

# Warren, Vermont Conceptual Vision Plan for Our Community

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 is located around the resort area and is mainly used seasonally. The 2010 Census indicates that 60% of the housing stock is 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.

## Catastrophic Event(s)

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.

## 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 pater of Warren Village, while encouraging a mix of commercial, residential and civic uses within the Village core.

The Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) was selected by the State of Vermont, Department of Housing and Community Development, Vermont Downtown Program in May 2013 to conduct a community planning and economic development charrette in Warren. The V-DAT was comprised of experts in architecture, planning, landscape architecture, historic preservation, economic development, organizational structure, landscape architecture, engineering and community branding.

The V-DAT planning charrette operates on three key tenants: utilizing an asset based approach, addressing the community in a holistic manner, and conducting the exercise in a public forum.

## Key Market Conclusions and Opportunities

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. The new mixed-use zoning will encourage this mix. 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 for the community, which is essential for the success of existing local businesses.

## Town Green

Warren should build upon the recommendations of the prior 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 earlier 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.
- 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.

## 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. The following are some techniques that may be considered:

- 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 removable planter pots could be used within this excess pavement zone to narrow the travel way.
- 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.
- 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.
- Implement sidewalk enhancements, particularly along Brook Road, connecting the village core to the pathway leading to the elementary 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

## Village Core Infill Opportunity

The vacant lot on the west side of Main Street offers great potential to provide additional 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. 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.



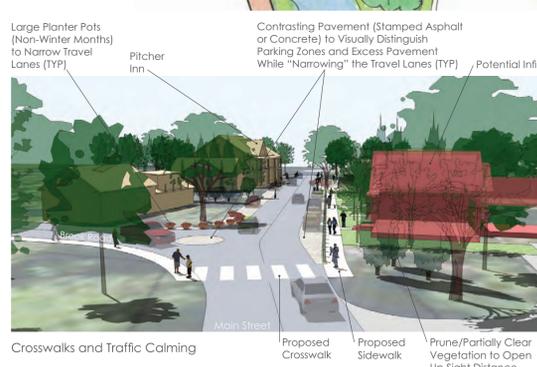
Crosswalks and Traffic Calming (View Looking South)



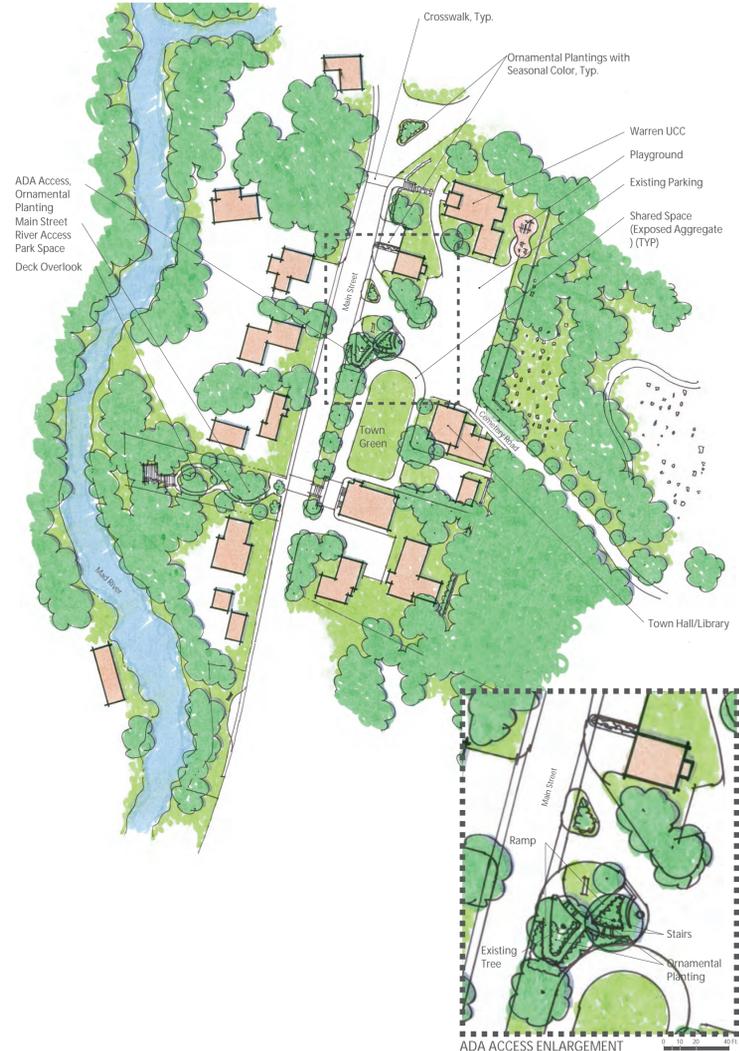
Potential Infill Development (View Looking West)



Additional Parking Opportunities (View Looking Northwest)



Crosswalks and Traffic Calming



## 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. 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.



## 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 Town 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 and links to the detailed presentation and report for Warren please visit [http://accd.vermont.gov/strong\\_communities/opportunities/revitalization/vdat](http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/vdat) or call (802) 828-5229.