

Hyde Park Village Pedestrian Masterplan

Project Summary

The Board of Trustees seeks your input to develop a Village Pedestrian Masterplan. Much of the Village was developed over century ago and remains walkable. The Trustees seek to make it easier and safer for residents and visitors to get around on foot and by bike, to enhance the community's livability and attractiveness.

Public gathering spaces add value to communities:

Hyde Park Village has many existing community assets: a rich stock of historic buildings, an intact and charming Main Street, and numerous outdoor hiking and bicycling amenities in a scenic setting. A network of sidewalks and paths could integrate these assets that make the Village a place of distinction.

Increasing options for walking and biking to more daily needs benefits residents' health. Increasingly, walkability also correlates with higher property values. A real estate tool called the 'Walkscore' shows how this works. (*See exhibit: "Walkscore"*).

Public spaces are "good neighbors" that add to the value of properties that surround them. They set the stage for "productive growth". This is growth that makes a place better over time. Productive growth happens incrementally, through modest and sometimes simple investments. Examples include: food trucks, planting street trees that grow into giant air conditioners and soak up stormwater.

4 factors required for an environment to be "walkable": how does HP Village rate?

1. Ease of street crossings
2. Sidewalk continuity
3. Street connectivity with a network of destinations
4. Mostly level topography

All of us have ideas about small improvements to make Main Street more livable and valuable and help this legacy street endure another 200 years!

Village Pedestrian Masterplan project builds on work already initiated:

Previous planning workshops in which Village residents say they want "places of distinction, public gathering spaces that benefit residents, as well as attract visitors and new economic investment". (*See exhibit: Public for Public Spaces Report*)

Decades of work by Village volunteers to improve the community: Community Collaborative, Community Circle, and the Hyde Park Village Improvement Association

New Zoning Bylaw enables prosperity: retrofitting historic properties and promotes desirable future growth in strategic locations. (*See exhibit: Zoning Bylaw with Form-based standards*)

Elsa French Pocket Park

A pocket park is a small park accessible to the general public and visible from the street. These small parks can increase the value of nearby homes. Functions can include small event space, play areas for

children, spaces for relaxing or meeting friends, taking lunch breaks. The Elsa French Park will be a pocket parks created out of vacant lot to benefit the local neighborhood. The pedestrian master plan is a chance to locate potential future “pocket parks” throughout the Village.

French House Building

New community facilities have been proposed for the renovated French House Building. (See architectural drawings). Increasingly, resident need for community space is outstripping the library's capacity to provide this.

If residents support it, the proposed new facilities would provide more public space for meetings and events and could be rented to generate revenue for their upkeep. Indoor facilities include a new large multipurpose room and public restrooms. Outdoors there will be a generous veranda and garden space.

Minutes – Public Meeting with Abutters

Subject: Hyde Park Village Masterplan, Elsa French Park and proposed renovation of French Building for new community public facilities and Village Municipal Offices, Minutes of Public Meeting 1

Attendees: Property Abutters of French Building and Elsa French Park, Kate Lalley, LCPC Regional Planner and Project Consultant

Date, Time and Place: March 3, 2016, 6-7:30, Community Room of Hyde Park Town Offices

Kate Lalley held a public meeting for abutters and near neighbors of the proposed properties. Two residents and one property owner attended the meeting.

The majority of the meeting time was spent familiarizing the three attendees with the project, genesis of the project, and project goals.

The idea of making the Village more walkable was generally supported as a goal, as was incentivizing economic development and the types of businesses desired. Lalley suggested how this might be accomplished through a pedestrian master plan, for instance utilizing the Sherriff's property for functions like food trucks and picnicking and a farmer's market.

One attendee preferred locating Village offices in a private building across the street from the French property, rather than retrofitting the French Building for this purpose. One attendee had concerns that existing on-street parking would be insufficient if the Village offices moved to the French House.

