

# Memorandum

**To:** Selectboard  
Selectboard  
Greg Duggan, Town Manager

**Cc:**

**From:** Katherine Sonnick, Community Development Director

**Re:** Update on 80 & 90 Upper Main Street Planning Project for future municipal site

**Date:**

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## Issue

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update regarding the first of several public workshops and stakeholder meetings for the Upper Main Street Planning Project.

## Discussion

Stantec facilitated the first interactive public workshop to talk about the future of the Town of Essex municipal site at 80/90 Upper Main Street in the evening of Thursday August 1. During the afternoon the Stantec team met in small groups with project stakeholders. These meetings were the first opportunities for the community to weigh in on the development of a conceptual master plan for the 32-acre site. An online survey was posted on the project website to collect feedback after the meeting. This survey will remain open at least through August.

The Stantec team has started to assess the information received to date and have provided a summary that is attached. They will also be in attendance at Selectboard's August 19 meeting to share their findings and respond to any questions.

## Cost

The consultant, Stantec, has been hired to conduct this and the upcoming work. Therefore, there is no additional cost related to this presentation.

## Recommendation

This memo and presentation is for information purposes only.

## Attachments:

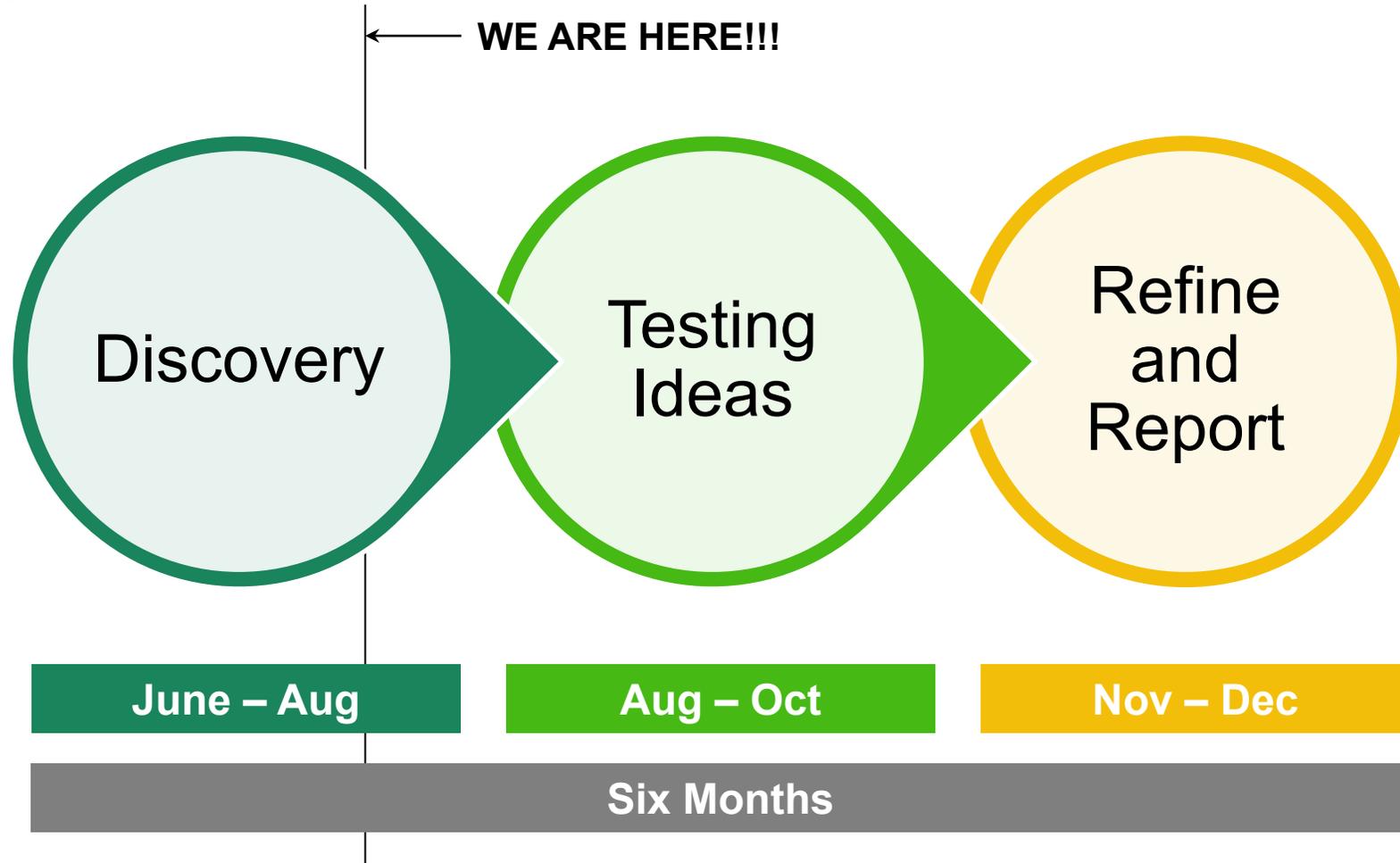
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# Upper Main Street Planning Project: Update #1





