



**Village Study
Committee**

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TO: Members of the Town of York Board of Selectmen
FROM: Ron McAllister, Chair of the York Village Study Committee
VIA: Steve Burns, Interim Town Manager
DATE: 4 December 2014
RE: Village Master Plan Phase I: Progress Report #2

This memorandum provides an update on the activities of the Village Study Committee since our last progress report (September 18). This report will be supplemented by a presentation to be made by TDRC's principals, Denis Lachman and Regina Leonard during next week's Board meeting (December 8). Below is a summary of activities for the period from September through November.

- **Earlier Revitalization Efforts:** Thanks to resident David Chase, the VSC has been made aware of a series of previous efforts going back to 1902 to landscape, beautify and otherwise revitalize York Village. A plan for traffic and parking improvements was put forward in 1946 by York's Town Planner, Arthur Comey. A 1964-67 effort focused primarily on signage and facade improvements while a 1974-77 Village townscape project generated considerable citizen participation but no notable alterations to the Village. These various efforts to improve York Village spanning more than a century show us that change does not come easily but they also show us that the task with which the Board has charged us is more important than ever. In his 1946 plan, Arthur Comey says: "York Village was once convenient, charming if not beautiful, and safe. Today (1946) it is inconvenient, ugly and to a degree dangerous." Many people would say this assessment remains accurate in 2014
- **Public Event #1:** On October 4, the VSC held its first community design workshop in connection with the TDRC Master Plan. Almost 60 people came out, met in small groups and gave us feedback on their visions for York Village. They looked at points of arrival and destinations they frequent when in the Village, on pedestrian connectivity options, on natural features and open spaces, on special events they either enjoy or would like to see, and on ideas about models of successful revitalization. Data from the six small groups are factoring into the developing Master Plan.

- **Economic Development:** On October 15 and 16, TDRC's Economist met with twenty-four Village business owners to talk with them about their experiences in the village. They talked about many of the issues previously identified: parking, walkability, economics, their buildings, Village identity and the potential for grant-writing in support of Village revitalization. We have yet to establish an Economic Development Subcommittee but the need for such an entity going forward is obvious to us all. While TDRC is identifying federal, state and private funding opportunities, they have not been contracted to write any grant proposals. Yet, proposals will need to be generated if we are to get beyond Town funds for Village revitalization. This could be part of the charge to an Economic Development group.
- **Marketfest Participation:** Members of VSC set up a table at Marketfest (October 17-18) in order to gather information from people who stopped by regarding where they go when they are in the village. This also gave us a chance to promote some future public events.
- **Non-profit Partners Event:** On November 18, the VSC convened a meeting with representatives of the four nonprofit organizations in the Village: York Hospital, First Parish, the Museums of Old York and the Public Library. This session gave these institutions a unique joint opportunity to interact. They were given a preview of emerging options with time to discuss and to react to them ahead of the next public meeting.
- **Public Event #2:** On November 22, the VSC held its second community design workshop. More than 80 people came to this one. Results from the first workshop were reported and attendees were asked to review three options (two of them new) for traffic circulation, parking and open space at the heart of the village.

Three Current Options: The first option was one fashioned by the VSC — now designated the *Town Common Y Option*— while the other two have been developed by TDRC based on their traffic studies. Each of TDRC's options would create a T-intersection: the *Town Square York Tee Option* would bring traffic coming down Long Sands Road to a +/- 90 degree connection with York Street and the *Town Square Long Sands Tee Option* which would bring traffic from York Street (West-bound) to a +/- 90 degree connection with Long Sands Road. Each of these *Town Square* options would likely shift the monument from its present location across the square to the South side of the intersection. All three options would greatly increase the amount of open, pedestrian-oriented space in the Village.

- **Connections:** We continue to work with other committees in Town to enhance cooperation. We remain in contact with the Planning Board, the Capital Projects Planning Committee, the Energy Efficiency Steering Committee and others to be sure that all appropriate groups are informed about the project and have an opportunity for input.
- **Outreach:** In addition to special events, we continue to reach out to the community with an ongoing series of articles in *The York Weekly*. The VSC website contains copies of presentations, reports, and meeting minutes to keep the community up to date as things develop. In addition, we maintain a *Facebook* page and a growing email list for direct contact with community members. See <http://www.yorkvillage.org> and <http://www.facebook.com/yorkvillage> to connect with these sites.
- **Next Steps:** A third public design workshop will be held in the first half of January 2015. We expect to come before the BOS again shortly after that to present the final draft Master Plan. While continuing to advance the Master Plan process, we are also looking beyond it. We remind the Board that the MDOT grant-funded Master Plan is not the end of the Village revitalization process. Once the Plan is completed (and assuming it is approved by the Board), we will be requesting additional funding for the Schematic Design phase and then the Construction Documents phase.

The committee has been greatly encouraged by the enthusiasm and the momentum which the master planning process has generated so far. We like to think that we will be ready to present the Master Plan to the Town's voters in May 2015. This will require prior consent from various boards and committees in Town. Additionally, we are trying to work within the new capital planning process schedule. This is presenting its own challenges because we want our estimates of the cost of achieving the vision of the Master Plan to be realistic and achievable. We remain grateful for the Board's support. Thank you.

cc: Village Study Committee
Denis Lachman, TDRC