

# Implementation Plan for Highgate Town Center

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January 19, 2019

**Prepared for:**

Town of Highgate  
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PO Box 189  
Highgate Center, VT 05459

**Prepared by Project Consultants:**



Consulting for businesses and nonprofits on  
strategy, leadership, culture and change.

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**Appendices:**

Survey (original, as distributed in paper form)

Survey results / conclusions summary

Survey narrative responses

Consulting Team Information

Cost Estimates for concepts A, B, and C (separately)

Drawings and Renderings of concepts A, B, and C (separately)



# Introduction

The Town of Highgate bought two properties in 2017 located in the Town center. These properties include the white house and outbuildings at the corner of St. Armand Rd. and Rt. 78 and the former Town garage site at 3119 State Highway 78. Once the Town bought these parcels the Select Board created a steering committee to oversee a process of gathering public input and bringing forward options for next steps with the properties. The steering committee then hired a group of consultants to design and facilitate public engagement, draft site plans, and present an implementation plan that includes redevelopment strategy regarding the use these properties. The consultants were a collaborative group composed of BUILD (organizational consultants), Centerline Architects, and The Housing Initiative. This document is presented by the consultants and represents the summation and conclusion of their work.

## Project Location

The project is located at the intersection of Route 78, St Armand Road, and Gore Road within the Town of Highgate's Village Center District.



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# Consultant Engagement with Steering Committee & Town Administrator

The consultants worked under the direction of the steering committee throughout the project. Consultants, the town administrator, and the steering committee met in person several times, in addition to engaging in bi-weekly phone meetings to support ongoing information sharing.

## Public Engagement

As part of a robust process of gathering public input regarding what to do with the town's new parcel, the consultants solicited participation in a written survey, a public meeting with local business owners, and two public design charrettes.

### Community Survey

The consultants created a survey seeking input from residents of and visitors to Highgate. They made it accessible online and on paper at multiple locations around town. The survey asked participants a range of questions about their current uses of Highgate's center and how they would like to use it in the future. The survey also asked participants about their willingness to pay for changes to the site via public funds. A review of key survey responses is included in the appendix. A total of 57 people responded to the survey.

### Summary of Key Results

1. Community connections is of primary importance. Residents may be feeling isolated. A town center creates opportunity to socialize and respondents want to use this opportunity to create a place for the community to gather.
2. A place to eat food is important. A cafe, pub, or restaurant serves to feed patrons, but also to bring people together (opportunity for community connections).

3. Residents see the town center redevelopment as important and worthy of spending town/taxpayer money

## Public Meeting and Design Charrettes

The consultants hosted a public gathering of business owners on June 12, 2018 to solicit their feedback on the needs of Highgate's core and what to do with the new site. A total of 21 members of the public joined the consultants and town leadership. The consultants also hosted two widely publicized design charrettes as an additional opportunity for the public to offer input into uses for the site. The charrettes took place on September 19 and September 22, 2018.



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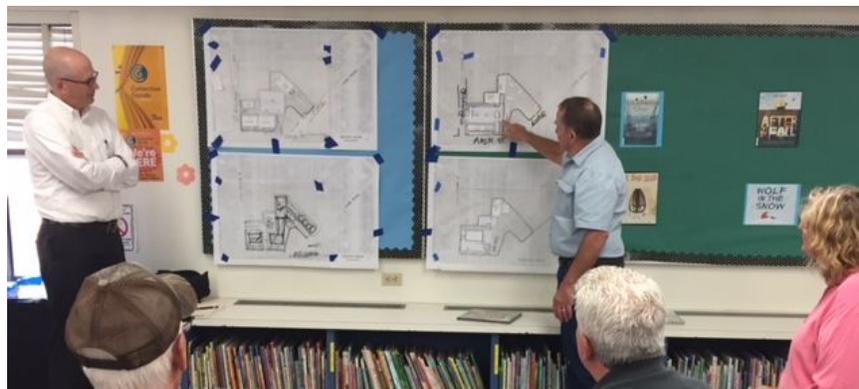
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The charrettes resulted in the creation of 12 drawings by members of the public illustrating possible uses for the site.

Synthesis of drawings:

- 12 of 12 illustrated an entry or exit to the site along RT 78. Most drawings had this curb cut next to the Paws for Thought site.
- 12 of 12 drawings illustrated the site having more than 1 building
- 11 of 12 schemes removed the existing house. One kept the building
- 11 of 12 drawings illustrated the site having one building being a restaurant/retail building and another a library
- 11 of 12 drawings illustrated the site having a garden, a gazebo, a bandstand, or other community amenity
- 9 of 12 illustrated a restaurant/retail building at the corner of St. Armand and 78
- 7 of 12 illustrated a library or community building set along the property of the school
- 6 of 12 illustrated a garden or patio at the corner of St. Armand and 78
- 2 of 12 schemes showed an independent post office building
- 2 of 12 schemes showed a bed and breakfast hotel
- 1 of 12 schemes showed a hockey rink
- 1 of 12 schemes showed a banquet hall
- 1 of 12 schemes showed senior housing
- 1 of 12 schemes showed multi-family housing
- 1 of 12 illustrated a library or community building at the corner of St. Armand and 78
- Most schemes did not provide adequate parking, either in size or amount
- Most schemes rely on shared parking between the library and commercial use



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## Conclusions from Public Meeting and Charrettes

- Space for retail or a restaurant should be included and located at the corner of St. Armand and RT 78.
- A library and/or community center should be included and placed at the back of the site, next to school property.
- A garden or outdoor community center should be included and located along Gore Road.
- An entry or exit to the site should be located along RT 78.
- A historical 'reminder' toward Highgate's past should be included.
- The existing building should be removed.



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# Concept Plans

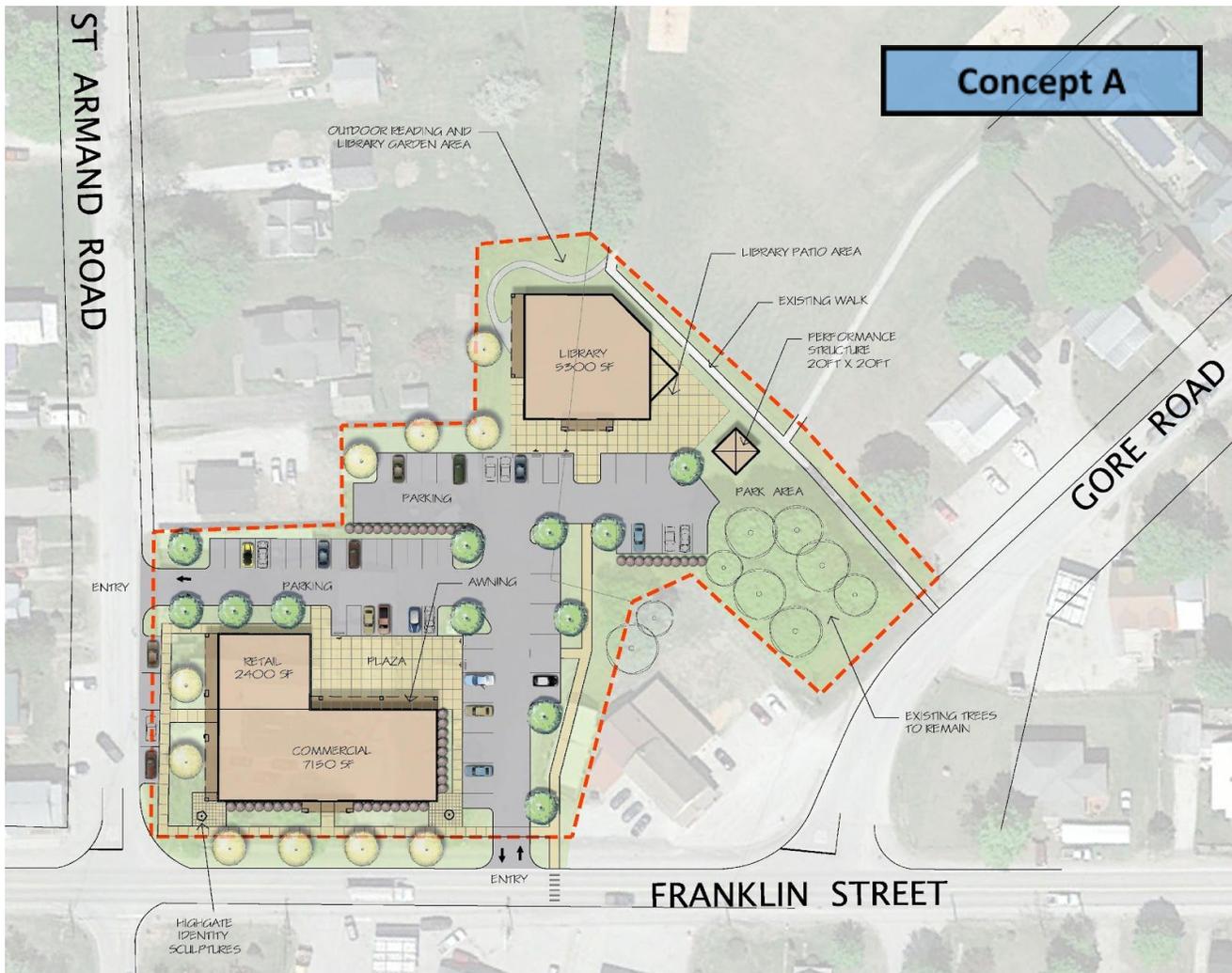
The following concept plans are the result of several sources of community input including a community survey, public meetings, and design charrettes throughout 2018. The public's direction from the design charrettes became immediately clear; a majority of the groups wanted the land to be shared between public and private entities.

Please note that two of the concepts include a portion of the land currently controlled by the school board / elementary school, while one of the concepts uses only land currently controlled by the town. Whether or not the town and school will come to an agreement about this extra portion of land is an open discussion at the time of our writing this report.

During the project the Steering Committee asked the consultants to consider the larger parcel as this gives the community the most options and the most flexibility with regard to a public project (library and community center) and private redevelopment.



## Concept Plan A



### Concept A Description

Concept A is focused on the corner between St. Armand Road and Route 78. A corner building creates a sense of place and acknowledges that a visitor has reached the center of Highgate. For these reasons the retail building is placed close to RT 78 and a sidewalk in front of the retail building activates the street and the front of the building.

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The geometry of the retail building is such that it creates an 'interior' plaza, a quiet space where casual dining might occur. Surrounding the retail building is the parking lot, and space for some 72 vehicles.

The new library building in each of the three concepts was placed behind the retail store, away from the street. In all three concepts, the library was placed closest to the elementary school, creating a natural extension of the school and connection to it. In Concept A, the library has a generous plaza, one that captures and formalizes an entry in front of the building and creates an area that differentiates the elementary school's playfields from the activities of the library.

The maple trees are an important symbol to the people of Highgate, and thus the grove of maple trees near Gore Rd. were kept. A sugar shack is added to create an educational opportunity related to the history of the region.

- 5,300 SF New Library Building / Community Center
- Outdoor Library Patio Area
- Performance and Community Gathering Area
- 7,150 SF New Commercial Building
- 2,400 SF New Retail Space
- Retail / Commercial Plaza



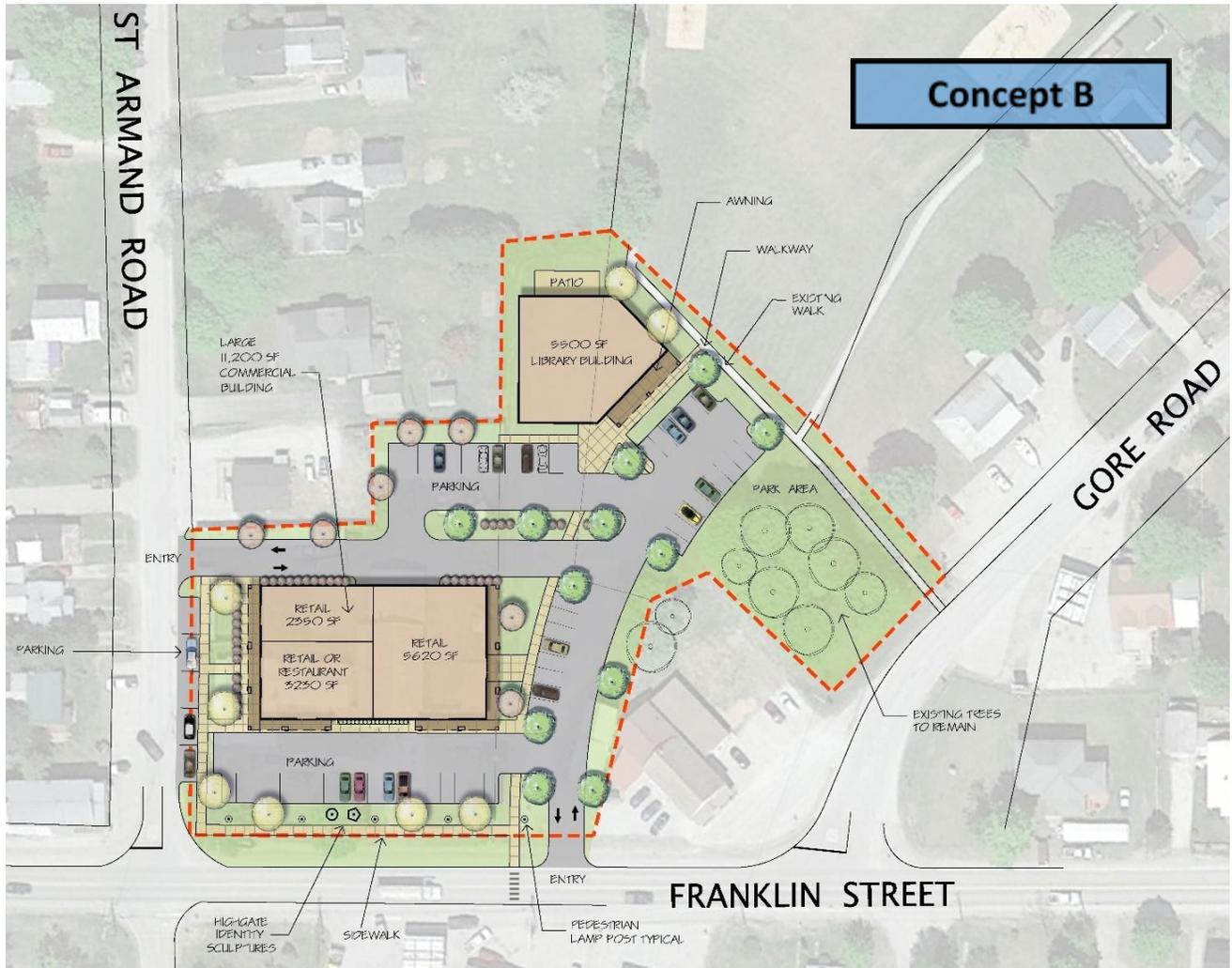
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## Concept Plan B



### Concept B Description

The retail building in Concept B is set back from Route 78. The area between the RT 78 and retail building is occupied by a parking lot. The building's rectangular footprint is surrounded by parking and site access roads. There is slightly more parking in this scheme - 76 parking spots, spread throughout the site. The library, like in Concept A, is

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located near the elementary school and although there is less plaza area, it has a larger footprint. The maple grove remains as part of this scheme.

