

# MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARRETTE REPORT NOVEMBER 2003



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We would like to thank all community members, sponsors and professionals who donated their time and creativity to the Middlesex Community Design Charrette. It was a great day for all and many realistic and feasible plans were produced.

The Middlesex Charrette was held primarily because village members recognized a set of needs for their village. Pedestrian access and safety, renovation, green space and developing the interstate interchange were but a few. The charrette served as a “next step” to address these issues as well as others. Designers with all types of backgrounds combined their knowledge, opinions, and skills to enhance the productivity of the charrette. Community members know the needs of the village and participated accordingly. Outside visitors took an objective stance, while the professional architects, planners, and designers transferred the ideas into something visible. This collaboration of working minds created a compilation of designs and planning strategies with which Middlesex can move forward. Thanks again to everyone who helped Middlesex in their desire for improvement!

Special thanks to the sponsors:

The Middlesex Village Steering Committee

The Middlesex Conservation Commission

The Middlesex Planning Commission

The Vermont Design Institute

The Vermont Chapter of American Society of Landscape Architects

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The November 2003 community design charrette brought together many people and ideas. It was a day of brainstorming possible solutions to community concerns about the vitality and future of Middlesex organized by the Village Committee and the Vermont Design Institute.

Three teams were identified and organized to look at the Village Core, the Village Gateways and Circulation, and the Interstate Interchange. These teams were presented with the following charges:

1. The Village Core Team was to look at enhancing the village center, defining the municipal complex, developing a concept for the Morse Property, and defining access to the river.
2. The Gateway and Circulation Team was to wrestle with creating a sense of gateway, defining the village edges, providing recommendations on historic properties and infill possibilities, and enhancing the pedestrian/vehicular circulation and access concerns.
3. The Interstate Interchange Team was concerned with understanding the impact of the build-out of the designated industrial/commercial zone, proposing creative economic opportunities for this area, and identifying the connection between the development of these lands and greater needs of the village/town.

Each team presented their thought process and understanding of the issues through a set of drawings and recommendations for further study and implementation. A synopsis of these recommendations is as follows (for greater detail, please see the Report).

1. The Village Team recommended a series of activities that when group together amount to a village master plan. This document would include designs for streetscaping, sidewalks, parking plan, crosswalks and traffic calming, build-out of the Morse property, and analysis of the municipal building needs. The design and engineering could be done as one comprehensive project or several smaller ones, followed by funding and implementation.
2. The Gateway and Circulation Team proposed a scoping project for the intersection of Bridge Street and Route 2. This should be integrated with the village master plan design and planning project, and may be a possible Enhancement Grant opportunity. They also looked at the historic properties and recommended a historic structures analysis of the Depot, a conversion of Camp Meade to year-round activity (restaurant), and a feasibility analysis of the future of Gallagher Street.
3. The Interstate Interchange Team came up with the following recommendations: a) the planning commission needs to define what is meant by industrial/commercial/mixed-use for this area such that it does not compete with village retail or industrial zoning on Route

2; b) the town should partner with the landowners to fund an economic feasibility and build-out analysis for this area; c) design guidelines should be developed that enhance the connection between the capacity of the land and the development needs/opportunities; and d) the use of transfer of development rights should be considered as an economic development and land conservation strategy.

There was also one overall recommendation that was voiced by a number of participants and that was to hire a part-time town representative to facilitate some of this work--to oversee economic feasibility studies, application of grants to design and implement streetscape improvements, etc.

For example, Morrisville raised the money to fund a part-time coordinator to work with the various municipal committees after their community design charrette. This ensured their success. The work and energy of existing committees and commissions is critical to long-term action.

There are a variety of resources to help Middlesex plan, design, and implement these identified next steps—from the regional planning commission and agencies of the State of Vermont to the Vermont Design Institute and The Preservation Trust of Vermont. The first step is acknowledging the work that was done last fall and empowering the town to continue.