sales)	Opportunity Gap/Surplus
Hobby, Toys and Games Stores-45112	272,645	0	272,645
Sew/Needlework/Piece Goods Stores-45113	123,132	1,066,944	(943,812)
Musical Instrument and Supplies Stores-45114	123,171	157,400	(34,229)
Book, Periodical and Music Stores-4512	405,607	2,270,302	(1,864,695)
Book Stores and News Dealers-45121	331,618	2,270,302	(1,938,684)
Book Stores-451211	305,597	2,270,302	(1,964,705)
News Dealers and Newsstands-451212	26,021	0	26,021
Prerecorded Tapes, CDs, Record Stores-45122	73,989	0	73,989
General Merchandise Stores-452	10,582,988	0	10,582,988
Department Stores Excl Leased Depts-4521	4,393,425	0	4,393,425
Other General Merchandise Stores-4529	6,189,563	0	6,189,563
Miscellaneous Store Retailers-453	2,365,766	868,776	1,496,990
Florists-4531	117,656	0	117,656
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores-4532	773,962	0	773,962
Office Supplies and Stationery Stores-45321	442,476	0	442,476
Gift, Novelty and Souvenir Stores-45322	331,486	0	331,486
Used Merchandise Stores-4533	229,090	0	229,090
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers-4539	1,245,058	868,776	376,282
Non-Store Retailers-454	6,459,574	2,741,054	3,718,520
Foodservice and Drinking Places-722	8,650,936	8,642,679	8,257
Full-Service Restaurants-7221	4,014,643	5,022,859	(1,008,216)
Limited-Service Eating Places-7222	3,561,853	2,561,149	1,000,704
Special Foodservices-7223	693,216	840,929	(147,713)
Drinking Places -Alcoholic Beverages-7224	381,224	217,742	163,482
GAFO *	20,659,766	21,823,399	(1,163,633)
General Merchandise Stores-452	10,582,988	0	10,582,988
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores-448	4,112,512	1,992,934	2,119,578
Furniture and Home Furnishings Stores-442	1,860,766	1,851,187	9,579
Electronics and Appliance Stores-443	1,782,364	4,080,936	(2,298,572)
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, Music Stores-451	1,547,174	13,898,342	(12,351,168)
Office Supplies, Stationery, Gift Stores-4532	773,962	0	773,962

2.4 Key Market Conclusions and Opportunities

2.4.1 Observations

The local population in Warren is small, slow growing, and relatively affluent when compared to the state and the country.

Warren's village center is compact and can only handle a very limited amount of additional retail. Moreover, community sentiment indicates that while some additional retail is desired, the residential character of the village center should be preserved. The market data indicates that Warren can be choosy when looking to expand its retail base, but that a pro-active approach for the right "mix" can be successful for the community.

For existing businesses Warren's connection to its major visitor attractions (the ski resorts) and emerging location for outdoor recreation in all seasons presents an excellent opportunity to broaden the visitor season.

2.4.2 Residential and Other Growth Opportunities

Although this study is not a detailed housing analysis, input from stakeholders indicate a desire to have more full-time occupancy of vacation properties. Its location proximate to Waterbury, Barre, Montpelier, and even Chittenden County make the Mad River Valley an appealing place for those exploring a more relaxed lifestyle to work and live. Warren residents commented on the need for both more affordable housing and for additional residents to occupy what have been seasonal homes.



Vermont Downtown Action Team Report

Physical Plan

3.0 Physical Plan

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Chapter Format

The physical plan for Warren Village is divided into two broad categories that overlap. The first is an assessment of the village center that includes the public areas and how they interact with private investment and how Warren's village center fits into an overall community context. The second section of the physical recommendations focuses on individual buildings and sites within Warren's Village Center.

3.1.2 Introduction and Assessment

Warren is fortunate to have numerous initiatives underway, including a new town green design study grounded in community input. Additionally, private property owners are seeking to make improvements to their properties providing an opportunity to strengthen Warren's physical village center environment. Based on review of the town green design study, private property owner plans, input from numerous stakeholders and the V-DAT's own observations, the V-DAT draws four primary conclusions related to the physical environment.

- The existing casual, informal and comfortable character of the community is appealing to visitors and cherished by residents. This character is defined by the presence of rock and use of stone; flower plantings; small architectural and site details; architectural variety, the Warren Store as a community meeting spot and relationship of the village center with the Mad River. Continued revitalization should seek to protect and enhance this character.
- The town green concept is a good one and will provide a significant open space amenity for the village offering flexibility to accommodate a variety of activities. While the concept is solid, the town green's hilltop location visually separates it from the core. It will be important to refine the design to strengthen the physical connection to Main Street and the village core. Additionally, the plan relies upon a significant parking resource being relocated onto private property. A phased approach should be taken so that an interim phase of the town green can be implemented without relying on this private property and the property owner should be involved in discussions to explore implementation strategies for the future phase.
- Pedestrian and vehicular traffic mix in the village core without having clearly defined boundaries. While this works for the most part, traffic does move quickly through the village, along Main Street, creating hazards for pedestrians and detracting from the town character. A variety of traffic calming measures need to be implemented to create a safer environment for visitors and residents alike.
- Warren has a distinct village center core, but is fairly low density with few opportunities for new businesses. Revitalization efforts need to identify ways to add more density to the core while maintaining the appropriate scale and character of the community.