- 5,500 SF New Library Building
- Outdoor Patio and Entry Plaza Area
- 5,620 SF New Large Retail Space
- 3,230 SF New Retail or Restaurant Space
- 2,350 SF New Retail Space



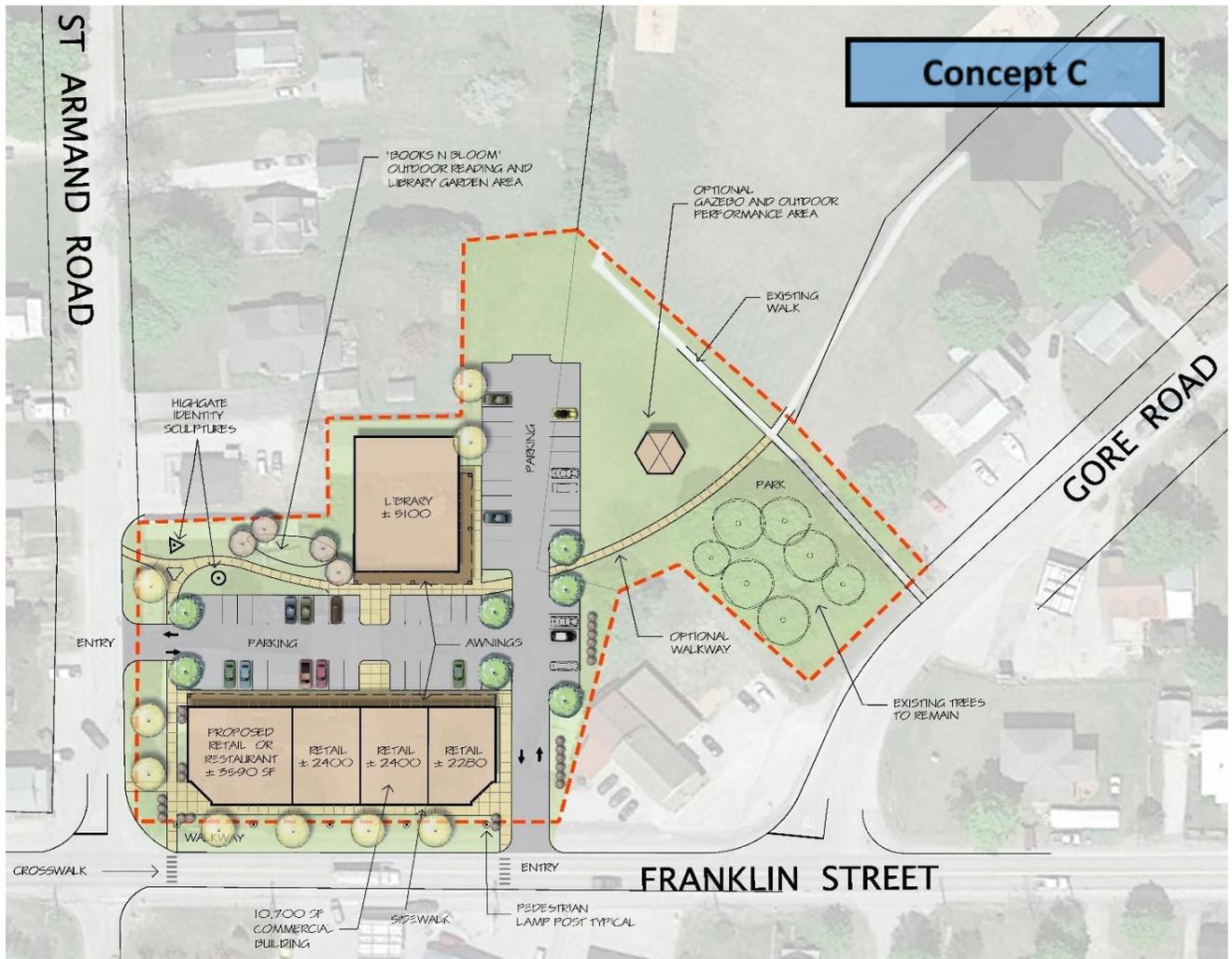
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## Concept Plan C



### Concept C Description

Concept C fits the Retail/Commercial and library buildings within the boundaries of just the Machia / former town garage site. Although both buildings have a smaller building

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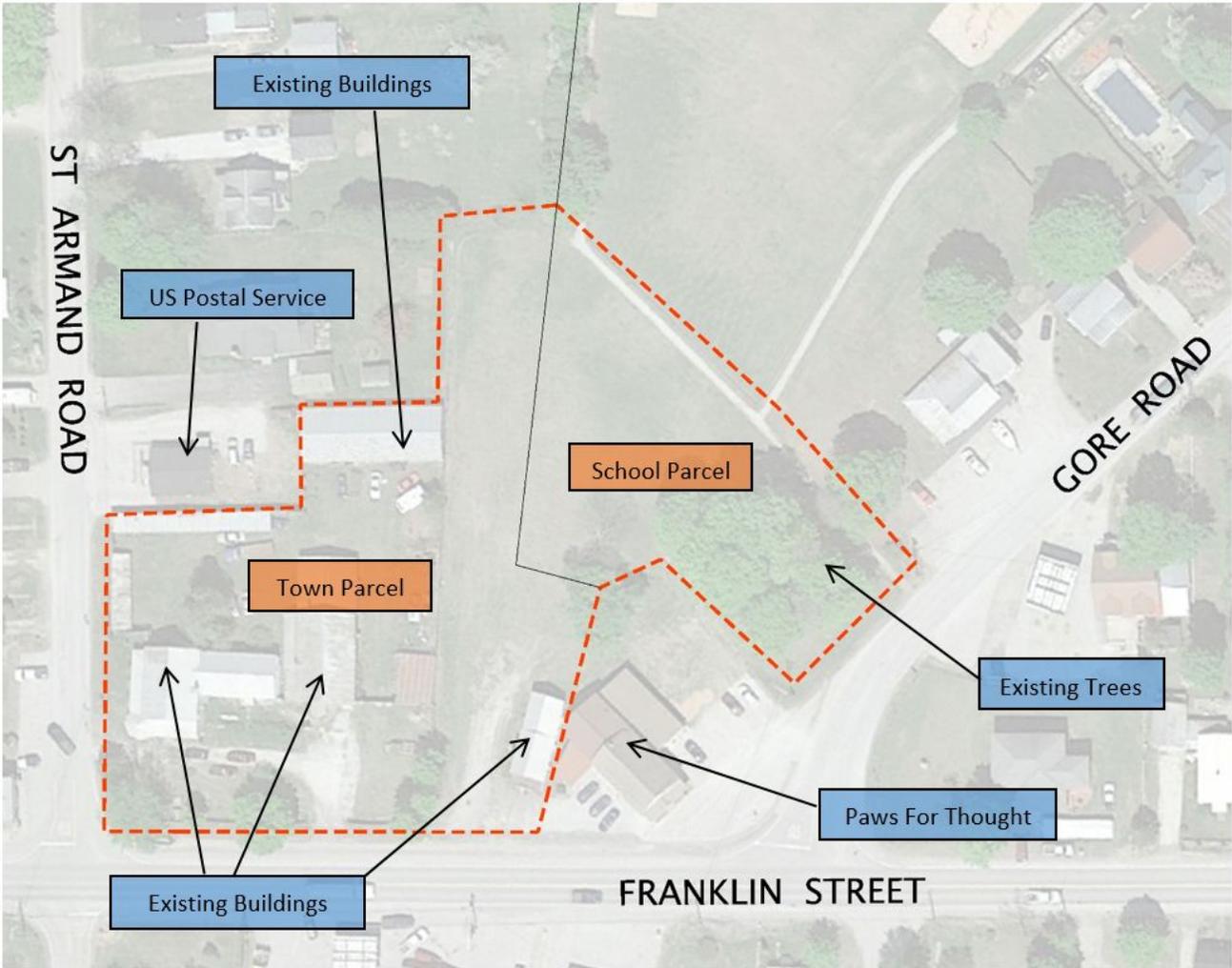
footprints than the two other concepts, the parking counts remain the same. In this scheme, the Commercial building is again placed against Route 78 and the library is placed within the Machia boundaries. The remaining school lot remains open for communal gatherings and activities.

- 5,100 SF New library / community Building
- Outdoor Reading and library Garden Area
- Optional Outdoor performance area and Gazebo
- 3,590 SF New Large Retail or Restaurant Space with Outdoor Seating
- Two additional 2,400 SF Retail Units
- 2,280 SF New Retail Unit



# Existing Conditions and Site Preparation

The project is located at the intersection of Route 78, St Armand Road, and Gore Road within the Town of Highgate's Village Center.



## Site Preparation

In order to begin construction upon any site, it is important that the site be ready to receive a building. It is the owner's responsibility to make the site ready. For this specific site, The Owner (the Town of Highgate) will need to remove the existing buildings and

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any known above grade hazardous materials. Steps for remediating the site have been outlined in the Phase 2, Environmental Site Assessment Investigation Report, done by The Johnson Company, dated 1/12/18 and funded by the Northwest Regional Planning Commission. It is also critical to survey the site specifically to locate above and below ground utilities. Sizes of existing utilities coming to the site will need to be identified. A geo technical analysis of the soils may need to be done. This report will help to identify the bearing capacity of the soils which in turn will give the structural engineer an idea about future foundation design. A geo technical analysis will also identify if the site has sub-surface ledge. Lastly, the Owner shall obtain any easements, zoning variances, or other legal authorizations essential for the execution of the project.

## Town Zoning Regulations

The site is located entirely within The **Village Zoning District** (VD) (dark purple color on map below). This district consists of the locations within the Town where it is desired that development occur which can accommodate the majority of the growth of Highgate. The Village District has been selected because of existing settlements, anticipated patterns of growth, existing and future public facilities and services, suitable soils and other physical characteristics. The development of this district with urban uses affords the best opportunity for the existing and future provision of economically feasible public facilities and services while providing an orderly separation of these uses from other legitimate land uses within the Town. Higher densities of residential, commercial development and many public and quasi-public facilities and services are intended to develop in this district.