Minutes – Community Public Meeting 1

Subject: Hyde Park Village Masterplan, Elsa French Park and proposed renovation of French Building for new community public facilities and Village Municipal Offices

Attendees: Approximately 14 Village residents; Charlie Aronovici, Village Trustee; Carol Robertson, Village Manager; Kate Lalley, LCPC Regional Planner and Project Consultant

Date, Time and Place: March 16, 2016, 6-7:30, Community Room of Hyde Park Town Offices

Kate Lalley held a public meeting to formally introduce and explain the project to Village residents, in order to get input on project goals. A second meeting is scheduled March 31.

Making the Village more walkable was seen as a worthy goal by attendees, especially Main and Church Streets, the heart of the Village. The poor condition of existing sidewalks on Main Street and the present lack of sidewalks on Church Street beyond the Post Office was noted by several residents. Residents said the sidewalk on the east side of Church Street should be rebuilt with a curb, also that sidewalks should extend on both sides of the street to the roundabout on Rt. 15.

Kate said that municipalities can use existing public spaces for as venues to incentivize more permanent types of economic development in the community. Leveraging public spaces is a “build on what you already have” strategy that creates amenities of public properties. Hyde Park has a number of public properties accessible from Main Street, and the popular new rail trail is just down the hill. Programmed with special events and in a setting of historic buildings and grounds, the Village could be a successful destination that draws the public (and its dollars).

Initially, the Sherriff’s property could be a location for food trucks and picnicking, and maybe a farmer’s market. This might encourage someone’s redeveloping the former filling station on the property as a café/coffee shop. A resident suggested using the property for disk golf, explaining this is very popular in Stowe and at Smuggler’s Notch. Over time, these events and activities would incentivize more lasting economic development, attracting businesses like restaurants, a coffee shop, and maybe a small market to the Village.

Trustee Charlie Aronovici said overcoming barriers to economic development has been a top Trustees’ goal for several years. He said barriers to bringing new business to Hyde Park Village have included a shortage of spaces to rent or for sale in the Village and onerous parking requirements required under the zoning rules. Recently, Trustees adopted new zoning regulations to allow the business development they want to attract. The new zoning bylaw incentivizes retail uses on the ground floors of buildings (upstairs remains residential). Ground floor shops and restaurants will be serviced by on-street parking, shared parking, and parking “outsourced” to other sites where there is capacity. A new Peddler’s Ordinance encourages enterprises like food trucks.

Charlie said that developing the French House property as community facilities, public restrooms, and new village offices would enliven and revitalize a prime property in the heart of the village. Having municipal offices in this location provides people with a reason to come into the Village, and turns a long vacant property into an “anchor”. This will help stabilize nearby property values and encourage re-investment in them.

Carol Robertson explained that community facilities – a room with seating for 24, kitchen facilities, a veranda and outdoor garden – provide a means of generating revenue for the Village. Trustees intend that new community facilities to be rented out for special events like small weddings, corporate meetings, and private parties. There is a need for such spaces in Lamoille County.

Trustees intend to finance the building's renovation through grants, for example for ADA access and bathrooms. In addition to the building, the French family also donated the adjacent lot which the Village intends for a neighborhood park, the Elsa French Park. Regardless of what happens to the building, the lot will be developed as a neighborhood "pocket" park.

Several residents voiced concern over loss of tax revenue resulting from the donation of this property to the Village. Carol noted the property had been listed for sale for two years with no interest. This prompted the French family to donate it for the Village's use. If residents want the Trustees to decline use of the building by the Village, the deed specifies the building may be donated only to another non-profit. The Trustees will do their best to ensure this would be a desirable entity, but ultimately can't control who ends up there. It's important that residents understand there is no option to sell the property for a profit or to generate revenue by renting to business tenants.