3.2 Public Realm

3.2.1 Town Green

Build upon the recommendations of the charrette that was conducted for a new town green. The recommendations developed during the charrette were based on significant stakeholder input; therefore, the fundamental concept should remain intact. Through its study of the plan, the V-DAT recommends the following elements to consider incorporating into the plan:

- Develop a phased approach that is not dependent upon the property behind the Municipal Building for parking.
- Develop pathways as “shared space,” designed to emphasize the pedestrian but also accommodate occasional vehicular traffic, particularly for handicap and elderly access to the Warren Church, Town Hall/Library and Municipal Building.
- Provide clear and visible access to both the village core, with considerations to ADA access, and the river (further described below in [Section 3.2.2](#)).
- Continue to emphasize large flexible spaces that can accommodate a variety of activities.
- Emphasize strategic planting of tall deciduous trees that will ultimately provide shade, frame views and define spaces while not obstructing views into the green or out to Main Street during the Warren 4th of July parade. Avoid low canopy ornamental trees or tall shrubs in areas where they will block views into or out of the space.

The initial phase of the town green is illustrated in [Figure 1: Town Green Initial Phase](#), and the potential future expanded plan is illustrated in [Figure 2: Town Green Potential Future Phase](#).

First Steps: Continue to discuss plans and build support with adjacent property owners, particularly the one to the east of the Municipal Building, which is well-suited for a large parking resource.

First Steps: Prepare detail construction drawings for the initial phase of the town green. This phase will keep the large parking lot at the church which can be utilized as event space occasionally throughout the year.

First Steps: Demolish the adjacent house and prepare the grade as a flat useable surface.

Next Steps: Implement the initial phase of the town green.

Long Term: Implement expanded phase of the town green by converting the majority of the church parking lot to green space and creating a larger parking resource behind the Municipal Building, should that property owner be interested in making the land available for such a purpose. Should a parking lot be developed here, care should be taken to preserve pockets of existing trees wherever possible and consideration should be given to using permeable paving within the parking stall areas.