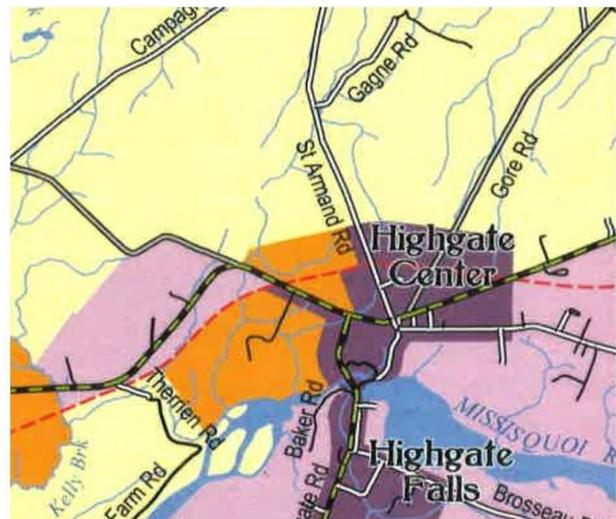
# ZONING MAP

## Town of Highgate

### LEGEND

#### Zoning Districts

- Agricultural District
- Village District
- Medium Density Residential District
- Industrial/Commercial District



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# Proposed Uses in Highgate Center

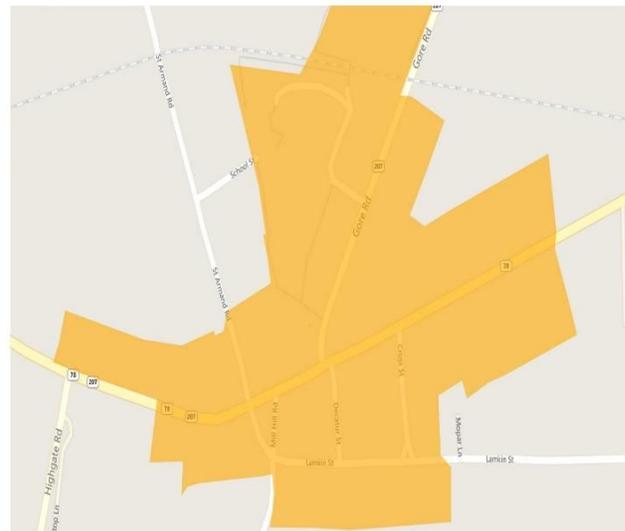
Following the outcome of meetings with the steering committee, community meetings, community survey and design charrettes, the following uses are proposed options for future development within the Village Center. In addition, this list includes a preliminary review of the Village District Land Use zoning review permissions, conditional uses, exemptions and site plan review requirements (if necessary):

<u>Proposed Use</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Zoning Review</u>
Public Use	Public Facilities / Library	C = Conditional Use
Commercial Use	Retail Sales	C/S = Conditional / Site Plan Review
Commercial Use	Restaurant	C = Conditional Use

Note: All proposed uses are allowable within the Village District

## Village Center Designation

The Vermont Village Center Designation Program supports local revitalization efforts across the state by providing technical assistance and state funding to help designated municipalities build strong communities. The proposed project site is entirely within the (yellow highlighted) State designated Village Center.



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**Program Contact:** Richard Amore (802) 828-5229

**Info Link:**

<http://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/CPR-VC-Designation-Benefits.pdf>

The proposal to further develop and enhance the town's Village Center is further benefited to receive Priority Consideration for State Grants; This specifically includes the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) grant AND the Northern Border Regional Commission Grant.

Following selection of a preferred concept plan for the site and buildings, we recommend the Town and committee members meet with Richard Amore (VT State contact) for further guidance, technical assistance, and documentation necessary from the State to support priority consideration for the VCDP and NBRC Grants. In addition meet to discuss other potential / available benefits for ANR Water and Wastewater subsidies, loans and other state grants and resources available with Village Center Designation.

## Feasibility Assessment of the Conceptual Plans

It is evident the Highgate community greatly supports a vision to enhance and redevelop their town center, and prior to this report, have identified this site (in particular) as a viable area to advance this vision.

The three concepts provide a major step forward to announce the town center effectively, provide and enhance additional commercial, retail, and restaurant opportunities, a new local library, and a variety of new outdoor public gathering spaces for the Highgate community.

While the plan includes a mixed-use concept as described, the site plans and building improvements would be positioned effectively within new developed parcel(s), property-line designations. A boundary line adjustment would be established to designate the new private commercial lot South of the remaining public town-owned community lot and proposed library adjacent and accessible from the school facility North.

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If the redevelopment concept moves forward, the new commercial parcel is well-positioned at the corner of St. Armand Road and Route 78 to capture modest demand for a variety of retail uses and perhaps a new local restaurant. New commercial uses will also complement adjacent/existing retail and public-use facilities such as Desorcie's Market, the United States Post Office, and the Highgate Village Market (Irving). In addition, all new buildings will be fully compliant to meet ADA accessibility requirements including on-site accessible routes for access between the mixed uses proposed and community gathering areas.

An RFP to solicit interested developers for the commercial lot can be developed and pursued following a full engineering survey of the existing conditions, final assessment and professional recommendations on environmental site conditions, assessment of septic / wastewater solutions, and complete demolition and removal of all existing buildings and other above-grade structures; and as further defined in the implementation description herein.

## Redevelopment Timeline

### Municipal Process & Community Alignment

1. Public Presentation to town by consultants, January, 2019.
2. Steering Committee and Select Board consider core questions which include:
  - a. How does Highgate make this site and this project attractive to a developer?
  - b. What price might be reasonable to attract a good partner / developer
  - c. Understand what grant funds are available for the town and for the developer
  - d. In consultation with Town Administrator and Assessor, consider long-term tax benefits and impacts based on concepts tax benefits
3. Steering Committee, Select Board, and School Board reach agreement regarding inclusion of a portion of parcel currently controlled by school district. Based on the resolution of this question:
4. Steering Committee recommends a vision and an implementation path (below) to Select Board using concepts, draft plan, and cost estimates from current project.
5. Select Board approves next steps and funding (as necessary) with or without modifications.
6. Town designates staff or external facilitator to pursue funding, execute town accountable portions of implementation.

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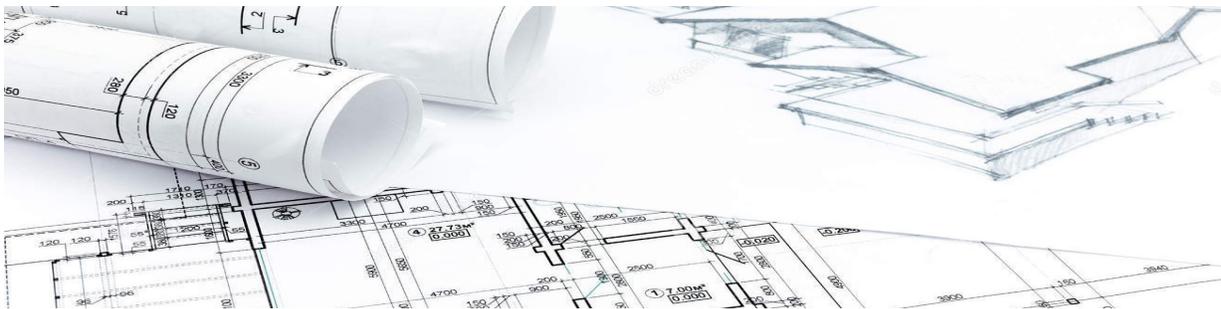
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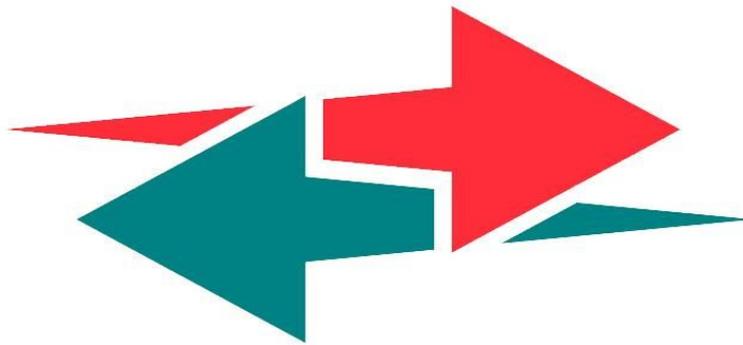
7. Facilitator / town staff:
  - a. Seeks funding
  - b. Coordinates with town, stakeholders, and funders
  - c. Drafts RFP(s)
  - d. Leads town through critical path
  - e. Helps draft bond - if desired by Select Board
  - f. Assists with drafting of public communication to keep town residents informed of progress and timeline
8. Recommended order of operations
  - a. Pursue town work - Library & Community Center first - on the principle that development attracts further development
  - b. Pursue RFP and marketing of commercial project second
9. Clean site - remove buildings, clean site of environmental hazards per regulations, complete site work to ensure parcel(s) are shovel ready for public and commercial redevelopment
  - a. Focus on Library & Community Center
    - i. Budget and consider a bond
    - ii. Bond proposal & vote
      1. Highgate has demonstrated access to grants & viability
      2. Bond may be for half the total project cost due to other fund sources
    - iii. Library & Community Center are done and built 2-3 years
  - b. Prepare a pre-permitted plan in advance of commercial RFP
  - c. Then pursue commercial development RFP
    - i. Assess parcel and determine whether it is now a more attractive site, perhaps market / offer for more than a dollar
    - ii. Commercial development project done and built in 3-5 years



# Implementation Plan

The outcome of this process included a strong desire for community gathering, retail use, and a new public library facility convenient to the community and school parcel. The design charrettes helped to pull-together many ideas into the three potential concepts. Concepts A and B include a small portion of the school lot, while Concept C maintains greater separation from any impacts to the adjacent school parcel.

In order to realize any of these proposed concepts and/or a modified version thereof, we offer the following steps as a guide to action. We further advise that this plan should be reviewed as a general guide, with the understanding that unexpected opportunities and/or site conditions may arise, including adjustments to the timing and order of the steps as may be necessary.



In addition, the concepts will likely include a future boundary line adjustment between the commercial lot and the public facilities lot. While a new property-line division can be made, there will be a need for coordinated agreements including access easement to the library use parcel.

Overall, the redevelopment includes a cooperative effort, new public and private partnerships, and a variety of mixed uses for the community; all of which, and together will enhance the center of the Highgate Village District.

Last, we recommend a designated person to act as the project manager and/or coordinator to the Town of Highgate on the steps identified in this implementation process.

## Steps in Project Implementation

### Step 1: Site Survey & Title Review

A pre-engineering task recommended is for the Town of Highgate to (soon) hire a consultant to complete a full site survey including overlap of adjacent/surrounding properties, roads, and school grounds and existing septic field.

The survey should include at least the following:

- All property lines including the town-owned and school-owned parcels, buildings, and above ground structures and site features, include all abutting lots and adjacent buildings,
- All pavement, gravel, walkways, and existing surface treatments,
- All above and below grade utilities,
- The location, size and invert data for the existing school septic field (the inverts are the piping connections to the existing system which include the subsurface elevations for these connections.),
- The locations of all other existing wells, water lines, and area septic systems
- Any / all known environmental site assessment data and information
- Spot elevations at all changes in grade, surface material changes, edge of pavement areas, utility/rim locations, all vertical changes and at all building corners,
- Site topography with 1ft contour data,
- Location of all general landscape features, and
- Identification of all soils and location of all trees.

The Surveyor should be expected to provide the final existing conditions plan in AutoCad (.dwg) format.

In addition to the Site Survey work, the Town should engage the work of a professional attorney for a thorough title review of the existing conditions, associated parcels, and adjacent properties, including (but not limited to) a full property description, any/all easements, rights of way, leases, protective covenants and/or other restrictions of record, environmental land use regulations, zoning, flood plain information and any other exceptions. We suggest the Town attorney either provide this service or advise the Town to hire a real estate attorney familiar with this type of work.

## Step 2: Complete Environmental Site Assessment

Continue and complete Environmental Site Assessment (ESA). This includes a full assessment of all buildings, site and soil conditions. We understand the Town is currently in-process of completing a Brownfield assessment and cleanup. This includes developing a plan and remediating brownfield site issues.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission contracted with The Johnson Company who conducted a Phase II report for the former Machia Estate and Town Garage parcels. This report was finalized on January 12, 2018.

From the January, 2018 Johnson Company report:

*In summary this Phase II ESA identified hazardous building materials (ACM, LBP and PCB containing material) and surficial impacts to soil in isolated locations that need to be addressed prior to and/or during the redevelopment of the property. Hazardous building materials that must be addressed are located in the former residence, garage, pole barn, and former restaurant. Impacted surface soil in isolated locations must be either removed for off-site disposal or placed beneath an engineered isolation barrier. If an isolation barrier is implemented, an institutional control must be placed on the property deed and filed in the Town of Highgate land records.*

*Alternatively, a site-specific risk assessment could be performed that specifically accounts for the future reuse and the presumed degree of exposure that accompanies such a reuse. This site specific risk assessment would determine if the soil concentrations are acceptable based on the site-specific reuse. However, given the relatively small quantity and localized nature of the impacted soil, JCO would not recommend pursuing a risk assessment.*

Should the School Board transfer control of a portion of the school parcel to the town for redevelopment, we recommend the Johnson Company be contracted to amend their previous report and environmental site assessment to include this additional area.

**Environmental Due Diligence and Remediation:** While we recommend the Town complete a full assessment of the Environmental Status of the property including all structures, soil conditions and all potential environmental liabilities, we recommend the Town to only pursue demolition and removal of all above grade buildings and structures following the assessment and recommendations provided.

We further recommend that the proposed development concepts for the commercial and public facilities lot(s) include an environmental engineering consultant as part of the future development team(s). The engineer would assess any/all other further

environmental due-diligence requirements as may be necessary to support the redevelopment proposals provided, including any removal of unsuitable soils (if required).

To date the town is working with Greta Brunswick, Senior Planner, Northwest Regional Planning Commission, on funding and contractors to manage the abatement of asbestos, Lead and PCBs in the existing structures on the parcel. Abatement for the cafe building is estimated at \$14,235 by Clay Point Associates (as of Nov. 1, 2018).

### **Step 3: Obtain Funds for Engineering**

Following due diligence to complete the pre-engineering tasks, a site survey, all environmental site assessment requirements, and the initial community vision as now identified with this scope of work, The Town of Highgate will be in preferred placement for further funding by DEC and USDA. This funding could support hiring an engineering consultant for further engineering studies and work required to complete wastewater solutions, feasibility analysis, and reports as outlined in Step 4. Prior to requesting funding, we highly recommend the Town organize a Village Wastewater Committee to help coordinate and determine a viable approach for a village wastewater solution. The committee should be formally created and endorsed by the Town Selectboard. The committee should include a member of the selectboard, planning commission, or other town official and/or staff person. We also recommend that the Town plan has addressed wastewater needs for the Village Center prior to submitting for the MPG grant described below.

