

Final Report, East Hardwick Better Connections Process

Appendix 3. Report on Community Outreach

APPENDIX 3. REPORT ON COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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## APPENDIX 3. REPORT ON COMMUNITY OUTREACH

### Introduction

This is an overview of the first phase of community outreach for the Village of East Hardwick's Better Connections Project. It provides the results of three initiatives: the creation of a project website, the completion of a community survey and the conduct of the first of two Village Suppers to inform the community about the project and get community members' suggestions and insights as related to the Village and the Better Connections Process. In sum, these results can be grouped into seven overarching themes, most involving better connections of some sort. These themes are:

**Improve Sidewalks:** the results of the survey and village supper highlighted people's concerns about the condition of Village sidewalks. Pedestrian access and safety were frequently mentioned as important to improving the walkability of the Village.

**Improve Infrastructure for Water Distribution:** People expressed concern that the Village water system be protected, given the current high quality of its water and the aging of the system.

**Improve Drainage and Stormwater Management:** Respondents recognized the damage done by the flooding in the past year and the necessity of improving draining and stormwater management to protect the Village properties and safeguard its quality of life.

**Protect and improve Village Appearance:** There were concerns expressed about the importance of maintaining and improving the physical appearance of the Village as a matter of both civic pride and enhancing the Village's economic viability

**Connect to the River and Lamoille Valley Rail Trail:** The River and the Rail Trail were both seen as important under-used assets for the Village. Residents are looking for ways to enhance connections to these assets to improve quality of life in the Village.

**Improve Housing:** The need to improve the quality and quantity of housing available to Village residents was a consistent concern in both the survey and village supper.

**Improve Community Connections in General:** People appeared to be interested in strengthening opportunities for community connections in general. This included a desire to improve community gathering spaces such as the Grange Hall, a potential park/gathering space at the site of the former library/fire department, the desire to revitalize McFeeter's or create another community store in East Hardwick. In addition, there was general concern about the need to address road intersections in the Village to improve connectivity. For example, concern was expressed about the safety of the intersections of Main Street and Route 16 and Main Street and Cedar Street. There are also concerns about the now-closed intersection of Route 16 and School Street, with some looking to restore the intersection, and others favoring abandoning that intersection altogether.

The results of each of the three community outreach initiatives is summarized below.

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### Project Website & Flyer

The project website was created as a WordPress site with the domain name “easthardwick.com.” The site provide an overview of the project, a list of members of the steering committee and includes posts describing recent events and other developments related to the project. There is also a page through which email messages can be sent by visitors to the page directly to the project consultants, Peter Fairweather of Fairweather Consulting and Andrea Day of the Dufresne Group.

A one-page flyer was also created to provide an overview of the project and was distributed throughout East Hardwick by steering committee members.

### Community Survey

A community survey was also completed as part of the outreach for the Better Connections Process. It was designed as a post card that asked people to name three things about East Hardwick that should be protected or encouraged as well as asking them to name three things about East Hardwick that should be improved or corrected. It also asked for the residence status of the respondents (i.e., live in East Hardwick, live in the Town of Hardwick, live outside the Town).

The survey was distributed throughout the community by steering committee members and was mailed to the households in the Fire District (as a proxy for the Village). Surveys were also distributed at the Village Supper of July 29, 2024. By its closing date of July 31, 61 surveys had been returned. The results indicated that, of the respondents, 52 lived in East Hardwick, 4 lived in the Town and 3 were from outside the Town.

The results of the survey are summarized in the following pages. The summary shows the results of “word clouds” generated when the survey results were entered into the Survey Monkey platform. This indicates which words were mentioned most frequently in response to each of the six questions (with common articles and adjectives removed from the word count). When asked about things to protect or encourage, people focused on the Village itself and important components of it, such as the Grange Hall, the River and the quality of the Village water system. When asked about things to improve or correct, improving sidewalks dominated the responses, followed by housing and concerns about vehicular traffic, including intersections and speeding.

The results are summarized in the pages which follow. A full listing of all responses received is included as an appendix to this report.