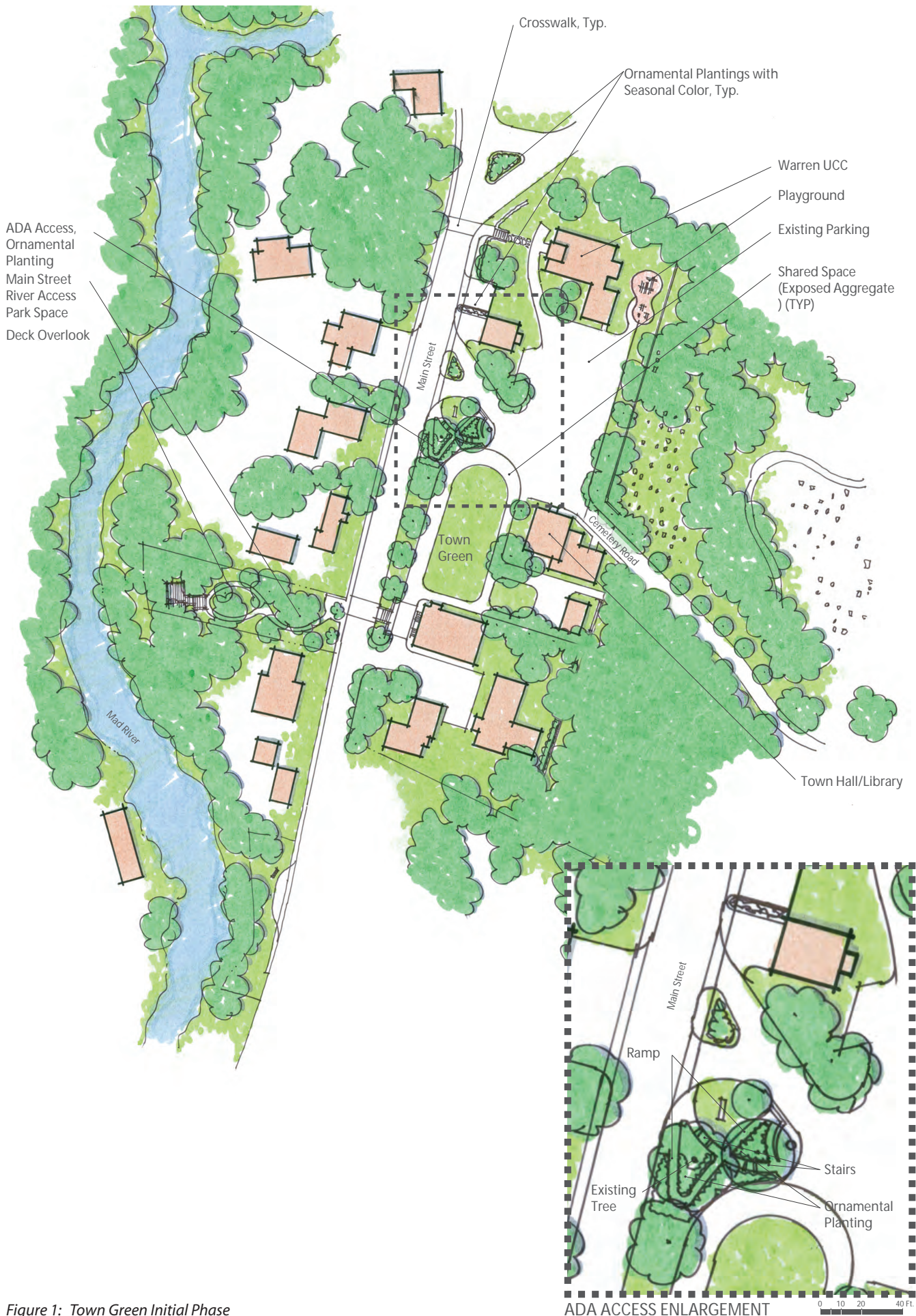


Figure 1: Town Green Initial Phase



Figure 2: Town Green Potential Future Phase

3.2.2 Main Street River Access

The publicly owned lot across from the Town Hall was acquired to provide access to the Mad River and some area for additional parking along the street. The V-DAT discourages parking along the front of this property, or within it, as parking will obstruct visual and physical access between the river and Town Hall and the planned town green. The following should be considered for this property as illustrated in [Figure 1: Town Green Initial Phase on page 24](#) and [Figure 2: Town Green Potential Future Phase on page 25](#):

- Maintain as an open space.
- Provide a clear crosswalk connection to Town Hall and a small entry space into the park. This entry space might include the interpretive signage that is located nearby and seasonal plantings.
- Provide a pathway to the river edge and establish an overlook. This overlook could be a deck structure or simply a small cleared, graded and mulched area.
- Remove invasive or unwanted vegetation as needed and replace with native overstory and understory trees.

3.2.3 Traffic Calming

Traffic calming is needed within the village core to create a safer pedestrian environment for residents and visitors; however, traffic calming measures need to be compatible with the overall village character. Following are some techniques that may be considered; some are illustrated in [Figure 5-Figure 8](#).

- Visually narrow the pavement area by using a slightly contrasting pattern/color to highlight parking zones and excess pavement at intersections, such as at the intersection of Main Street and Brook Road. Specifically, large planter pots could be used within this excess pavement zone to narrow the travel way. During the winter months, the flower pots can be removed to allow for plow access snow storage ([Figure 7 on page 35](#) and [Figure 8 on page 36](#)). Likewise, such planters could be removed during the Warren 4th of July parade. This treatment could be used whether or not all of Main Street is distinguished with special paving as described above. Any stamped pattern should be reflective of stone or cobble as opposed to brick.
- Consider special paving for Main Street's street surface within the village core area. The paving could simply be stamped concrete or asphalt to visually distinguish the core area as a pedestrian-friendly environment ([Figure 5 on page 33](#) and [Figure 6 on page 34](#)). Any stamped pattern should be reflective of stone or cobble as opposed to brick.
- Maintain on-street parallel parking as much as possible. Parked cars separate pedestrians from moving traffic and result in traffic calming because they visually narrow the street. Additionally, the movements required to park a car on the street help to slow traffic.
- Implement sidewalk enhancements, particularly along Brook Road, connecting the village core to the pathway leading to the school.
- Implement crosswalks along Main Street at Brook Road, near Flat Iron Road across from the Warren United Church of Christ, and across from the Town Hall.

- Prune/selectively clear vegetation that blocks views, particularly on the west side of Main Street at Brook Road where sight distance is limited by the curve in the road.
- Utilize speed monitors: The speed monitors are only used partially during the day. These should be used throughout the day, at least for a period of time, to collect data and fully understand realities (and perceptions) regarding speed within the village core.
- Stop Signs: Consider stop signs along Main Street at Brook Road and at Flat Iron Road. While stop signs pose an inconvenience to motorists, it is appropriate for traffic to stop upon reaching the village core to provide a safer pedestrian environment.