The **Municipal Planning Grants program (MPG)** provides state grants of **up to \$22,000** dedicated toward a wide range of community planning needs including work on viable wastewater solutions. Having Village Center designation from the State will provide a preference on attaining the grant award.

Note: The Preliminary Engineering Report work identified in Step 4 is extensive, being that it will need to address a commercial lot for retail use, a public lot for the library use, perhaps review of existing septic capacity at the adjacent school facility, soil testing and more. That said, we suggest the Town pursue their own planning fund that may match the state grant funds awarded if at all possible. A matching-fund program will likely favor the MPG grant request.

**MPG Program Contact:** Faith Ingulsrud  
Email: [faith.ingulsrud@vermont.gov](mailto:faith.ingulsrud@vermont.gov)  
Tel: 802-839-0964

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## Step 4: Hire an Engineering Firm

We recommend the Town hire a civil engineering firm that preferably includes environmental engineering support services in-house or as an additional sub-consultant to the team. The following engineering scope includes all tasks that can be funded by the DEC and USDA in support of the project:

### Feasibility Studies:

- Determine Existing Conditions. This includes review of all work to date, conduct soil tests and other site investigations (such as obtaining archeological review).
- Identify alternative wastewater solutions. Include 3 or more alternatives. Engineer will also coordinate with Town and school officials to review any potential water conservation remedies which may in-turn provide a wastewater solution to the development project. For example, one of these solutions may be to swap-out toilets at the school facility with new waterless toilets, thereby decreasing the wastewater output/flow from the school facility and therefore gain available septic capacity for the proposed library building (as a concept).
- Evaluate Alternatives. Identify pros and cons of each alternative. Develop cost estimates. Identify finance strategies and possible fee structure. Identify long term management structures.

### Preliminary Engineering Reports:

- Report on work so far: Consultant to report on Existing Conditions information, project needs & requirements.
- Recommend a wastewater project solution for the library site/facility. Consultant to provide preliminary design, project schedule, permit requirements, sustainability and financing options.
- Recommend a wastewater project solution for the commercial / retail site. Consultant to provide preliminary design, project schedule, permit requirements, sustainability and financing options.
- Recommend other (potential) Village District wastewater alternatives. While consultant is concentrating efforts to develop a project-related solution, it is important to also review whether (or not) there are any potential wastewater solutions as well for adjacent businesses, housing and other existing uses within the Village District.

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- Recommend drinking water solutions for the commercial site and library facilities. Consultant to include preliminary design, project schedule, permit requirements, sustainability and financing options.

### **Step 5: Revise Site Concepts**

Concepts shall be revised (as necessary) following results of the feasibility study and preliminary engineering report (PER) provided in Step 4. While the MPG grant covers some engineering studies based on these initial concepts, we suggest the Town budget a minimum of \$5,000 to \$10,000 for any necessary concept plan revisions that may take place following the completion of the PER. The revised plan will then be finalized as one concept and meet all applicable local & state design requirements as noted in Step 6.

### **Step 6: Pre-Permitting Review**

The selected design consultant (in Step 5) shall submit a sketch-level schematic design that meets necessary permits, local zoning requirements, and state regulatory requirements. The plan shall include a viable wastewater solution for the village center and revised concept plan for the commercial parcel and public/library parcel.

The Town should also include attorney services (again) at this stage to advance the title review based on the final schematic design

concept, including any/all required easements, shared utilities, public access, legal agreements with school and other adjacent landowners, and any other aspects. We again suggest the Town attorney or advise the Town to hire a real estate attorney familiar with this type of work.



### **Step 7: Secure Funding for Village Wastewater Solution**

At this stage, the Town should work toward qualifying for and securing USDA-RD Rural Development funding for Wastewater Solutions for the Village Center. This may include surveys within the district, income information, and results of the PER to the USDA.

In addition the Town may wish to engage public in preparation for a bond vote (if needed) and/or set up a local loan program that addresses all the cost associated with providing the wastewater solution identified for the Village Center.

### **Step 8: Final Planning and Feasibility Review**

Once the cost and solutions are finalized on wastewater, the final design concept has been approved, and the revised cost estimates are known, there are still many factors that may influence the next phases of the project. These include:

Site and market investigations and

Additional engineering and design considerations that can affect the project.

During this phase the final concept may be altered, redesigned depending on cost (value engineering), and modified to address concerns or feasibility needs and/or meeting requirements associated with funding sources.

### **Step 9: Design, Engineering and Permitting for Public library Site**

The Town of Highgate will hire and engage a design team for the development of the public parcel on the North East (Library / Community Center) portion of the property. This will include advancing the design plan from schematic-level into preliminary and final permit plan drawings as needed for local permit approvals. All local and state level permits shall be obtained. Once final project permits are approved, final project construction-level design and engineering plans shall be completed. The scope of work will include Schematic, Preliminary, Final and Construction Document (CD) plans and specifications for the full development of the public parcel.

### **Step 10: RFP Developed for Private Commercial Parcel**

Upon completion of full site assessments, removal of existing buildings, survey completion, easements, parcel division, attorney and title research, The Town of Highgate will hire a development consultant to develop an RFP for the +/- 1 acre commercial parcel at the South West corner of the development. RFP will include the desired objectives and outcomes of the community goals and vision developed by the Town of Highgate and the Steering Committee. It will be important to note within the RFP:

- The objective to attract a development which enhances the Village Center and provides identity to the Town. A commercial/retail project with mixed use, plazas, and pedestrian connections will be viewed as having met this objective.
- The need to create the highest and best use for its asset and welcome creative development schemes that may require amended zoning, special conditions, waivers, and modifications to local zoning (if necessary).

### **Step 11: RFP Released for Private Commercial Parcel**

The Town of Highgate will solicit proposals from qualified entities for the purchase and development of the SW corner parcel through an RFP process. The RFP requirements will include statements of qualifications to purchase and develop the property in accordance with design objectives, easements, covenants, and restrictions as specified in the context of the RFP. It is the objective of the Town that the property be developed at a scale appropriate to the vision of the Village Center, consistent with the character and in compliance with existing zoning and any/all other restrictions set forth in the RFP.

The RFP will recognize the need to create the highest and best use for either retail, restaurant, and/or other commercial uses and welcomes creative and/or alternative development ideas which promote pedestrian use and an attractive retail center to the South West parcel.

The Developer will advance all required permits beyond sketch-level plans and obtain all local, state and federal permits as needed for the project. The selected developer will also be asked to include a project schedule and timeline of when the development of the South West corner will take place and as not to conflict with the development schedule of the North East (Library) public parcel.

### **Step 12: Construction of Library & Public Parcel**

Final plans for the library / public parcel shall be issued for bids by contractors and construction may commence at an appropriate time not to conflict with development of the Commercial parcel. If the project bids come in over the budget, the plans may be modified (value engineered) to help the proposed development of the library meet available funding goals.

# Cost Estimates

See appendix for cost projections of the three concepts provided above.

## Potential Funding Sources

The following list includes an assessment of potential grant, funding, and financing tools to help pursue the future development of the Highgate Town Center area.

This is in effort to help identify available public Vermont funding sources for the development of the site. Because the project is located within a State-designated Village Center, the site benefits to receive Priority Consideration for State Grants; This specifically includes the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) grant AND the Northern Border Regional Commission Grant.

### 1. Village Center Designation Benefits

The area designated for improvements is within the Highgate Village Center District

The Vermont village center designation program supports local revitalization efforts across the state by providing technical assistance and state funding to help designated municipalities build strong communities.

**Info Link:**

<http://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/CPR-VC-Designation-Benefits.pdf>

The proposal to further develop and enhance the town's Village Center is further benefited to receive Priority Consideration for State Grants; This specifically includes the Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) grant AND the Northern Border Regional Commission Grant. In addition, the Village Center has priority consideration for other State Planning and Funding program grants including Municipal Planning Grants, Transportation Enhancement Improvements, and Community Development Block Grants.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Following selection of a preferred concept plan for the site and buildings, we recommend the Town and committee members meet with Richard Amore (VT State contact) for further guidance, technical assistance, and documentation necessary from the State to support priority consideration for the VCDP and NBRC Grants. In addition meet to discuss other potential / available benefits for ANR Water and Wastewater subsidies, loans and other state grants and resources available with Village Center Designation.

**Program Contact:** Richard Amore (802) 828-5229

## 2. Better Connections Grant Program

**Description:** The Better Connections Grant Program invites municipalities to apply for funding in the 2019 grant cycle. The annual Program is a competitive grant reimbursement program available to Vermont municipalities outside of Chittenden County with approximately \$200,000 in total funding available, inclusive of a 10% local cash match (exclusive of ANR's Clean Water Funding). Projects are selected on a competitive basis.

The Better Connections program aims to improve state interagency coordination by providing targeted assistance and funding to awarded communities to align state and local investments to increase transportation options, improve water quality, public health and economic vitality in Vermont's community centers. The interagency program provides targeted assistance to:

1. Help communities identify and prioritize their goals and projects;
2. Develop an action-oriented roadmap to achieve the goals and move projects forward;
3. Link the communities to a growing network of public and philanthropic partners to help them implement their priority projects.

The Program is led by the:

- Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) in collaboration with the
- Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and

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- Vermont Department of Health (VDH)

The Program is primarily funded by the federal transportation legislation, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, under an agreement with the Federal Highway Administration, with additional staff support and funding provided by the State of Vermont, ACCD, VTrans, ANR and VDH. Awarded projects are administered by VTrans on behalf of a local jurisdiction according to state and federal requirements.

**Eligibility:** Applicants must be a unit of local government (town, city, or village) in Vermont outside of Chittenden County with a confirmed local planning process. **To be confirmed, an adopted municipal plan must be approved by January 31, 2019 by the municipality's Regional Planning Commission (RPC).**

### **Grant Types:**

#### **Clean Water Fund Grants**

The Clean Water Fund will provide additional resources to incorporate water quality planning into the transportation and land use planning process. The Clean Water Funds support projects that improve water quality by reducing nutrient and sediment pollution. The Clean Water Fund application form provides additional information on the eligibility, criteria, and requirements of the "add-on" Clean Water Funds.

#### **Vermont Department of Health Quick Build Grants**

The Vermont Department of Health is targeting additional "quick build" grants to awarded municipalities to accelerate the implementation of projects that support public health, physical activity, and access to healthy foods to prevent chronic conditions. The VDH Quick Build grants will be offered to the awarded Better Connections communities in 2019/2020 and administered by the VDH during a separate grant application process and timeline.

By providing resources and state assistance, the Program encourages municipalities to proactively coordinate land use decisions with transportation investments that improve water quality, encourages physical activity, and builds community vitality. The Program works in partnership with municipalities and other stakeholders to accomplish the following objectives:

- Provides safe, multi-modal and resilient transportation system that supports the Vermont Economy

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- Supports downtown and village economic development and revitalization efforts
- Leads directly to project implementation (demonstrated by community capacity and readiness to implement)

**Average Award:** Awards may range between \$35,000 and \$67,500

**NOTE GRANT DEADLINES:** The Pre-application meeting deadline was December 31, 2018 and the Application Deadline is January 31, 2019.

**Information Link:**

[https://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/planning/documents/scbc/FY19-BetterConnections\\_ApplicationGuidance\\_FINAL.pdf](https://vtrans.vermont.gov/sites/aot/files/planning/documents/scbc/FY19-BetterConnections_ApplicationGuidance_FINAL.pdf)

**Regional Contact:** Richard Amore, Planning and Project Manager Tel: 802-828-5229

### 3. Vermont Community Development Program Grants (VCDP)

**Description:** The Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) assists communities on a competitive basis by providing financial and technical assistance to identify and address local needs in the areas of: Housing, Economic Development, Public Facilities, Public Services, and Handicapped Accessibility Modifications.

**Eligibility:** Any Vermont town, city (except Burlington), incorporated village chartered to function as a general purpose unit of local government, or a consortium of such entities, is eligible for funding. However, the majority of projects are a coordinated effort between the municipalities, community groups and local or state non-profit organizations or small businesses.

**Grant Types:** We believe there are two areas of eligibility for the Highgate Town Center:

**Accessibility Modification Grants (AM)** (Grant Range: \$5,000-\$75,000) - Example: Bring municipally-owned buildings and libraries into compliance with state and federal accessibility requirements.

A New Library Building as proposed in all three concept plans would provide full ADA compliance. We suggest a grant application include an assessment and diagram of the existing library building and proposed building. An accessibility analysis plan and understanding of the current ADA deficiencies and future library facility accessible improvements will strengthen the town's application. The town is in possession of a recent "Highgate\_ADA Survey" that addresses the accessibility of the current library.



**Implementation Grants (IG)** (Grant Range: \$50,000-\$1,000,000) - Examples: Assist businesses to create or retain jobs, create or rehabilitate housing units, build infrastructure, create or assist childcare and senior centers etc.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Because the majority of VCDP applications have historically been a coordinated effort, we recommend the Town of Highgate to partner with other local, state, non-profit and small businesses to support the future application submission.

Complete an Accessibility analysis and assessment plan (as described above).

VCDP funds must primarily benefit persons of low and moderate income. We believe developing a public town center, including a new library facility and promoting community access and amenities greatly supports persons of low and moderate incomes as a local support center for working families.