# Planning Process





# Stakeholder Interviews

We held and are continuing to schedule Stakeholder Interviews. These 45-minute to 1-hour long conversations seek to dive deeper into opportunities and concerns that impact Town leadership, Town services, impacted neighbors and businesses, and others. We like to include anyone who might either have crucial information to make this project happen or have unique perspective on the property and its environs.

Stakeholder Group	Attendees
Design Team Meetings	Katherine Sonnicks, Caitlyn Corless, Kent Johnson, Stantec
Site Visit/Library Tour	Katherine Sonnicks, Aaron Martin, Adriane Martin, Caitlyn Corless, Kent Johnson
Planning Commission Representative(s)	Trefor Williams, Georgia Lavigne
Selectboard Representative(s)	Andy Watts, Dawn Hill-Fleury
Commissions	Will Dodge (Energy), Ken Signorelo (Conservation and Trails), Anna Brouillette (Housing), Jean O'sullivan (Economic Development)
Library/Municipal Services	Aaron Martin, Adrian Martin, Caitlyn Corless, Kent Johnson, Sharon Kelley
Police/Rescue	Peter Mutolo, Colleen Ballard, Ron Hoague
Adjacent Residents	6-7 residents
Commercial/Businesses	Deb Holland, Peter Edelman, Al Senecal
Fire/Rescue	Charlie Cole, Colleen Ballard, Peter Mutolo



# Online Engagement

Project website:

[www.essexvt.org/uppermain](http://www.essexvt.org/uppermain)

- Survey posted after tonight's meeting with similar questions for those who could not attend
- Future online input opportunities

The screenshot displays the Essex Vermont website. At the top, the text "ESSEX Vermont" is prominently featured against a background of lush green trees. Below this, a search bar contains the text "How can we help you?". The main content area is titled "Upper Main Street Planning Project" and includes a navigation breadcrumb: "Home > Explore & Engage > PROJECTS & INITIATIVES > Municipal Complex - 80 & 90 Upper Main Street > Upper Main Street Planning Project". A dark blue banner with white text reads "UPPER MAIN STREET PLANNING PROJECT KICKOFF MEETING". Below the banner is an illustration of five people gathered around a table, looking at a map. To the right of the illustration, the text "Join us August 1st" is displayed. A left-hand sidebar contains three menu items: "Upper Main Street Property Purchase", "Upper Main Street Planning Project", and "News and Media".



# Engagement Exercise

Attendees were divided into groups and asked to discuss critical characteristics, goals and concerns regarding this planning process.

This resulted in a robust 45-minute discussion in which members of the community got to share thoughts with each other and then report to the broader room at the end.



Review the discussion guide at each table. Then talk about these prompts as a group and write your answers below.

### Desired Character

What type of place would you like this to become?

What would you like to do here in the future?

### List 3 goals or outcomes the group most wants to see when this project is complete.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Challenges and Concerns

Does the group have any concerns about the future of the site?



# Some Themes/Feedback so far...

## Programmatic needs/wants

- Town needs meeting space – both a civic outdoor gathering space as well as an indoor space that can hold about 200 people
- Need for housing, specifically affordable or senior options.
- Trails and natural connections are important and desired
- Community Gardens would be a tremendous asset/complement to the municipal uses
- Sustainability/Efficiency – the buildings and the grounds should be sustainable and consider district power/HVAC and other ways to build responsibly and cost-effectively (long term)
- Opportunity for recreation uses integrated into open space, and maybe even as part of municipal program?
- Potential opportunity for Rescue service to share space with Fire and mutually benefit each other with overlapping facilities/needs

## Concerns/Issues to address in this study

- Traffic/Congestion on Upper Main and on Old Stage – not only an issue for site access, but also a concern for Fire and Rescue ingress and egress.
- Parking or access via other means (trails, bike, ped)
- Need to retain the character of Essex and its agrarian roots (this is NOT South Burlington, and doesn't want to be!)
- How are we going to pay for this? – concern regarding taxes
- Need to carefully site all uses to be sensitive to adjacent neighbors – provide buffers for privacy
- Concern regarding mature trees on site and whether or not they can be retained