First Steps: Utilize the speed monitors that are in place throughout the day to collect data to support (or not support) traffic calming measures.

First Steps: Develop streetscape detail design plans to include traffic calming measures described above. Coordinate streetscape plans with potential Warren Store parking enhancements described below.

Next Steps: Implement streetscape enhancements

3.2.4 Bridge Enhancements

The existing Main Street bridge across Freeman’s Brook provides a well-defined gateway into the village core. There are opportunities to visually enhance this important bridge feature. Enhancements made to Wilmington, VT’s West Main Street Bridge provide a good example of what can be done here in Warren. The Wilmington Bridge image below shows the example from Wilmington and Village Bridge: Existing Conditions and Village Bridge: Proposed Conditions on page 28 illustrates an existing and potential after view for this part of Warren Village.



Wilmington Bridge



Village Bridge: Existing Conditions

Connecting the village area between the commercial and civic core, this bridge spans the river that meanders through village. Historically the bridge was a character-defining element in the village core. Currently, the roadway and sidewalk area are not clearly defined, it is not illuminated and there is no consistency to its treatments at each of the four corners.



Village Bridge: Proposed Conditions

Taking clues from historic photographs, it is recommended that replication period lighting be reinstalled atop the bridge. The addition of flower baskets to the rails would be a simple and inexpensive way to introduce color and texture to the bridge. By adding a stacked-stone wall on the right to match the conditions on the left, the walls would visually funnel the traveler to the center of the bridge. By changing the color –and potentially, texture—of the sidewalk, it would visually distinguish the pedestrian zone from the automobile roadway. Finally, by clearing underbrush and wild growth from the tree canopy, views to the river from the bridge would be enhanced.

- Improvements to concrete sidewalk to better distinguish it from the roadway surface and to provide a curb.
- Addition of flower planters on railings.
- Return of the post lights once located on the end piers on each side of the bridge.
- Add stone wall on Warren Store side of bridge, similar to that on the Pitcher Inn side.

First Steps: Conduct maintenance evaluation of bridge prior to making any enhancements

First Steps: Restore lighting and add flower planters

Next Steps: Enhance sidewalk (with streetscape improvements described above)

Next Steps: Add stone gateway wall, in coordination with the Warren Store.

3.3 Development/Redevelopment Sites

3.3.1 Warren Store Site Enhancements

The Warren Store is the heart of the village and the area around it is often bustling with activity. There are some enhancements that could be made to the property that would make the site more functional while maintaining the informal character that is so important. These enhancements are illustrated in [Figure 3: Village Core Enhancements and Infill Development on page 31](#) and might include:

- “Organized” parking area: The parking area in front of the store bleeds seamlessly into the street. As discussed above, stamped asphalt or concrete could be used to visually distinguish the front parking area from the street and the remainder of the gravel lot. Rather than striped parking lines, which would look too finished and suburban, granite or other stone insets could be used to provide a subtle indication of designated parking zones.
- Expanded Storage area: Expand and enclose the storage area behind the store and relocate materials that are currently stored outside, near the river edge. With the exception of the stacked firewood, the open storage visually detracts from the setting.
- Expanded outdoor dining: Add additional tables and chairs in the lawn area to provide additional outdoor dining space to take advantage of the river setting.
- Improved access to the restrooms and river overlooks. Provide a more formalized path (potentially flagstone) to the restroom building and to the existing overlook which offers incredible views of the river.
- Consider enhancing the overlook with a small deck structure and some outdoor seating.

First Steps: Construct the expanded storage area and add additional outdoor seating.

Next Steps: Construct the path and improved overlook.

Next Steps: Pave and organize the front parking in conjunction with streetscape implementation described above.

3.3.2 Village Core Infill Opportunity

The vacant lot on the west side of Main Street offers great potential to provide additional density and development within the village core. This infill development would most likely include multiple buildings, scaled appropriately for the village core that would capitalize on their proximity to the river, The Pitcher Inn, and the Warren Store, as illustrated in [Figure 3](#) and [Figure 5-Figure 8](#). Any infill development should consider the following:

- Consider multiple structures that might be 1-2 stories in height. Two larger structures or up to four smaller structures could fit within the site. Smaller structures could be phased as demand warrants and would allow for residential uses, live/work space, and micro-retail space.
- Avoid locating parking between the structures and the River. Rather, locate parking resources to the north and the south of the development. Parking to the north can utilize the existing driveway easement (shared with the property to the north) off of which a small parking court could be developed. Parking to the south could be accommodated by covered parking in the form of an out-building.
- Design structures so that large existing rock outcrop is incorporated into the building and site design.
- Consider overlook at river and access easement for visitors to Warren and to new and existing businesses.