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### Village Supper

The Village Supper was held in the Grange Hall from 5:30 to 7:30 on Monday, July 29, 2024. Approximately 50 to 55 people were in attendance, with 42 entering their names on the sign in sheet. At the session, consultants Peter Fairweather of Fairweather Consulting and Andrea Day of the Dufresne Group provided an overview of the Better Connections Process and fielded questions from the audience. For the session, 11 posters were positioned throughout the hall, each highlighting an area of concern or potential opportunity for East Hardwick.

Before beginning the buffet supper, attendees were instructed to circulate throughout the hall and review the posters. Throughout the session, attendees were encouraged to express their thoughts about these topics by writing their comments on the relevant poster and/or using a PostIt note to place their comments of each poster. (There was also a 12<sup>th</sup> poster for people to record other thoughts or ideas not addressed by the other posters.)

During the course of the evening, over 250 comments were recorded on the 12 posters. These are provided below, displayed by the poster topic under which they were entered:

#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what should Better Connections say about SEWER & WATER INFRASTRUCTURE?**

Would be great if our hydrants worked.

Community septic as some properties will not meet code if they need to be replaced.

Ability to update and repair water system.

Many houses have old septic systems and some have limited space to rebuild. Should they fail. A shared community septic might be needed.

my leach field collapsed after the flood of 2023! Still working but for how long?

Is our wonderful "best water in Vermont" a relic of the past?

Community septic. Collection and treatment. May be large Leitchfield. Maybe we build a wastewater plant with Greensboro.

I like individual septic systems. I do not want to pay for a Village system.

Save drinking water please! Septic must be up to code? Add septic sewers.

Fix the reservoir contamination issue. Too much chlorination!

Offer grants to fix defunct septic systems.

Appreciate high-level of the boards Care & town's Support need resources for these volunteers and the work.

Add septic sewers.

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Get the water system to support the hydrants. I like how our water tastes. Keep it clean, but not over chlorinated.

Improve water system, old. Breaks all the time.

We have great water. Let's protect it, but more land to surround the town Springs

Keep water rates, low, plan improvements overtime.

Test river often.

#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what should Better Connections say about THE LAMOILLE RIVER and East Hardwick?**

Dredge waste from buildings in River and rebuild an enforcement embankments.

Must be dredged! If not, where will the waters go?

I think there should be a public access point to the river for fishing.

Better access.

Need access for fishing. Must prevent flooding in erosion.

Improve pedestrian access. Can we re-create some wetlands for flood mitigation?

Mitigate flood, erosion, and bridge damage.

Public access near rail trail for picnics fishing and swimming hole.

Rehab the main street bridge and provide river access from the overlook park.

Use lots of stone to reinforce riverbanks.

Protect the bank near the LVT from subsidence.

Develop wetlands access for swimming and for kids to play in water. Build a swimming hole and access.

It is a hidden asset, need to build a new bridge to showcase it/provide access.

Improve public access.

Community park by river may be add Whitewater course for voters.

To predict, but improved access and habitat is important.

Find a way to help prevent flooding of the neighbors around it.

Help residence whose houses are in peril from the river

Love the river and falls, we need help to control the erosion expand the flood zones and field

protect fish from pollution especially Michaud farm

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Learn and celebrate the Abenaki name and history yes, public access.

Clean up trees and debris in river.

Keep the Lamoille river

Control the flooding.

Fishing access.

Create access for recreation

#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what should Better Connections say about TRAVELING BY WALKING OR BICYCLE or other means in East Hardwick?**

We need a rope tow to pull people up the hill! We need new sidewalks on main extending to the Grange and church. We need sidewalks or a walk/bike lane on school Street.

Street lights for nighttime we need sidewalk repaired and more sidewalks.

The sidewalks are deplorable and unsafe, need replacing.

Keep sidewalks clean and safe! Fix them first.

Fix sidewalks. Stop sign at Cedar Street and Main Street. Better visibility where roads meet the bridge.

Walking or biking. Encourage it. Safety is important. And the awareness about visitors the trail is bringing.

Sidewalks on the hills need to be fixed.