Charlie acknowledged the loss of tax revenue but noted this will shortly be more than offset when the McMann's dealership is added to the Grand List. This is a \$2-3Million dollar project that is being reviewed under the new zoning's form-based standards. The DRB is working with the property owner to ensure this is an attractive new complex that will enhance the Village gateway from Rt. 15. It was noted that McMann's plans to loan bicycles to patrons having their cars serviced. Attendees quickly saw the potential for synergy this will offer to draw people to Main Street.

With financial concerns over use of French House property for village offices somewhat ameliorated by prospects of significant new tax revenue, attendees continued the discussion about the Village's prospects for economic development in a broader sense. Kate noted the Village has adequate service capacity (WW, electricity, water) to support new enterprises., and said this is an advantage that distinguishes Hyde Park from other municipalities.

Residents brainstormed ideas for bringing people to Hyde Park, such as an annual Lilac Festival in the spring. It was noted that Trustee Peter Gallo and the Hyde Park Improvement Association briefly explored having an event organized around scent and bloom, similar to Shelburne Museum's timing of events around lilac and peony bloom periods.

As discussion of Hyde Park's "brand" continued, Kate suggested strengthening links between Hyde Park Village and the Arts, noting that a venue for performing arts has long existed here, there are several local artists of note in the community, and the local setting provides a gracious backdrop that lends itself to art exhibitions – indoor and outdoor. Kate said that art, coupled with desirable new development, could be the basis of a unique "wayfinding" system at Village gateways on Rt. 15 to signal to passerby that something worth investigating is going on "up on the forested hilltop". Having a bypass adds greatly to quality of life in the Village but the downside is it keeps the Village "hidden".

Charlie related that Trustees reached out to a Stowe restaurateur about expanding in Hyde Park. Things looked promising until a review of the parking requirements under the previous zoning killed interest. (that discovery produced new regulations mentioned earlier). The Stowe restaurateur said

Hyde Park could be a successful food destination. Many Canadians own second homes in Lamoille, and want to eat in Stowe restaurants on the week end; however, demand for dining is such that they frequently can't get reservations. He suggested that Hyde Park capitalize on this, that a pub/bistro in the Village would be heavily patronized.

In the brief time remaining a resident said he would like there to be a gazebo in the Elsa French Park. He envisioned the porch/veranda of the French building as a place for holding music concerts with residents listening from the gazebo or on the lawn. It was a nice image to end the meeting on.

Minutes – Community Public Meeting 2

Subject: Hyde Park Village Masterplan, Elsa French Park and proposed renovation of French Building for new community public facilities and Village Municipal Offices

Attendees: Approximately 8 Village residents; Peter Gallo, Village Trustee; Carol Robertson, Village Manager; Kate Lalley, LCPC Regional Planner and Project Consultant

Date, Time and Place: March 31, 2016, 6-7:30, Community Room of Hyde Park Town Offices

This was the second public meeting to introduce and explain the project to Village residents, in order to get input on project goals. An earlier public meeting was held March 16.

In her brief introduction Kate stated that overcoming barriers to economic development has been a top Trustees' goal for several years. A primary barrier was the Village's zoning rules. Trustees recently adopted new zoning regulations to allow the business development they want to attract. The new zoning rules incentivize ground floor shops and restaurants (upstairs remains residential) serviced by on-street parking, shared parking, and parking "outsourced" to other sites where there is capacity. A new Peddler's Ordinance encourages enterprises like food trucks. A Village pedestrian masterplan would link the existing public spaces on and/or accessible to Main Street and repurpose them as Village amenities. Programmed as venues for food trucks, a farmer's market and other fun events could encourage more permanent types of economic development in the community. Reusing the French House for community facilities and Village offices leverages this long vacant property as an anchor to stabilize nearby property values and encourage re-investment in them, and draw residents and visitors to the Village.