First Steps: Develop detail design plans for buildings and site and market site to potential businesses

First Steps: Clean up vegetation at corner near Brook Road to open visibility and site distance in support of traffic calming measures described above.

First Steps: Consider informal deck overlook (or simple mulched clearing) to promote relationship of property to river.

Next Steps: Develop parking shed from south and parking area/access from north. Design and develop initial mixed-use building to the north.

Long Term: Develop additional infill structures.



Figure 3: Village Core Enhancements and Infill Development



Figure 4: Town Green Illustrative Master Plan (Long-Term)



Enhanced Streetscape (View Looking North From Main Street Bridge)



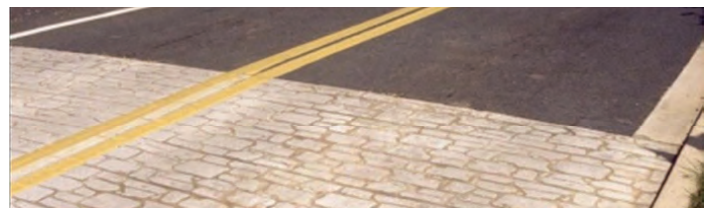
Alternate Paving Opportunity (View Looking North From Main Street Bridge)



Enhanced Streetscape (View Looking North From Main Street Bridge)

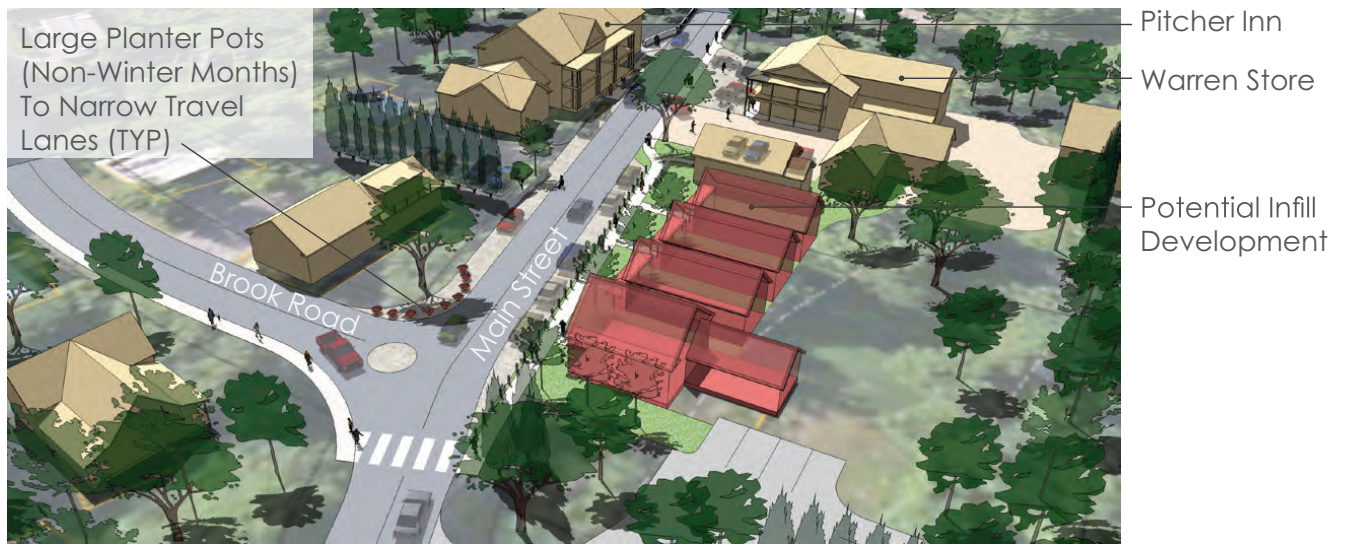


Alternate Paving Opportunity (View Looking North From Main Street Bridge)