Establish a trail head with amenities on the rail trail.

Biking lanes needed.

Real sidewalks, not black top, extended over an imaginary curb .

New sidewalks.

Clearly marked and spaced bike lanes through town.

Fixing/maintain sidewalks.

Sidewalks for safety.

We need hitching posts and mounting blocks.

We need better sidewalks.

We have enough but need to maintain and repair existing sidewalks.

Redo sidewalks, culverts are hazard to walkers.

As long as traffic is low, we don't need more sidewalks, just maintain the ones we have.

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Update sidewalks.

Bicycle and horse crossing lights

Take measures to control speeding.

Holes and culverts on the bottom of hill are really dangerous. A child or animal could catch/cut their foot in them . Huge liability/danger for Town

Let's get the darn sidewalks fixed and safe.

Make rail trail head with potty and water.

#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what should Better Connections say about BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES in East Hardwick?**

Yes, we need more business.

Would like a snack bar or small diner or store or farmers market. Small office space. Encourage home businesses.

Restore McFeeters as a general store and coffee shop yes yes.

D and L beverage needs to be more inviting, clean up. Trailers are awful with messes visible. More choices for customers, wine, beer, deli/more accessible.

Bicycle, fishing-related business would be good.

Keeping a gas convenience store.

Food carts on LVRT.

Solve lack of Village parking and restore, safe walking and biking, people will follow.

A general store would be great! With coffee shop would be fabulous.

Good luck.

Encourage more cottage industry

It's nice to have a quiet town with a few or no businesses. Greensboro and Hardwick are so close.

Signage for existing businesses. Bulletin board with business card holders that is weatherproof.

A real inn! There is a café for hikers and bikers.

McFeeters operating would be good, but there is no parking.

Café or restaurant to sit, enjoy a meal and see neighbors.

Would not like more as the result of more business

Restore McFeeters.

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Create more infrastructure to support small business, such as dollar incentives, good power and water, connections, etc.

Overnight stays/camping/Airbnb needed for LVRT bikers.

#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what are your ideas about TRAFFIC, CIRCULATION & PARKING in East Hardwick?**

Close school Street where the slide is. Use the space for a park/playground/community garden, etc..

No room for parking spaces. Stop signs. Rebuild bridge.

Parking lot where old library is. Stevens Lane and Hardwick Farms one way.

Traffic control Route 16 junction with Main Street must be turned to 40 mph. Very dangerous.

Jake break ordinance.

School street needs to be safe for bikes and walkers. We have a great opportunity to create something unique. Out of the box thinking is needed.

We need more parking near the trailhead, near the Grange to encourage businesses

Lee land from the church for parking and playground.

Put in proper sidewalks

Brick house Road should be one way parentheses (up) and Stevens Lane be down. Very unsafe for people and the trail crossing. Slower all through Village.

Parking on Stevens Lane, but keep it two way unsafe coming out onto Route 16, poor visibility

Stevens Lane could be better parking.

Parking on Stevens lane. Maybe closed Steven's lane?

Don't think we need more of this.

We need more formal parking places more businesses will create more traffic. A negative.

Close school Street. Improve flow from Hardwick Farm Road.

Some trucks are way too loud. Is there a decibel ordinance?

Create more parking, safer signage, slow traffic on route 16. Reduce T by main and cedar to create green space and parking.

It is lovely and quaint as it is, but we need to utilize all the lots we have, too many abandoned, poorly maintained homes

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#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what should Better Connections say about providing HOUSING for people in East Hardwick?**

Tiny house, Village with brown and gray water systems (love the river).

Provide Resources to fix up dilapidated houses

Housing is a big issue pretty much everywhere. I don't know what the Village can do about this, but encourage folks to set reasonable rents. Can we turn East Hardwick into a welcoming and financially feasible community for teachers, nurses, etc.?

Will the water system support more homes? How many?

Less empty or underused homes. Less junk.

Attend to abandoned/condemned properties. To make available for new housing. Money for homeowners to fix up their homes.

All sorts of folks are welcome here but we need to make better use of our big houses. They are treasures.