#### **Information Link:**

<http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/vcdp>

**Regional Contact:** Cindy Blondin, Grants Specialist Tel: (802) 828-5219

## **4. Northern Border Regional Commission Grant (NBRC)**

**Description:** The Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) created by Congress 10 years ago, provides funding for projects in 36 rural counties across northern New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. NBRC invests in economic and infrastructure projects in the following Vermont counties: Caledonia, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle, Lamoille, and Orleans. Depending on the level of [economic and demographic distress](#) in each county, NBRC funded projects can be eligible for up to an 80% matching grant.

**NBRC Strategic Plan:** The 2017-2021 NBRC Strategic plan guides the Commission's programs and investments as it seeks to help the Northern Border region emerge from a period of significant economic transition and challenge. The Commission's strategies are designed to capitalize on regional assets to grow and retain wealth in the region, and are informed by local priorities identified by public, private, and not-for-profit stakeholders.

**State Contact:** **Katie Corrigan**, NBRC Program Manager at the Agency. **It's strongly recommended that applicants for NBRC funding contact Ms. Corrigan about their**

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**projects in advance of submitting an application.** Ms. Corrigan can be reached by phone at (802) 272-1420 or by email at [katie.corrigan@vermont.gov](mailto:katie.corrigan@vermont.gov)

**Local Development Districts (LDD's):** The NBRC Federal-State partnership is aided by a group of regional organizations called Local Development Districts (LDD's) that assist the NBRC in its outreach activities and administer NBRC investments for grantees. LDD's provide feedback to the Commission on its current programs as well as assist in identifying future areas of focus for the Commission. LDD's are either an already existing federally designated Economic Development District, as certified by the US Economic Development Administration or an organization similar in nature to a regional planning commission.

LDD's are knowledgeable about other Federal and State programs that help fund economic and community development projects. They are aware of local concerns as most engage in regional economic development planning of varying degrees.

**Regional Contact:** The Northern Vermont Economic Development District contact for the Town of Highgate is Greta Brunswick; Senior Planner, Northwest Regional Planning Commission.

Tel: 802-524-5958. Email: [gbrunswick@nrpcvt.com](mailto:gbrunswick@nrpcvt.com)

**Information Links:**

**Overall:** <http://www.nbrc.gov/>

**State:** <http://www.nbrc.gov/content/vermont>

**Local LDD:** <http://www.nbrc.gov/content/local-development-districts>

## 5. Rural Business Development Grant in Vermont USDA Rural Development Grant

**Description:** This program is a competitive grant designed to support targeted technical assistance, training and other activities leading to the development or expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas which will employ 50 or fewer new employees and has less than \$1 million in gross revenue. Programmatic activities are separated into enterprise or opportunity type grant activities.

**Eligibility:** RBDG funds must be used for projects benefiting rural areas or towns outside the urbanized periphery of any city with a population of 50,000 or more. Applicants include Rural public entities including, but not limited to: Towns, communities, state agencies, authorities, nonprofit corporations, institutions of higher education,

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Federally-recognized tribes and rural cooperatives (if organized as a private nonprofit corporation).

**Funding:** There is no maximum grant amount; however, smaller requests are given higher priority. Generally, grants range from \$10,000 to \$500,000. There is no cost sharing requirement. Opportunity grants are limited to up to 10 percent of the total RBDG annual funding.

**Info Link:**

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants/vt>

**Regional Contact:** Misty Sinsigalli, Tel: (802) 424-3156 Email: [misty.sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov](mailto:misty.sinsigalli@vt.usda.gov)

## 6. Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program USDA Rural Development Grant

**Description:** This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial or business undertakings.

**Eligibility:** Eligible borrowers include public bodies. In addition, eligible rural areas include cities, villages, townships and towns including Federally Recognized Tribal Lands with no more than 20,000 residents according to the latest [U.S. Census Data](#) are eligible for this program.

**Funding:** Funds can be used to purchase, construct, and / or improve essential community facilities, purchase equipment and pay related project expenses.

Examples of essential community facilities include:

- Health care facilities such as hospitals, medical clinics, dental clinics, nursing homes or assisted living facilities
- Public facilities such as town halls, courthouses, airport hangars or street improvements
- Community support services such as child care centers, community centers, fairgrounds or transitional housing

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- Public safety services such as fire departments, police stations, prisons, police vehicles, fire trucks, public works vehicles or equipment
- Educational services such as museums, [libraries](#) or private schools
- Utility services such as telemedicine or distance learning equipment
- Local food systems such as community gardens, food pantries, community kitchens, food banks, food hubs or greenhouses

### What kinds of funding are available?

- Low interest direct loans
- Grants
- A combination of the two above, as well as our [loan guarantee program](#). These may be combined with commercial financing to finance one project if all eligibility and feasibility requirements are met.

### What are the funding priorities?

- Priority point system based on population, median household income
  - Small communities with a population of 5,500 or less
  - Low-income communities having a median household income below 80% of the state nonmetropolitan median household income.

### Info Link:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program>

**Regional Contact:** Anthony Linardos, State Director, 87 State Street Suite 324, P O Box 249

Montpelier, VT 05601 Tel: (802) 828-6080 [www.rd.usda.gov/vt](http://www.rd.usda.gov/vt)

## 7. Village Wastewater Solutions

**Description:** The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) have developed a workbook to help organize a village wastewater committee and path for determining how to approach village area wastewater solutions in August 2018. In addition a

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diagram depicting a path to wastewater solutions for Villages was developed in July 2018 by DHCD and DEC.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

While there is a variety of wastewater funding sources and avenues of thought when it comes to wastewater, we believe the first step for the town of Highgate is to focus the effort here on investigating viable preliminary engineering solutions that can support the vision depicted in the conceptual plans provided. To that end, and following the selection of a preferred concept, attaining a planning grant to fund further engineering studies is certainly the next best step.

The Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development provides a **Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) program** the purpose of which funds a variety of municipal planning and revitalization projects, including those that improve flood protection, protect natural resources, and promote efficient growth and development.

It is important that the town also designate a 'Project Coordinator' who would work directly with an engineer on the preliminary engineering tasks. The outline herein depicts the typical engineering approach for Villages:

**Funding:** We understand the MPG program has an approximate grant of \$22,000 for the study work with a duration of 18 months without any extensions. We believe the application to receive the MPG program grant will be strengthened if the Town has a designated coordinator / project manager identified as contact for the engineering coordination study work.

As previously mentioned, we believe there may be additional creative solutions that could be reviewed when conducting an analysis of the municipal buildings (existing school and proposed library). For example the designated engineer conducting the preliminary engineering study and report may investigate whether a waterless system upgrade to the school building can provide a wastewater solution for additional system capacity. Perhaps swapping out some toilets at the existing school building with new waterless systems can provide all the necessary capacity to support the proposed library facility without the need to expand the existing septic field.

One additional resource is an Engineering Planning Advance Grant from the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR). Lynnette Claudon is the project lead for this grant (Claudon@vermont.gov)

## Info Links:

Vermont Village Wastewater Solutions (August 2018):

[https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/WastewaterWorkbook\\_180802.pdf](https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/WastewaterWorkbook_180802.pdf)

Wastewater Solutions for Vermont Communities:

<https://accd.vermont.gov/sites/accdnew/files/documents/CD/CPR/DHCD-Planning-WW-Treatment-Options-Guidance.pdf>

Vermont Water and Wastewater Funding Sources (September 2018):

<https://efcnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/VT-Water-Wastewater-Funds-2018.pdf>

Municipal Planning Grant:

<http://accd.vermont.gov/community-development/funding-incentives/municipal-planning-grant>

Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) application link:

<https://egrants.vermont.gov/Login2.aspx?APPTHEME=VTACCD>

Advance Planning Grant - Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)

<https://dec.vermont.gov/facilities-engineering/water-financing/planning-advance>

## 8. Revolving Loan Fund

**Description:** The Route 78 County Industrial Development Corporation (FCIDC) operates a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to provide assistance to small, value-added businesses. Revolving Loan funds are available to start-up and established value-added businesses located in Route 78 and Grand Isle Counties. The FCIDC RLF is unique in that the program can fund financially sound projects that cannot obtain all of the credit needed from a bank.

**Funding Range:** \$25,000 to \$250,000

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

We believe the revolving loan fund (RLF) may be of assistance/option to help support a prospective developer of the commercial / retail lot proposed in the concept plans

and encourage the town to identify this as a resource in the future RFP developed for the

**Program Contact:** Tim Smith, Executive Director Email: Tim@fcidc.com (802) 524-2194

**Info Links:** [http://www.fcidc.com/web\\_documents/application.pdf](http://www.fcidc.com/web_documents/application.pdf)

## 9. Brownfield Remediation and Cleanup

**Description:** The Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (VT DEC) manages a Hazardous and Petroleum Assessment EPA Grant program for municipal or regional planning organizations through an application process from the US EPA Region 1 Brownfield Program. Assessment Grants provide funding for site assessment to discern the presence, degree, nature and extent of contamination at sites and to perform remedial planning, as necessary.

The Northwest Regional Planning Commission administers the Northwest Region Brownfields Program (NRBP) which is aimed at leveling the playing field for developing brownfield properties by helping owners and prospective developers address environmental challenges through environmental assessment, cleanup planning and cleanup funding. Our goal is to help recycle properties back into use as industrial or commercial sites, as green space, or for housing, non-profit or municipal uses.

**Grant Range:** Up to \$200,000 per parcel

**Program Contact:** Greta Brunswick, Senior Planner, NRPC Tel: (802) 524-5958  
Email: GBrunswick@nrpcvt.com

**DEC LINK:**

<https://dec.vermont.gov/waste-management/contaminated-sites/brownfields>

**NRPC LINK:** <https://www.nrpcvt.com/brownfields>

# Appendices:

Survey (original, as distributed in paper form)

Survey results / conclusions summary

Survey narrative responses

Consulting Team Information

Cost Estimates for concepts A, B, and C

Drawings and Renderings of concepts A, B, and C (separately)

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## Highgate Town Center Survey

The Town of Highgate wants to hear your thoughts about how to use the two properties the town now owns in the town center. These properties include the white house and outbuildings at the corner of St. Armand Rd. and Rt. 78 and the former town garage site at 3119 State Highway 78.

The town bought these parcels in 2017 and created a steering committee that has hired a group of consultants to get public input and develop ideas on how to use these properties. This process will include this survey and two public meetings planned for September (dates and times to be determined). The consultants will share your ideas with the steering committee and town staff.

As you answer the questions below, please consider what is important to you in the town center, as well as what you think is best for the community overall.

Thank you for participating,

**BUILD. | Centerline Architects | The Housing Initiative**

Consultants for the Town of Highgate - Village Core Master Plan

**Heidi Britch-Valenta**

Town Administrator

**Steve Lafar, Woody Rouse, Richard Noel, Clarence Miller, David Roddy**

Steering Committee

## Highgate's town center, now and in the future:

1. I really like the center of town in \_\_\_\_\_ [name town].
2. I like that town's center because:
3. My idea of a town center is: (Circle as many as you want)
  - a. A place to shop
  - b. A place to eat / restaurants
  - c. A place to gather
  - d. A place for government services (town, state or federal)
  - e. A place for business
  - f. A place for housing
  - g. A place for tourists
  - h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does Highgate need a town center? Circle one.
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Why does Highgate need or not need a town center?
6. Where is Highgate's current town center? Circle one.
  - a. Highgate doesn't have a town center
  - b. US Post office
  - c. Town office complex
  - d. Highgate Village Market
  - e. Elementary School
  - f. Library
  - g. Highgate Recreation Facility
  - h. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
7. What kind of place is Highgate?
8. What kind of place do you want it to be in 5 years?
9. What kind of place do you want it to be in 25 years?

10. The center of Highgate most needs: (Circle one)

- a. More housing
- b. A new library building
- c. More businesses (commercial space)
- d. Community space (such as a park or community center)
- e. Industrial spaces
- f. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. I think the most important result of this project for our town is:

*Choose up to 3. Rank them in order of what you most wish as #1, next most wish #2, etc. You do not need to select them all.*

- a. \_\_\_\_ Increasing business
- b. \_\_\_\_ Bringing more residents
- c. \_\_\_\_ A place for town's people to gather
- d. \_\_\_\_ Increase tax revenue (grand list)
- e. \_\_\_\_ Make the town look more attractive
- f. \_\_\_\_ Attracting tourism business
- g. \_\_\_\_ Create a new identity for the town
- h. \_\_\_\_ Other:

12. I wish I could \_\_\_\_ in Highgate Center.

*Choose up to 5. Rank them in order of what you most wish as #1, next most wish #2, etc.*

- a. \_\_\_\_ Shop for more groceries
- b. \_\_\_\_ Rent space for a meeting or party
- c. \_\_\_\_ Shop for household items
- d. \_\_\_\_ Shop for fun or non-essential items
- e. \_\_\_\_ Bring my kids to play
- f. \_\_\_\_ Socialize
- g. \_\_\_\_ Eat out for dinner
- h. \_\_\_\_ Sit in a cafe
- i. \_\_\_\_ Have a drink

- j. \_\_\_\_ Get a snack or deli sandwich
  - k. \_\_\_\_ See a health professional
  - l. \_\_\_\_ Bike around town and cycle along the proposed / future bike network
  - m. \_\_\_\_ Do more active recreational things, such as basketball, tennis, ice skating, mini golf, etc.
  - n. \_\_\_\_ Do more passive recreational things, such as kite flying, walking trails, picnic/BBQ, etc.
  - o. \_\_\_\_ Other:
  - p. \_\_\_\_ Other:
13. A goal for this site should be to improve safety for pedestrians. Circle one.
- a. Yes
  - b. No

## Costs related to the property:

The white house at 14 St. Armand Rd. was built in 1768 and is listed on the Vermont Historic Register. Keeping this house might be important to you. Or, removing the house so that there are more options for how to use the site might be important to you. Whether you want to keep it or remove it, there may be costs involved in dealing with the building.