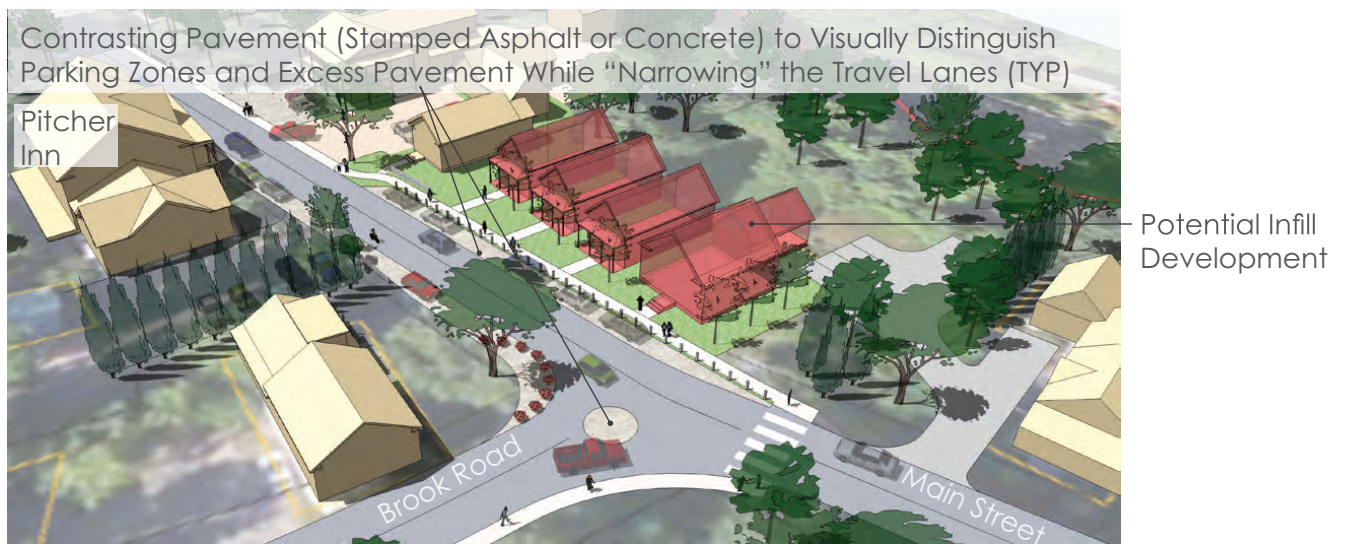


Precedent Images From Burketsville, Maryland Showing Stamped Concrete Paving

Figure 6: Village Core Traffic Calming and Infill Development



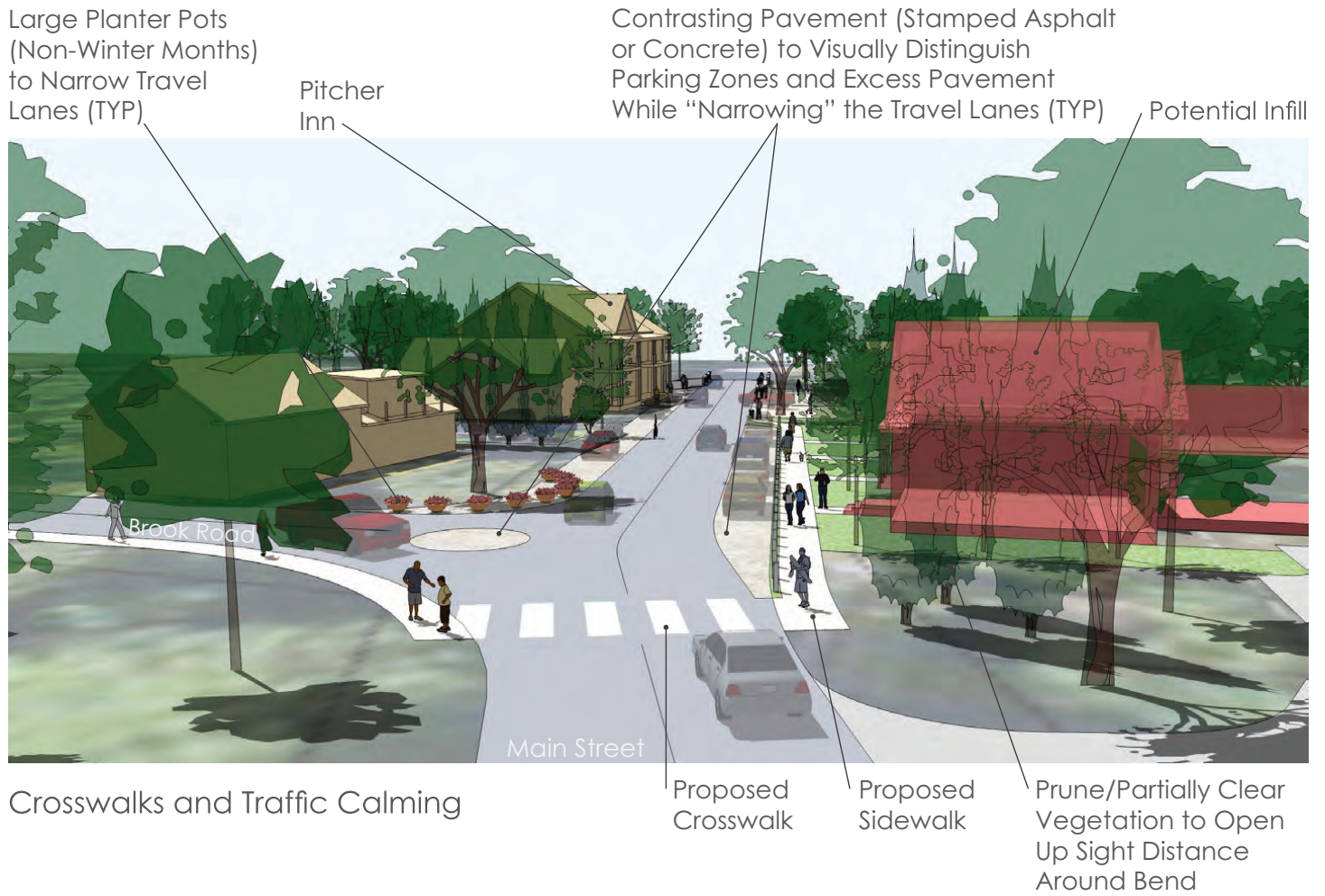
Crosswalks and Traffic Calming (View Looking South)