Buy up buildings that are falling down and fix first

Build housing on the library property.

Moratorium on Airbnb, VRBO, temporary housing, until there is enough affordable housing.

We need more affordable and help for those whose homes are falling apart.

Find ways to help depressed and the king houses. Provide financial advice and monetary assistance, if possible.

No blighted buildings!

Lots of empty houses, can we get apartments added? New, or retrofit? Expanded/improved trailer park?

Brown build where the library is. Add or improve housing where disrepair is.

Offer funds to renovate properties and disrepair.

Renovated house great example for more affordable housing in the village.

Use the empty abandoned home and lots we have for more housing rehab, large building into apartments like Eric Stevens did across from the post office. Tear down a couple unsaveable structures.

Engage with the group that absorbed Lamoille housing partnership to brainstorm possible projects

Hardwick town never sweeps the sidewalks anymore. Makes them dangerous.

Help people update and improve their homes through grants and loans.

Help match homebuyers with empty/unoccupied homes.

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#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what should Better Connections say about the role of THE ARTS in East Hardwick?**

It is important for you to interact with established artists to fuel their creativity and abstract thinking.

I love the gallery in place! Live theater. Music performances. Promote the gallery out to the community.

Get the Grange restored into a public community center for year-round use

Movie nights at the Grange.

Help the Whitewater gallery, secure, more parking for events.

More live music.

Bingo and music.

Awesome resource to encourage.

Would love more music and theater events

Make the Grange accessible so there can be arts events.

Art walks and bike rides. Yes murals!

Do we need that? Please no murals.

Get more events at the Grange. Have a community art project connect with LVRT?

The Whitewater gallery is a treasure. Wouldn't it be nice to have a place for children's art projects in the summer?

Make the Grange accessible. Look at future uses for the church.

Have a community talent night/storytelling event.

More music and theater (no puppets) :-)

Community sculptures. Abenaki education through Art

Love the gallery! Include use of the Grange for a variety of arts events.

Love the gallery. Can we find the site that would serve as a cooperative for local artist to display their wares?

Would love yoga classes at new gym

Grant for Grace arts to come to EHK

Community art projects like Barry does with cats sculptures

Art co-op space

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#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what should Better Connections say about THE LAMOILLE VALLEY RAIL TRAIL and East Hardwick?**

I love the rail trail, but do we really need so many of those detour signs?

Parking at trailhead.

Rail trail – a pleasant place to rest with benches, picnic table (toilets?), Water would be great. How about a small bicycle shop/repair shop? Doggy poop bag dispensers too

Have community events on the trail

Rail Trail: I love it! Will be using it to commute to work.

Bring in public porta potties.

Wonderful resource to advertise our community.

When Stevens Road has a ditch between rail trail parts, town needs to make clear signage. Saw a bicyclist cross the road and fall in the ditch!

We need signage along the rail trail at road crossings for businesses in East Hardwick.

I missed the railroad, but I would like to see the rail trail used more.

More signage in the village for the LVRT.

The plans for a trailhead. Water For dogs and horses. Parking at the trailhead.

Trailhead maps, promote what we have.

Community art projects/installations on the rail trail.

Rail trail is fine, but we need facilities for users and the bathroom and water. Also, I'd like bikers to go slower past walkers!

I love it!

There are three old LVRR rails beside the trail east of Keen Road use them to add character to the trailhead

Build an LVRT trailhead with seating and some shade

Parking with trash cans. Tiny library spot.

We need to provide potty and water and some overnight options. We are at 1/3 point and people want to overnight.

Events for bikers at GIANG.

Create a stopping place for water/bike repairs.

It's wonderful. I am on it several times per week. Bike to Hardwick for food, library, tacos, etc. love it

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Bill, the best amenities site, and have signage to encourage exploring the village (historical/for scavenger hunt)

Get our plans for our open “landing” and welcome area established! Water, shelter, air pump, etc..

Parking at the trailhead with picnic tables.

Good signage/easy access/local information

#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what are your ideas about STORM WATER AND RUN OFF in East Hardwick?**

Repair & clean the storm drains on Main Street

Develop more wetlands and Swales.