14. Choose the statement that is most accurate to your opinion. (Circle one)
- a. Anything done with the site must be at no cost to the town/taxpayers. I understand that this means selling the property. The buyer would then control what happens with it.
  - b. I see the site as a good investment in our town and think it is ok to use some town/taxpayer money to improve it.
  - c. I am willing to spend town/taxpayer money on the site if the town would recover the costs within 10 years.
15. I would be willing to pay \_\_\_\_ more in property taxes each year to improve the site. (On a property valued at \$199,000, which is the median residential home value in Franklin County). Circle one.
- a. Not applicable (I don't pay property taxes in Highgate)
  - b. \$75

- c. \$50
- d. \$25
- e. \$0

16. I want to keep the existing white house at 14 St. Armand Rd. Circle one.
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Either is ok

## About you and how to stay involved:

17. I most often find out about upcoming events in town through: (Circle one)
- a. Word of mouth
  - b. The electronic sign in front of the town offices
  - c. Front Porch Forum
  - d. Facebook (Town of Highgate page)
  - e. Postings at local businesses / public spaces
  - f. St. Alban's Messenger (newspaper)
  - g. County Courier (Enosberg newspaper)
  - h. Other:

18. I would be more likely to attend an event related to deciding what to do with this site if it were scheduled: (Circle all that apply)
- a. On a Saturday morning
  - b. On a Saturday mid-day
  - c. On a Saturday afternoon
  - d. On a weekday evening

19. I am a resident of Highgate. (Circle one)
- a. Yes
  - b. No

20. My age is: (circle one)
- a. Under 18 years old

- b. 19-29 years old
- c. 30-50 years old
- d. 51-75 years old
- e. 76+ years old

21. I have children under age 18. (Circle one)

- a. Yes
- b. No

22. I have lived in Highgate for: (Circle one)

- a. Less than one year
- b. 1-3 years
- c. 4-9 years
- d. 10-20 years
- e. 21+ years

23. Employment status: (Circle one)

- a. Self-employed
- b. Full-time
- c. Part-time
- d. Student
- e. Unemployed

24. Employment location: (Circle one)

- a. In Highgate (at local business)
- b. In Highgate (work from home)
- c. Outside Highgate

25. I would like to be emailed with updates on this project. Here is my name:

26. I would like to be emailed with updates on this project. Here is my email address:

Information about this project and results from this survey are available at the project website:  
<https://sites.google.com/buildstrategiesconsulting.com/highgate-vermont-village-core-/home>

If you have other thoughts, concerns, or suggestions about the town center, please email them to: [nathan@buildstrategiesconsulting.com](mailto:nathan@buildstrategiesconsulting.com)

## Key Results from Highgate Town Center Survey

### Summary of Key Results:

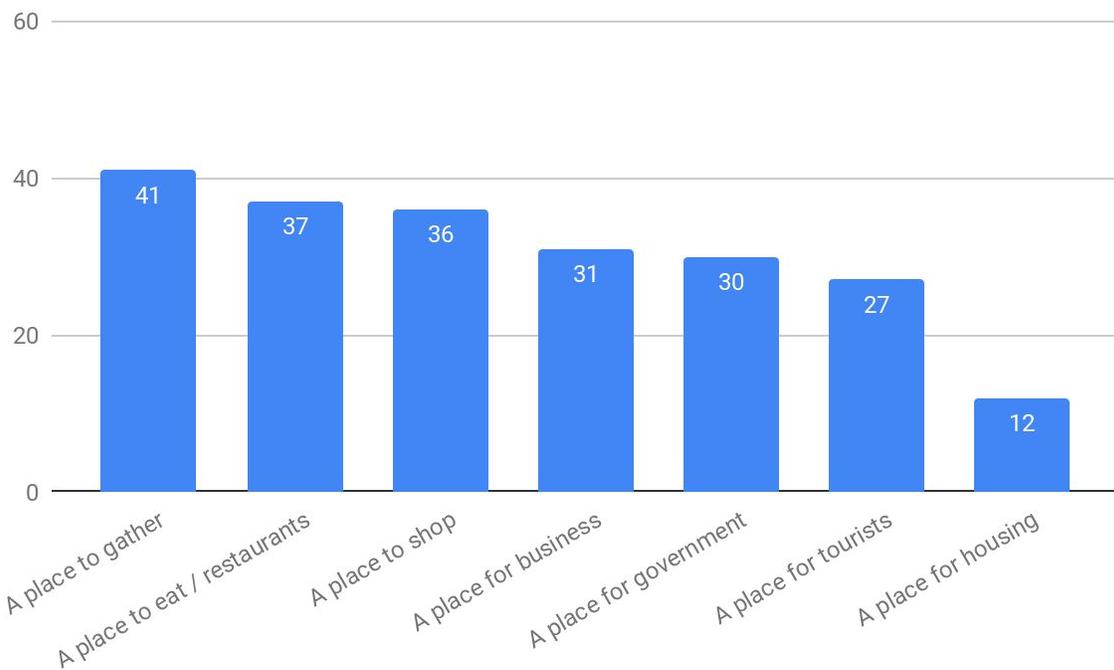
1. Community connections is of primary importance. Residents may be feeling isolated. A town center creates opportunity to socialize and respondents want to use this opportunity to create a place for the community to gather.
2. A place to eat food is important. A cafe, pub, or restaurant serves to feed patrons, but also to bring people together (opportunity for community connections).
3. Residents see the town center redevelopment as important and worthy of spending town/taxpayer money

## Key Results

1. Question: My idea of a town center is: (Circle as many as you want)

Answers:

- a. **A place to gather 73%**
- b. **A place to eat / restaurants 66%**
- c. **A place to shop 64%**
- d. A place for business **55%**
- e. A place for government services (town, state or federal) **54%**
- f. A place for tourists **48%**
- g. A place for housing **21%**



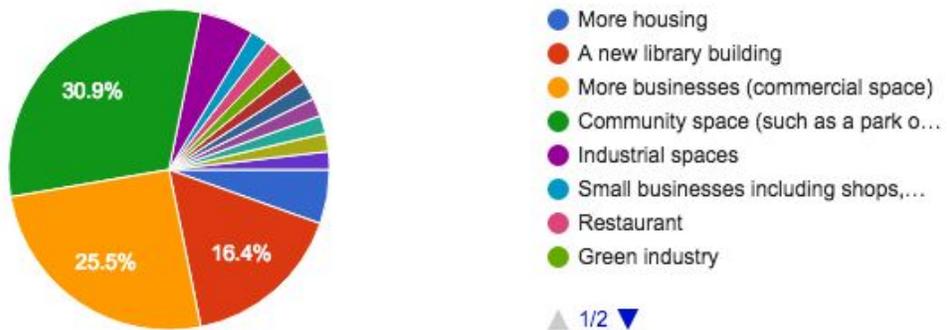
2. Question: The center of Highgate most needs: (Circle one)

Answers:

- a. **Community space (such as a park or community center) 31% (17)**
- b. **More businesses (commercial space) 26% (14)**
- c. A new library building 16% (9)
- d. More housing 6% (3)
- e. Industrial spaces 6% (3)

The center of Highgate most needs:

55 responses



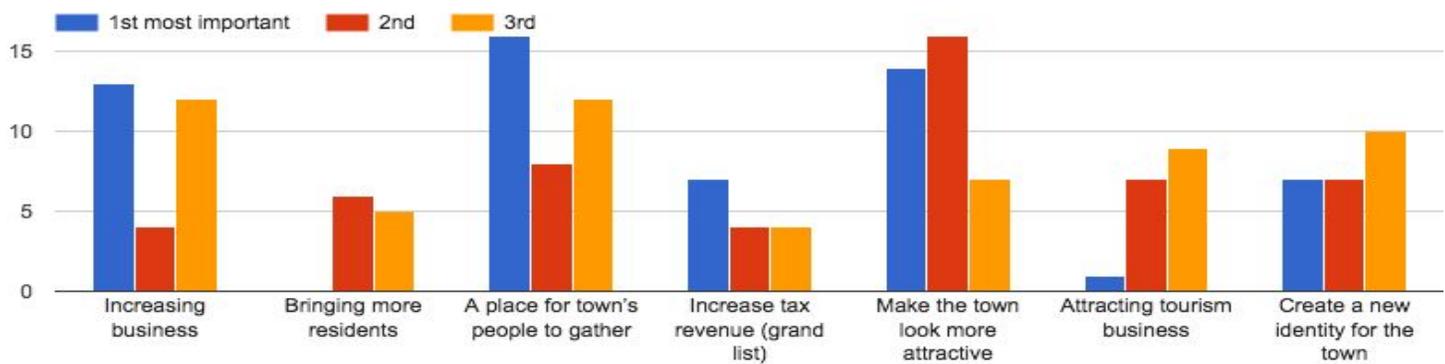
3. Question: I think the most important result of this project for our town is:

*Choose up to 3. Rank them in order of what you most wish as #1, next most wish #2, etc. You do not need to select them all.*

Answers:

- a. **A place for town's people to gather** (16 - 1st choice, 8 - 2nd choice, 12 - 3rd choice = 36 total as top 3 choice)
- b. **Make the town look more attractive** (14, 16, 7 = 37)
- c. Increasing business (13, 12, 4 = 29)
- d. Create a new identity for the town (7, 7, 10 = 24)
- e. Attracting tourism business (1, 7, 9 = 17)
- f. Increase tax revenue (grand list) (7, 4, 4 = 15)
- g. Bringing more residents (0, 6, 5 = 11)

I think the most important result of this project for our town is: (Choose up to 3. Rank them in order of what you most wish as #1, ne...2, etc. You do not need to select them all.)



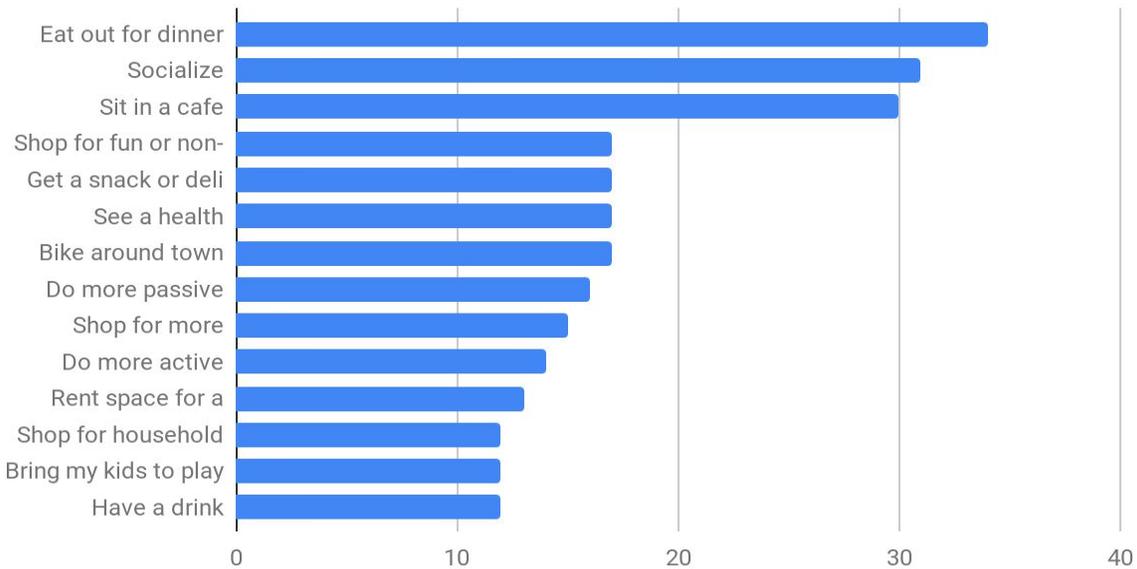
4. Question: I wish I could \_\_\_\_ in Highgate Center.

Choose up to 5. Rank them in order of what you most wish as #1, next most wish #2, etc.

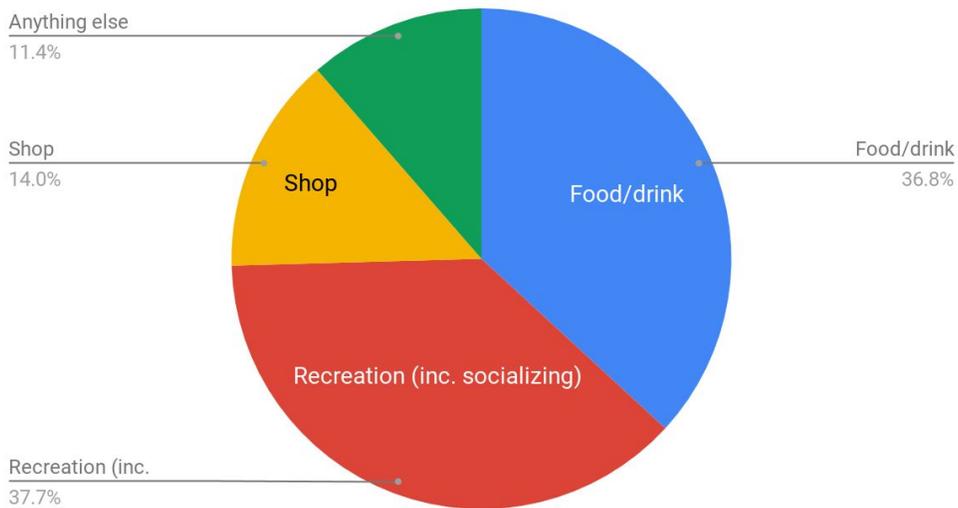
Answers:

Respondents clearly favor a place to enjoy food and interaction with others (eating out/cafe, socializing).