Potential Infill Development (View Looking West)



Additional Parking Opportunities (View Looking Northwest)



Potential Infill Development

Figure 8: Village Core Traffic Calming and Infill Development



Vermont Downtown Action Team Report

Organization & Funding

4.0 Organizational and Funding Plan

4.1 Organization

Warren is a very small village where the organization vests with the Select Board and the Planning Commission. It is very unlikely that trying to layer an additional organization onto the existing structure would prove beneficial for the community. Both the Select Board and the Planning Commission maintain good communication with the citizens of the community on a regular basis and very little happens in the community without substantive citizen input.

With regard to the V-DAT study, Warren's leadership will want to maintain ongoing communication with the Mad River Valley Planning District (as it already does). This will ensure that funding opportunities, implementation timeframes, and existing initiatives continue.

4.2 Funding

The funding strategy for each phase of every project will be as customized as the project itself. There are many mechanisms available to municipalities such as synthetic tax increment financing, bond issuance, ad valorem tax reversion, state line-item budget requests, and others that are not discussed here. Additionally, there are other means for private financing such as historic tax credits, new market tax credits, independent investors, and private bank loans. Organizations may choose to utilize fund-raising tools such as crowd sourcing (also used in private development), events, memberships and donations. The list below offers some private and public grant options that can be considered when putting together a finance package for the V-DAT recommendations. In most cases, they are a part of the project not the complete monetary source.

4.2.1 Town Green (Recommendation 3.2.1)

ACTrees – TD Tree Days grants for community tree planting in TD Bank communities

ACTrees – Neighborwoods Grants for local organizations to make communities healthier, cleaner and greener.

Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program – Trees for Local Communities Cost-Share Program for developing and implementing urban and community forestry programs.

American Forests – Global ReLeaf grants provide private dollars to support reforestation efforts on public lands.

4.2.2 Main Street River Access (Recommendation 3.2.2)

Vermont Department of Forest Parks and Recreation – Vermont Recreational Trails Program can be used to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail related facilities.

Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation – Land and Water Conservation Fund can be used to create parks and open spaces, protect wilderness and forests, and provide outdoor recreational opportunities.

Nature Sacred – Open Spaces, Sacred Places National Awards Initiative for projects that demonstrate the healing power of nature.

Clif Bar Family Foundation – Small Grants are designed to fund organizations or specific projects which can be related to enhancing outdoor activities.

Ben and Jerry's Foundation – Vermont Community Action Team Grant Program for enhancement of Vermont communities especially those with underserved populations.

The Conservation Alliance – Consortium of large outdoor retailers funding wildlife conservation projects including trailways and waterways under or seeking to be in permanent protection.

4.2.3 Traffic Calming Bridge Enhancements (Recommendation 3.2.3, 3.2.4)

Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development – Downtown Transportation Funds can be used for lighting,

Vermont Agency of Transportation – Transportation Alternatives Funding Program funding for sidewalks, bike paths, trails

US Department of Transportation – National Scenic By-ways can be used for improvement to a scenic byway that will enhance access to an area for the purpose of recreation; development of tourist information to the public (such as biking info and maps on scenic byways).

National Gardening Association - Mantis Tiller Award – For community gardens that improve access to fresh food and/or serve as interactive educational tools for the community.

Vermont Community Garden Network - SEED and GROW grants – For school and community garden and compost projects.

Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development – Downtown Transportation Funds supports public capital improvements like new sidewalks, lighting and other pedestrian and streetscape improvements

State Transportation Improvement Program – 4 year physical and fiscal plan for Vermont Transportation. Communities can request inclusion of wayfinding signage programs.

America's Great Outdoors Initiative – Priority of the Obama Administration to use increasing amounts of the Land and Water Conservation Fund administered by states to enhance community spaces and urban parks. Grants should be available in 2014 or 2015.