Needs major overhaul, pipes repaired, drainage, redone, and more street drainage.

Repairs to the flooded areas that will be better able to withstand the next flood. We can't keep doing things the same way.

Stormwater repairs essential, Main Street down to the bridge equals yikes! School Street should remain open from Main to D and L. market

Re-orient the bridge.

Just got to be fortified. No more buildings in flood zone and increase the flood zone designation.

Identify properties that flood that are not necessarily on the Lamoille and find solutions for them.

Keep the gutter on the sidewalks clean! More culverts!

Number one priority should be better stormwater control.

Erosion along the river is extreme and damaging to the river and Hydro dams. We need serious state help to deal with some areas.

Permaculture designs for floodwater mitigation in Swales

Bring back wetlands, perhaps along route 16 above the village.

It's a huge problem for those of us who live at the bottom of the hill.

Get some final fixes to this major neighborhood problem on lower Main Street!!

Need more culverts.

It all meets at my house from Brick house and Main Street and washes out the driveways at the bottom of the hill and Riverbank

Engineering study to proactively address river damage/continue erosion. Fix road drainage currently contributing to flooded basements.

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#### **As we build a shared vision for our future, what are your ideas about BUILDING BETTER CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PEOPLE in East Hardwick?**

Start an east Hardwick listserv

Have an annual block party?

Townwide yard sales.

Book clubs.

Contradance.

If more walkable, more people would stroll and meet.

Renovate and make the Grange accessible.

The Grange activities have been great.

Weekly free music in SOMMER on Church greens.

Preserve the Grange. Fix the kitchen.

Better connections among people, regular community, gatherings like this!!

Keep EHNO going!

More funding for Grange activities.

Work with N2N on getting everyone's cell phone number

More community events.

Take care of the Grange building. Keep it accessible.

Public gathering spaces.

Better connections: central point to launch out on a snowshoe, foraging, walk, community recreation opportunities.

Internet access!

Free community meals.

System to check in with each other in disaster situations (individual or communitywide).

Find ways to support and enhance EHNO. Find ways to break down the distance between sub populations.

Grange accessible for meet space

Make Community garden.

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**As we build a shared vision for our future, what are your ideas about what to do with the space that will be created by the demolition of the OLD LIBRARY & FIREHOUSE?**

Sell it and use the money to support the fire district.

Tear it down.

Make it a park.

Gazebo or benches to rest while walking up the hill. Also display outdoor art/sculpture.

Green space, perhaps a site for affordable housing

Green space.

Tear down and create edible green space.

Plant a shade tree and a couple of benches and space for hopscotch.

Tear it down. Create a common space/mural community garden/historical marker? Sculpture park?

Basketball court with lights

Rail Trail parking with Green space public.

Make a community flower garden and art park

Community garden.

Tear it down. Make a couple of parking spots,

Airbnb

Park small garden for rail Trail access?

Outdoor art park/garden with seating.

Garden and Park/swing set

Basketball/Pickleball court to replace building. Lighted.

Green space to gather but neighbors will need to be fenced out to be a pleasant space. Park bench.

Flowers

Park or neighborhood garden

**OTHER IDEAS OR ISSUES FOR EAST HARDWICK?**

Purple house on E. Church St. and Main Street, not only an eyesore but mold and fire hazard.

Jake break ordinance. Speed bumps.

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Reconfigure tea intersection as attractive island/parking/clear path for bikes.

Concerned about drug activity coming into town.

Jake breaks. Manure haulers. Drillage manure haulers on Main Street on the hill.

Where is the town of Hardwick when they are needed? Clean off sidewalks? Police patrol?

Drug activity.

Agree with ordinance around Jake brakes within half mile of Village

Horse, hitching Post and mounting block at rail Trail road crossing

Church is going to have to close soon due to lack of funds and small congregation. How use the space/building/parking?

Go door to door to get the folks who didn't come out tonight to come.

Tear down the "purple house" at the bottom of Brick house Road

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### APPENDIX: Full responses to the Community Survey