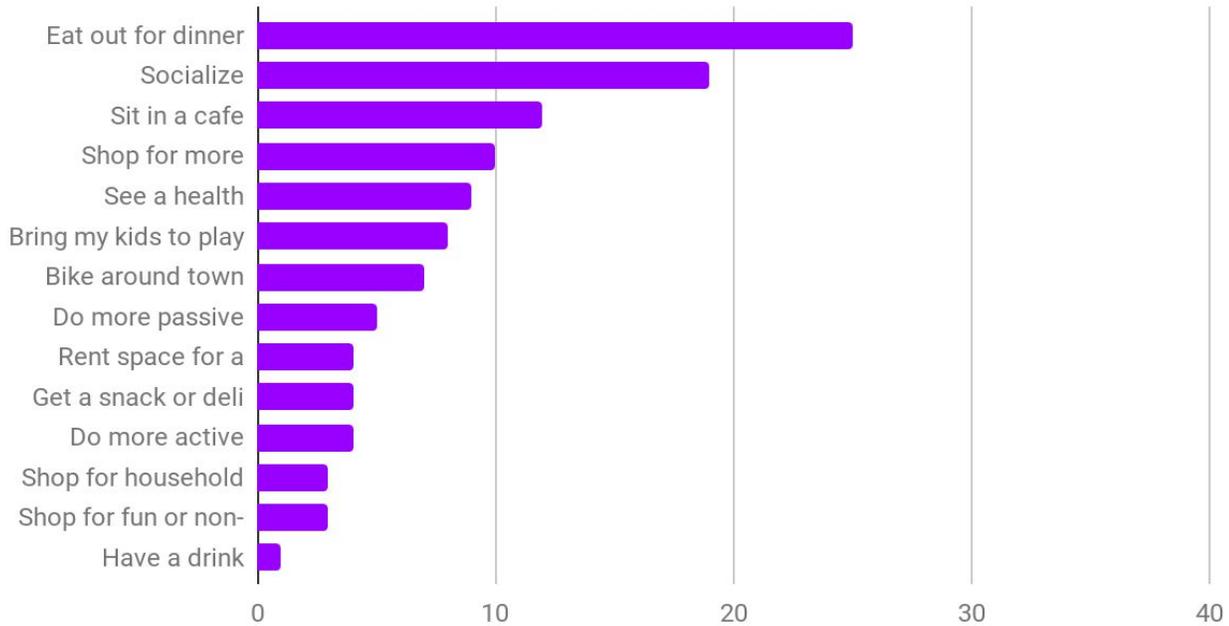
Top 5 choices



Categorized top 5 choices



## Top 2 choices

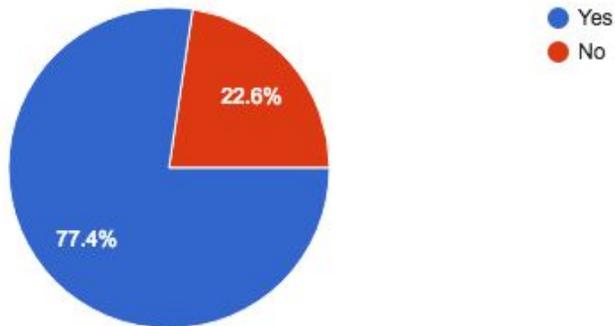


5. Question: A goal for this site should be to improve safety for pedestrians. Circle one.

Answers:

**A goal for this site should be to improve safety for pedestrians.**

53 responses



6. Question: Choose the statement that is most accurate to your opinion. (Circle one)

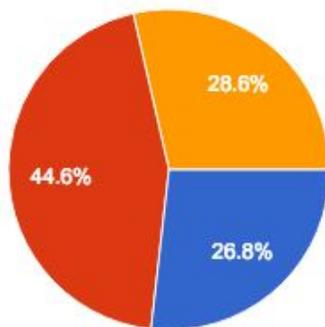
Answers:

**74% of respondents are willing to use town/taxpayer money on this site.**

- a. Anything done with the site must be at no cost to the town/taxpayers. I understand that this means selling the property. The buyer would then control what happens with it. 27% (15)
- b. I see the site as a good investment in our town and think it is ok to use some town/taxpayer money to improve it. 45% (25)**
- c. I am willing to spend town/taxpayer money on the site if the town would recover the costs within 10 years. 29% (16)

Choose the statement that is most accurate to your opinion.

56 responses



- Anything done with the site must be at no cost to the town/taxpayers. I understand that this means selling the property. The buyer would then cont...
- I see the site as a good investment in our town and think it is ok to use some town/taxpayer money to improve it.
- I am willing to spend town/taxpayer money on the site if the town would recover the costs within 10 years.

7. Question: I would be willing to pay \_\_\_ more in property taxes each year to improve the site. (On a property valued at \$199,000, which is the median residential home value in Franklin County). Circle one.

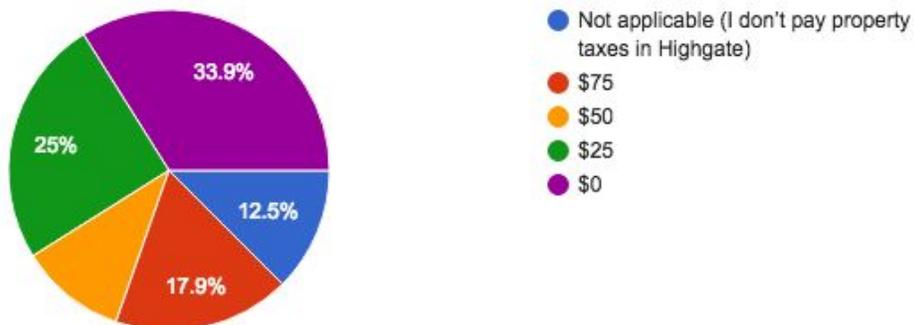
Answers:

**54% of respondents are willing to pay at least \$25 more**

- a. Not applicable (I don't pay property taxes in Highgate) 13% (7)
- b. **\$75 18% (10)**
- c. **\$50 11% (6)**
- d. **\$25 25% (14)**
- e. \$0 34% (19)

I would be willing to pay \_\_\_ more in property taxes each year to improve the site. (On a property valued at \$199,000...ential home value in Franklin County).

56 responses



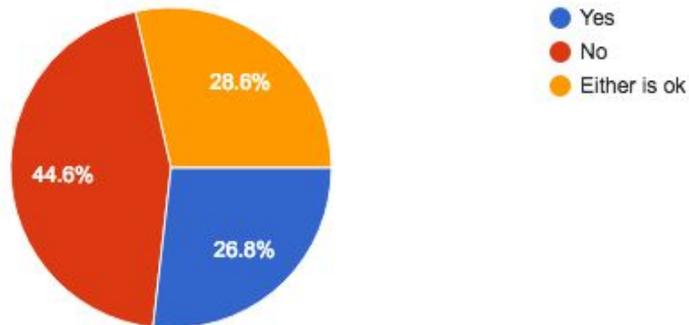
8. Question: I want to keep the existing white house at 14 St. Armand Rd. Circle one.

Answers:

**72% of respondents approve removing the existing house.**

I want to keep the existing white house at 14 St. Armand Rd.

56 responses

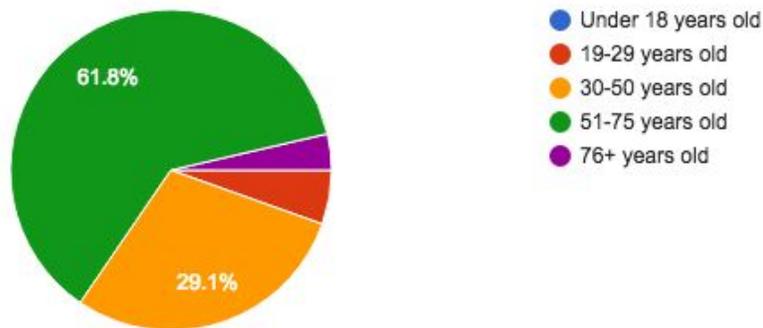


## Demographics of respondents

9. Question:

**My age is:**

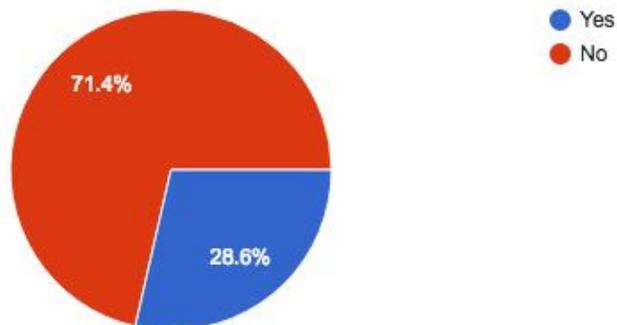
55 responses



10. Question:

**I have children under age 18**

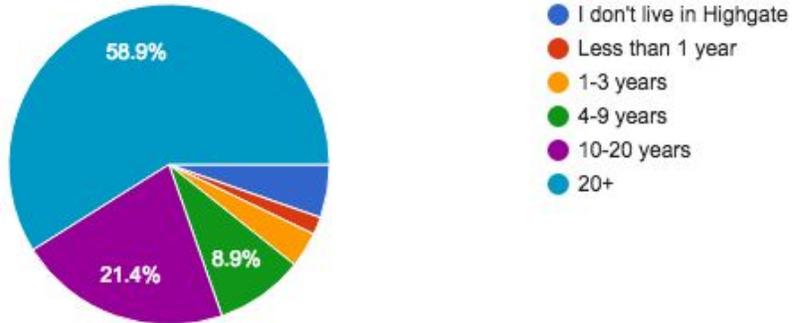
56 responses



11. Question:

**I have lived in Highgate for:**

56 responses



Highgate Survey narrative responses:

**I like that town's center because:**

It's small

It's colorful, has restaurants and interesting stores.

It is an old fashioned common green space.

Greenspace, businesses, and pedestrian walkways

It was refurbished to an appropriate small town style center and retains that ambience while offering shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities.

The Recreation Path, Post Office, Library, 2 old-time (not fake old-time) fantastic local Stores (McCuin's and Desorcie's), 2 quickie marts, a lovely little park, and the town offices and fire department are all within 3 miles of my home.

It is accessible

Sense of community

It doesn't have a dollar general

Interesting, walking areas, variety, well maintained, state/area architecture appropriate

Quiet

Places to eat, shop, and plenty of convenience

The community has always been close.

I meets most all my needs, except for clothes shopping.

It is quaint, sweet, peaceful and clean

It is small and safe

The main street contains businesses, churches, town buildings, and park that is inviting for people to walk the streets for. It also has places to park without congesting the streets.

I'd love to have a place to have community events. As a young family in Highgate we would love to see more events for families with young children instead of having to travel to other locations in franklin County or chittenden county.

there is abundant greenspace fronted by historic buildings, many of which are thriving commercial properties

It has stores, Dr.s, garages, restaurants, banks, and a nice park, that are easily accessible in a small area.

It is my home town

Very neat and accommodating

It has variety

The park was beautiful and welcoming. The stores are maintained.

It's the right size

It has more to offer

It has a little of everything (except for the traffic)

Very active, clean & people friendly

Very inviting and safe.

A quintessential type of Vermont village

Looks good for town

A few services can be found - close - quiet

It is welcoming!

The grocery store, gas station - close to everything

Close to everything

It is quaint.

Open, well designed

Because i grew up here, it's a nice town, but my opinion doesn't usually count. "Deaf" ears.

There are tons of small shops and info about what to do around St. Albans. Very neat as well now. It looks very clean plus the farmers market.

They offer everything below and it's just fun to visit and walk around

It's the center of Highgate

Well kept. Located near river waterfall and has an identity

"Nice park, inviting | note from front page:

Your steering committee needs to have younger blood - like young families who want their future here or to help keep our families here in town, or the ones that are planning families. Go out and ask you'd be surprised who would say yes."

### **Why does Highgate need a town center?**

Too move forward

Because you can pass thru it and not know you've been there.

Central place to congregate, develop

To provide local folks and visitors a "town center" environment to seek out and enjoy, to include our home town as one of the places we like to visit and show to friends.

Compared to Swanton, St. Albans, and Enosburg (the neighboring towns) ours is pretty meager.

A town center will give the community a central place to gather, communicate, and access information.

To bring & retain people to the town

To define the community rather than it simply being the next suburb of Burlington.

To further develop that sense of community, offer a place for community member to gather and share like interests

To give residents a sense of place, and pride. A nice neutral place for positive interactions.

There is already a lot of traffic through town. Plenty of opportunity for business.

I think a new community center, larger library or even a place that offers something for people to do would be beneficial. While it is a small and tight knit community, the local opportunities are slim. Locals must travel to Swanton or St. Albans for activities, and shopping. Something that offers more employment would be ideal as well.