After Kate's brief introduction, the following public comments were noted on a flipboard chart:

1. The deteriorating condition of sidewalks as well as the lack of sidewalks in the Village was first brought up by residents. Johnson Extension road is poor quality, there are no shoulders. A resident said she walks down the road center to feel safe.
2. Another resident suggested changing to one way roads in the Village would provide space to create shoulders, enhance safety, control traffic flow.
3. Several residents noted there is a lot of speeding in the village, especially in the morning (commuters and school). Having a speed limit measurer in the Village might help.
4. Conditions at Village intersections along Main Street were discussed next. At Church and Main, the Village crossroads, residents said the current crosswalk arrangement is chaotic and inadequate. Kate said coming up with a specific strategy for the intersection would need much more thought but that solutions could be found. She said the ROW in Stowe very narrow but they've made it very ped oriented. Stowe has an environment where the pedestrian is primary and cars behave. Streets as public spaces where everyone wants to be is also the secret to their economic success.
5. "Hyde Park Home Days" – currently, the annual parade occurs in the midst of traffic. Several residents said this should be an event with no cars.
6. What kind of place could Hyde Park become? Residents thought pursuing the "Arts Theme" was realistic and appropriate – build on what you already have: tradition of performing arts (opera

house); community with many artists; opportunities to use French House building and grounds to display art, have events with champagne.

7. Peter Gallo suggested partnering with BFA at Johnson, hosting residency programs (another use for French building?); establishing an annual “Village art crawl”. The Elsa French Park could become a sculpture venue, art could be used throughout the Village and at the gateways to activate public spaces.
8. More broadly, art could be the way to connect to other communities with arts, such as Johnson. The Village should leverage the fact that all communities are connected by rail trail.
9. Discussion of how public spaces could become connected. It’s important to be able to cross Main and Church Streets safely and make them inviting for pedestrians. Strategies discussed included narrowing the vehicular traffic lanes and widening the ped realm to allow broader sidewalks. Adding street trees would be historically consistent, create a safe and pleasant pedestrian environment, and mitigate for stormwater.
10. In the past the Town snow plow knocking down trees has been an issue. Kate said investing in granite curbs would protect the Village’s investment in trees. The street section used by Stowe and other places with lively pedestrian realms featuring trees could be studied and replicated.
11. French House – The French House property is proposed to be repurposed as community facilities, public restrooms, and new village offices. Carol explained that community facilities – a room with seating for 24, kitchen facilities, a veranda and outdoor garden – provide a means of generating revenue for the Village. Trustees intend that new community facilities to be rented out for special events like small weddings, corporate meetings, and private parties. There is unmet need for such spaces in Lamoille County.
12. Trustees seek the public’s input on this proposed use. They intend to finance the building’s renovation through grants, for example for ADA access and bathrooms. In addition to the building, the French family also donated the adjacent lot which the Village intends for a neighborhood park, the Elsa French Park. Regardless of what happens to the building, the lot will be developed as a neighborhood “pocket” park.
13. If residents want the Trustees to decline use of the building by the Village, the deed specifies the building may be donated only to another non-profit. The Trustees will do their best to ensure this would be a desirable entity, but ultimately can’t control who ends up there. It’s important that residents understand there is no option to sell the property for a profit or to generate revenue by renting to business tenants.
14. Public response to French House proposal – Many in attendance LOVED the notion of public restrooms, (for LVRT users, residents out and about). Residents noted a meeting room could feature a pop-up gallery/store.

Minutes – Community Public Forum and Final Presentation

Subject: Hyde Park Village Masterplan, Elsa French Park and proposed renovation of French Building for new community public facilities and Village Municipal Offices

Attendees: 3 Village residents, including Village Trustee, Jack Anderson; Carol Roberston, Village Manager; Kate Lalley, LCPC Regional Planner and Project Consultant

Date, Time and Place: April 19, 2016, 6-7:30pm, Community Room of Hyde Park Town and Village Offices

This public forum was held to explain progress made to date during several previous public meetings. Kate has been functioning as a “moderator” of resident discussions and feedback generated during this public process. Information gathered from the public will be considered by the Trustees who will make a final determination about the Village’s use of the French building.