4.2.4 Warren Store Site Enhancements (Recommendation 3.3.1)

VHCB – SerVermont, Americorps volunteers or NCCC volunteer corps can be utilized for community projects benefiting the public such as tree planting, bed revitalization, green parking, streetscaping and trail building or maintenance.

4.2.5 Village Core Infill Opportunity (Recommendation 3.3.2)

Neighborworks Rural Initiative – Focuses on building the capacity of rural community development organizations in the areas of housing and economic development (Central Vermont Community LandTrust participates)

Wells Fargo Homeownership Grant Program – For construction and rehabilitation of owner occupied homes.

Citi Foundation – Neighborhood Revitalization Program seeks successful redevelopment models for investment.

Low Income Investment Fund – Capital for Healthy Families and Communities affordable housing initiative includes green financing.

Opp. Finance Network – A national network of community lending institutions that invest in opportunities to benefit low income and low-wealth people in the US. (Community Capital of Vermont is a member and helped Next Chapter Bookstore)

Enterprise - Multi Family and Commercial Real Estate – Provides community development based financing through Bellwether Enterprise.

Enterprise - HUD Capacity Building Section 4 Grants – for capacity building and initiation of community development organizations.

HUD's - Rental Assistance Demonstration Programs – allows proven financing tools to be applied to at risk public and assisted housing.

Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) – Building Sustainable Communities program assistance is customizable to each community.



Vermont Downtown Action Team Report

Implementation

5.0 Implementation Strategy and Action Plan

The attached “Strategy Board” summarizes all of the projects and recommendations included in this plan. The board is a working document for benchmarking and ongoing evaluation of the implementation process. The strategy board summarizes all of the recommendations of the plan into one sheet of paper.

The projects are divided into three time frames. The first series of projects are demonstration projects that should begin in the coming two years 2014-2015. For the most part, these are simple projects that will be highly visible, have significant impact and should be completed within the first year after the plan is adopted. The second set of projects is labeled “next steps.” Some of these are more advanced projects while others are continuations of projects that began during the demonstration period. The next step projects should be completed within the second to fourth year of the plan. The final series of projects are long-term or plan completion projects. While this category remains largely empty, many of the projects begun in the next steps phase will not be completed until later. Over time this category will continue to fill up as priorities evolve. Each timeframe for the strategy board might also represent the ongoing fulfillment of steps taken in earlier time frames.

The strategy board and its recommendations represent a “living document.” As time goes by and implementation proceeds, some priorities will shift while other ones will arise. The implementation strategy board should be evaluated periodically, no less than annually. This evaluation process will allow for finished tasks to be indicated on the board, for responsibilities to be shifted between parties, and for time frames to be adjusted for individual projects.

Each of the plan strategies and visions are outlined in the strategy board. It is important to remember the ultimate planning, development, and marketing strategies that each project supports. Of course, each of these strategies is linked with one another, but failure to achieve any one goal does not negate the ability to achieve others.

Warren is a community that prides itself on maintaining its unique character. The recommendations of this report provide for respectful implementation of changes that will enhance the village without altering its unique character.

	Public Realm Improvement Strategy	Fostering New Investment: Development/Redevelopment Strategy
First Steps 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to discuss plans for Town Green • Demolish the building to make way for Town Green • Continue to build support with adjacent property owners • Initiate River access open space • Develop streetscape detail design plans • Use speed monitors to collect data for traffic calming decisions • Add flowers to bridge • Continue street tree planting with non-profit tree group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct storage and outdoor seating at Warren Store • Property owner consider development opportunities for 242 Main Street. • Prune vegetation at corner Brook Rd to open visibility of site (consider what to do with the rock) • Consider informal deck overlooks to river along Main Street
Next Steps 2015/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction drawings for Town Green • Provide crosswalk connection from Town Hall to River access • Remove invasive plants around rivers edge • Implement streetscape enhancements • Complete power to Covered Bridge • Engineering bridge analysis • Continue to phase II of tree planting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop design plans for redevelopment opportunities for 242 Main Street • Construct overlook improvements for Warren Store at the rear of the site • Property owner consider paving and organizing parking for the Warren Store • Develop parking behind the Main Street development site behind 242 Main • Contemplate community investment club
Long Term 2016-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct initial phase of Town Green • Consider pathway or overlook to the river • Consider implementation of expanded town green. • Contemplate parking expansion with tree preservation per prior plans • Restore lighting to bridge • Enhance bridge sidewalk • Add gateway wall to bridge on Warren Store Side 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop additional infill structures on 242 Main street site • Consider live above the shop infill structures
Funding/ Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AcTrees • Urban Forestry Grant • DR2 Funding • Nature Sacred • VTRANS transportation alternatives • America's great outdoors initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborworks Rural Initiative • SBA Loan Program • HUD Capacity Building Section 4 Grants v