"The feeling of a small community grows from a town center. From the fire department and other town offices( post office , library and elementary school) to the local stores especially those established for generations like Desorcies Market. Let's not forget the very building that explains and provides memories for a community; the Highgate Historical Building!

The feeling of community could grow from a town center that holds a multi generational facility like senior housing.

I do not want another chain store or restaurant in my hometown.

At this time I am aware of the business revenues that could be had but I feel like a bringing together of community spirit is needed in a town that is very divided."

Bigger tax base

Be a good place to hold town activities and for the kids in the summer months

To attract future homeowners and encourage future commercial growth.

Convenience. So residents do not have to travel far for quick errands.

A central business and meeting area of a town keeps the community united and interacting rather than just being a place to drive through to another destination.

Highgate is an extremely cute town. It is up and coming with lots of young families moving to the town. Unfortunately, there are not a lot of community activities because there is no place to hold them. As a young family of 2 little children we would love to see something like a community center built. We love everything Liza did at the library for the town. I think if we had a new building to hold events you would have more volunteers to hold events. I would love to not have to travel to other towns events (Franklin and Chittenden county).

Without intentionality, Highgate will lose a rare opportunity to define and preserve the physical landscape of its village. This is a core property, on which stands an important historic building. Could that property be renovated to house a restaurant, something that would serve the community well while creating an important gathering spot? Could it house municipal offices, making the building useful while ensuring preservation of the greenspace that links the current municipal building, town park, Civil War monument, and the Machia property (now that the fence is down). Could the original house be renovated and adapted for senior living, with sympathetic additions? Is there a loss of the aged from the community because they do not have housing options otherwise? I don't see one solution here, but a range of options that will restore the luster of a very early home that has long anchored the village historic district. Thank you for taking up the task, which will very much determine the future of your downtown.

Promote business (add to tax base)

A sense of community, a gathering place, place to relax and enjoy neighbors. Needs to be dog friendly also. Needs clean-up property next to town hall. New library

To enhance Highgate and bring more for the citizens

Well it is called Highgate Center, it would be nice to have more than just 2 gas stations, a grocery store, and a hardware /lumber store.

A place where info is properly distributed, not a gossip place.

We need to keep building a sense of community

For more business

Centrality of services for citizens of said township

Promote continuity and community involvement

Bring business in!

Bring business in

Safe, comfortable spot too have tea - coffee, sit, relax

Would be a happier place

To have a place to be a the "center" of the town

To allow for more activities for all.

Because there are a lot of people that need a place to go for getting together or help.

I feel as if Highgate is just behind. It's really hard to find things to do around here and I live here.

Highgate needs a community center to come together and share, visit neighbors. A focal point

to start where people can discuss where to go from here.

See #3 above

A place where meeting others is part of our everyday life, a place to call home.

### **Why does Highgate not need a town center?**

I feel that the town should stay true to its roots and stay rustic old country  
Highgate has all the resources we need but a restaurant would be a great addition.

Small country town and take the sidewalks out that no one uses

too small no economy

We're fine the way we are. Don't keep spendin our money for nothing.

It's a small town. Doing so would not be very profitable for any business.

I love that we still have that small town feel and I value our close community

We have 2 gas stations a grocery store and a hardware store. That's all we need

It is not that big of a town. There is a place for seniors to go in Swanton.

It's got one

Needs a park for families to hang out and visit neighbors.

Highgate needs businesses + senior housing

### **What kind of place is Highgate?**

Bedroom

Insular: not much interaction unless it's a holiday

Bedroom community

Empty

Spread out with no center to draw folks in and no real connections between the different components.

A farm friendly community

divided

A bedroom/welfare recipient community with escalating crime and drug problems.

A poor, agricultural, bedroom community

Rural AG based community broken into several small informal villages

Some divided, judgemental, good people who need a unifying project and/ or place to be pulled together.

Quiet small Vermont town

A gas stop for tourists. Locals run free with no law enforcement.

A kind, close community

"A diverse community that is divided."

bedroom town

Great small town

Expensive, small town. Lot of people having a hard time just paying their taxes!

It at one time was a quiet little town, with friendly people willing to help their neighbors.

a close, clean and mostly kind community

A safe place to raise kids. But there is not much to offer in town.

Highgate is A beautiful little town with an up and coming young population.

A community with deep agricultural roots, a proud history, and tremendous opportunity to enhance its image and growth.

Small Town

A peaceful small town

Highgate needs to set rules such as not having garbage, junk cars hanging around.

Bedroom community

Rural and sometimes quiet (4-wheelers interrupt the quiet)

Nice community. Just nowhere to come together. The eyesore behind the park does not help.

It used to be good

Small - has little to offer anyone, not attractive and not a place to spend any time.

Nice little country town

Friendly, socially tight-knit by nationality, special goods & services are 10-20 miles away and commuting to work is common and necessary.

Nice people, nowhere to gather.

Good community, not too much drama.

A place to grow

It's a wonderful place the way it is. We need something that brings in taxes

Bucolic!

Rural

A small, quiet place to live

Small, quiet place to live!

Small, unassuming, and quiet

quaint small town

Rural

It's a nice small town.

I love it. It's very nice, but there isn't much to do and to be honest the town just looks like no one cares about it anymore.

A small town becoming more of a bedroom community to local business employers. Less farming. I think we have an abundance of the working poor. Less kids (young people) sticking around - more retirees.

Historic River and border farming community

Rural, Ag business driven

Friendly - small town vibe

### **What kind of place do you want it to be in 5 years?**

Retirement

I want people to feel that's there's is a reason to go to and stop in Highgate

The same

Destination

See my earlier responses.

go back to rustic farm community

lower taxes, bigger grand list

More public space. The town Historical Society building has no parking, looks derelict, and could house a welcome center with public bathrooms. ooh, where's one better: WHEN YOU MOVE THE LIBRARY, MAKE THE OLD LIBRARY THE WELCOME CENTER!!!! THAT would be brilliant.

A place where young families actively seek to live

More centralized community joining the smaller groups

Warm bustling small town active community center , new green businesses coming in, farms flourishing

Same as now but with out the sidewalks

Safe, laid back town square with a spot for tourists and locals to enjoy a nice meal and enjoy views of the parks

I want there to be more opportunities for employment, safer community.

A community that I'm proud to support with a strong historical and school connection. I would like to see a community center for the elderly similar to the Fairfield Community Center.

business based, places to eat

hopefully continues to be a great small town

More affordable. Would like to see the elementary go to 7th grade, or better yet a middle school for 5th-8th. There has to be a way to get private funding or grants to better our education without raising the taxes. The price we pay in taxes we could afford to send them to the best private school!

Thriving and appealing to young and old.

the same with less drug use

A bigger park, more walking paths, a nice place to walk to stores, not just drive

In 5 years my children will be 8 and 6. I would love to see Highgate bloom into a great little town with a place to bring our children for events. Currently I do not feel there's a place for that.

A thriving, deeply-connected community

Medium Town

Hopefully the same as it is now.

I would like it to be a clean town, band stand in the falls park. Flowers were beautiful this year!

Nice, quiet town with a nice restaurant to go to

Same

A small town people are proud of.

As is

More business and more attractive

The same with a few more businesses

Upbeat, not so divisive by state f=government rules. Example Act 46.

A safe and inviting family community.

More prosperous, more social opportunity.

New Businesses

I would like it the way it is, but I know that change must happen. Keep it the same rural VT town Bucolic with more business - professional offices, restaurant.

Attractive, more user friendly, safe  
More business coming in  
Bring business for tax money!  
Area for Kids, Hands-on house, activities on a Saturday night or Sundays  
Somewhat more lively  
The same with a few improvements  
Rural  
Would like to see it offer more businesses a place.  
Ha well as much as I hate road work I'd rather see small shops and a farmer's market here.  
A growing community of families  
same  
Same but more progressive, building for the future  
same

### **What kind of place do you want it to be in 25 years?**

Alive  
I want to be able eat, bank, and gather at a comfortable eatery in Highgate  
The same  
Destination/Historic preservation  
See my earlier responses  
same unchanged  
Growth but not loose small town charm  
More trees and public greenspace. The "sidewalk to nowhere" should lead to historical sites (Methodist Church, Cemeteries, The Manor, that historical church near the Manor that I can't remember the name of, the old Dam bridge, the recreation path, the post office, Descorcie's, and McCuins. More parking and more tourists will benefit every business. AND, maybe - make the drug use go somewhere else - instead of our Park 'n Ride.  
A vibrant community where all generations live, work, and learn together.  
Vibrant classic Vermont community  
Still small, respectful, supportive, aware community with prosperous green local businesses and diversified farms  
Same as now but without the sidewalks  
The same as in 5  
That's a stretch.  
A connected community of folks who cater to a small town spirit with a strong historical presence. An elderly person could live in the center of town and walk to area amenities. Senior housing is needed in our community!  
see above  
a place where I still want to live  
Have a bigger park for gathering and events, restaurants, small businesses. Have a seperate middle school for 5-8th grade. Schools really need to make some great improvements.  
I reserve that input for younger residents.

a small town that still values community

More stores or the current stores to be larger. A new library. A nice place to visit, not just drive through.

I would LOVE for Highgate to be a place where my kids would consider coming back and raising there family. A safe place to raise a family, with great places for activities and such.

The same

Medium Town

The same as it is today.

Attractive town, tourists are driving through now where it would be nice to add a restaurant or place for them to stop.

Don't know and won't be alive

Same

As is

More education and business

The same

Progressive, well educated, friendly. A place people are proud of.

Same as above.

More of the same

Happy town with light growth

Same as above

What we have, a few more businesses,... Still existing!

Not just a "hole in the road"!

More development

To have the town being development

The same with a few improvements

Rural

Productive, but still a small town.

Hard to say.

A place where generations work and live together helping each other same

Same as above with more tax producing businesses located here.

I won't be around.

# Town of Highgate, Vermont

## Public Engagement & Redevelopment Planning

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### About BUILD

BUILD consults with organizations on strategy, leadership, culture, and change. We design and facilitate initiatives for our clients that significantly impact their current and future direction. We are experienced in project planning, organizational development, stakeholder engagement & communications and meeting facilitation. The impact of our work is concrete, significant, and durable.

### Experience

The team at BUILD offers a suite of expertise for planning and facilitation activities. The principals at BUILD, Autumn Barnett and Nathan Suter, bring proven experience in:

- **Facilitation & Strategic Planning:** Meeting facilitation, decision-making processes, and stakeholder inclusion & communications. Communication drafting and production, teaching leadership by example while facilitating teams.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Convening and coordination of multiple agencies and community-based stakeholders, energizing & coordinating involvement, and synthesizing input into concrete conclusions.
- **Navigating Government:** Build principals have been employed in, contracted by, and worked in close collaboration with state governments. In Vermont: Department for Children and Families, Department of Corrections, and Department of Public Service.

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### BUILD.

Consulting for businesses, nonprofits and the public sector on strategy, leadership, culture and change

[www.buildstrategiesconsulting.com](http://www.buildstrategiesconsulting.com)

## Consulting Team:

The engagement, design and development team of **BUILD + Centerline Architects + The Housing Initiative / Park Architecture** unites specialists in civic engagement, architectural design, and community redevelopment & funding to map the path forward - directed by the vision of Highgate's community.

Each member of our team is guided by related and harmonious philosophies: **BUILD** envisions thriving, diverse communities where individuals and organizations act to realize positive personal, social, and economic results. BUILD's mission is to develop the capacity of individuals and organizations to achieve their greatest potential.

**Centerline Architects** believes in the importance of the master planning process; a successful master planning is the most appropriate first step towards creating a successful project. The benefit of the master plan process is that goals are set from the very beginning, which in turn helps set appropriate priority markers during the different stages of design.

The most important part of a successful plan listening to the stakeholders, understanding the issues that need to be solved. The interview process is the most effective method for defining the issues at hand. The most active interview process is the design charrette. The architect does not have all the answers. The successful charrette involves the architect designing with the community. A charrette is interactive, and alive with the client's ideas and solutions. It is an intense and focused mesh of ideas for coming up with creative solutions. The architect in the charrette process is the design facilitator for the community.

**The Housing Initiative's** goal is to assist in the development of affordable and workforce housing opportunities in New England; with an emphasis on regions where there is a shortage and/or lack of much-needed housing growth.

Development services include site selection, acquisition, design, permitting, construction, owner's representation and construction management. Our professional staff works closely with private and institutional partners every step of the way to ensure the success of their housing goals and initiatives.

Guided by principles of accessibility and transparency, agendas, notes, images, process guides, and deliverables will be publicly available via a 'wiki' site where Highgate residents have significant agency to access the information, share perspectives, and engage one another. While the two-part charrette offers the most direct and comprehensive opportunity to participate in this process, the wiki site

offers those with work conflicts, young children, or transportation barriers to join in.

A 'wiki' site allows full access to discussion threads for members of the public - allowing residents to engage in a discussion at any time that works for them, where their contributions are then visible to others in the discussion as well as decision-makers. Agendas, minutes, and other public meeting documentation would be located on this site - thus not increasing the administrative workload of the town administrator during the course of this work plan. At the conclusion of the consulting team's work, this site will be transferred to the control of the Highgate Town Administrator for ongoing engagement or for archival purposes.

Other strategies for public engagement and communication are addressed below.

## **Contacts:**

### **BUILD:**

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