The Masterplan, French Building proposal, and Elsa French Park should be understood as components in a larger longer term vision of Village Trustees to revitalize the Village economy and provide for a sustainable and livable community well into the future. Progress made by Trustees towards realizing these goals include locating “new” Village wastewater capacity that can support new investment in existing Village buildings, and revising the zoning bylaw regulations to include Form-based standards that enable their reuse.

In rural towns wastewater capacity is a valuable asset for attracting new businesses, but building additional Village wastewater capacity is a considerable public expense. To avoid this expense while overcoming a significant barrier to investing in the local economy, Trustees successfully petitioned State officials to reevaluate wastewater flow estimates in the Village. After measuring *actual* Village wastewater use, the State agreed the Village had additional wastewater capacity *in its existing system!* Trustees wish to leverage this valuable asset to attract new business enterprise to the Village.

To incentivize investment in existing Village properties and allow the historic built pattern of development to extend to undeveloped parcels in the Village, Trustees recently revised the zoning bylaw to include Form-based standards. To enable temporary venues that could become permanent Village businesses, Trustees also adopted an ordinance to allow Peddlers and Food Trucks.

All successful places share a common feature: a lively pedestrian setting. Hyde Park Village residents learned the value this can bring communities and the potential to create such a setting in the Village during the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) technical workshops, held in Spring 2013. PPS worked with Village residents “on how to build on existing community assets and improve underperforming places to create a more sustainable, vibrant and livable Village and surrounding region”.

Resident participated in a “Connectivity and Barriers” exercise (resulting map exhibited at this forum and all prior public meetings), evaluated the quality of the existing walking experience for a few blocks on Main and Church Streets, noting areas that needed improving, and identified specific sites that might offer opportunities for improvement. This important early work – securing additional wastewater capacity, adopting a new bylaw, and the PPS workshop outcomes provided the foundation for the project we are considering today.

This project – a Village Pedestrian Masterplan, creation of the Elsa French “Pocket” Park on a vacant lot, and considering proposed use of the French Building for community facilities and Village Offices – takes the Trustees vision for the Village a step further. How can the Village’s abundant existing assets be the “ingredients” for realizing a more prosperous, walkable, and sustainable community?

What are these assets? Residents have raised many ideas about this at public meetings since March. The first asset is having streets that are built in “the right way” (meaning with pedestrian in mind) in the first place. While not all Village streets feature sidewalks, Main Street and a portion Church Street do, and the compact form of the Village is very walkable. Kate showed a 5 minute walk and a 10 minute walk superimposed on a map of the village. The same map also shows that the Main Street features several underutilized outdoor spaces that are open to the public. How these properties could be “activated” with events and other temporary venues to create new destinations for residents, tourist visitors (theater, LVRT), employees of the Courthouse have been the source of lively discussions.

As has been noted, the physical organization of the Village layout is already inherently walkable. An official pedestrian masterplan provides a means to focus attention on this feature so it can be leveraged for new purposes. For instance, prioritizing use of investments in infrastructure improvements to link public properties, address stormwater challenges, and create a more inviting public realm that supports getting around without cars for short trips, chance meet ups with friends, encourages tourists to visit and explore the Village...and spend their money at local businesses.

Public properties – which includes the public ROW of the street – are the focus of the masterplan because they are usually under municipal control. Since municipalities have little influence over if and when investment happens on private properties, finding ways to activate public properties is a cost-effective way to improve surrounding lots and catalyze investment in them. The Masterplan focuses on the catalyzing reuse of two properties - the Elsa French Park and French Building use for community facilities and Village offices.

The proposal that Village residents are now asked to consider: repurposing the French building and the adjacent vacant parcel as new community facilities and Village Offices and a new municipal park, the Elsa French Park, and to creating a pedestrian masterplan to improve public streets for pedestrian use and link public Village properties is in every way Village Trustees’ NEXT STEP in the process to attract investment and leverage Village public assets.