

INTRODUCTION

The Middlesex Village Steering Committee organized a community design workshop as part of a municipal planning grant. With help from Diane Gayer, of the Vermont Design Institute, and Nat Goodhue, from the Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), collaboration was established and served an instrumental role in the formation and function of the successful design charrette.

The primary objective of the charrette was to generate renewed excitement and to realistically consider development options for the Town of Middlesex, with the assistance from various professionals and community residents. Participation from community members was encouraged by individual invitations and announcements in the Middlesex Monthly. Participating village residents' insights and assessments of the various site problems were relevant and essential to the design process. Village residents were an integral part of the charrette teams. Members of the Planning Commission, the Conservation Commission, and the Middlesex Selectboard were present in the afternoon of the charrette.

The charrette was organized to address three particular zones or areas within the town for enhancement and/or redevelopment. The areas of focus were the Village Core, Gateways and Circulation, and Interstate Interchange. The hope of the Village Steering Committee was that ideas and questions prompted by the charrette process would give the town new insight into possible directions and implementation strategies for these areas.

Each design team was given a set of guidelines and questions to resolve or attempt to address. The Village Core team looked at:

- ?? Enhancing the center
- ?? Defining the Municipal Complex
- ?? Working with the newly acquired Morse property
- ?? Accessing the river

The Gateways and Circulation team wrestled with:

- ?? Creating a sense of gateway or arrival
- ?? Defining village edges
- ?? Providing recommendations on historic properties
- ?? Identifying potential infill development
- ?? Enhancing pedestrian and vehicular access and safety concerns

The Interstate Interchange team worked on:

- ?? Understanding the impact of the build-out for the area
- ?? Finding creative solutions/opportunities for the industrial/commercial zones
- ?? Determining the differences between each of the various zones and properties
- ?? Looking at distinctions between these new areas and the village proper

The dynamic of the workshop allowed for a creative exchange between concerned residents and experienced professionals. The outcome of the charrette was many innovative solutions and doable recommendations for improving the overall vitality of Middlesex.