

# Conceptual Vision Plan for Our Community

With a town population of 1,719, Waitsfield, VT is located in the Mad River Valley in Central Vermont. It is a small rural village known for its beautiful scenery, the prominence of the Mad River, and the historic village center. The Village Center extends slightly beyond the historic district of Waitsfield and includes less than sixty properties. The "core" of the Village is at the intersection of Bridge Street and Main Street though the designated village center extends north to the school and stops short of Irasville.

Waitsfield is a major support community for the Sugarbush and Mad River Glen Ski Resorts creating a unique mixture of businesses in the community that serves both local residents and visitors to the resorts. The village center also contains significant open spaces, trails, and outdoor recreation that are become ever more appealing to visitors outside of the typical ski season.

## Catastrophic Event

On August 28, 2011, Tropical Storm Irene dropped over seven inches of rain in Waitsfield, causing the Mad River to crest at over 19 feet in the Village Center (just shy of the 1927 flood). Floodwaters heavily damaged many village businesses, several of which occupy historic structures; others were swept off their foundations and destroyed. The Great Eddy Covered Bridge (or Waitsfield Covered Bridge) was not destroyed but did suffer damage to the bridge abutments.

## Recovery

To date, Waitsfield has done significant recovery work. The Covered Bridge abutments are scheduled for repair in 2014 and the Town of Waitsfield purchased property destroyed by the storm with plans underway for a waterfront pocket park. Streetscape and sidewalk improvements are underway, with a focus of making a more pedestrian friendly village center. Additionally, private sector investors have restored businesses, repaired buildings, and opened new businesses in Waitsfield.

The community is exploring future wastewater treatment options, the use of the Old Methodist Church, and the reuse of the Flemer Barns. Most recently, town voters approved the construction of a new Town Office within the Village that will provide much needed space (out of the threat of floods) for town business.

The Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) was selected by the State of Vermont, Department of Housing and Community Development, Vermont Downtown Program in May 2013 to conduct a community planning and economic development charrette in Waitsfield. The V-DAT was comprised of experts in architecture, planning, landscape architecture, historic preservation, economic development, organizational structure, landscape architecture, engineering and community branding.

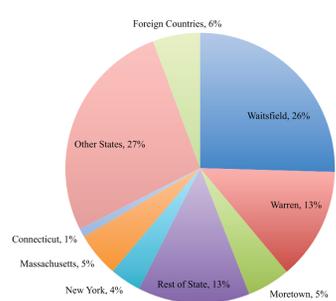
The V-DAT planning charrette operates on three key tenants: utilizing an asset based approach, addressing the community in a holistic manner, and conducting the exercise in a public forum.

## Market Opportunities

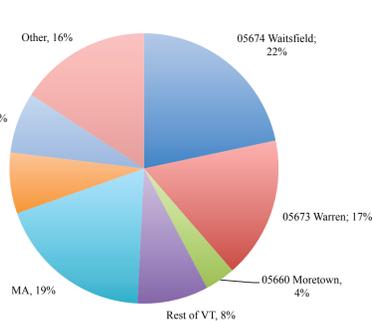
Two zip code surveys were held in Waitsfield to track customer visits to the community.

Waitsfield, Warren, and Moretown represented slightly over 40% of the visits to local businesses in both surveys. Regional visitors from Vermont comprised 13% of the customers in October and 8% in January. Nearby state visitors greatly increased in the winter months as ski season was in full play. Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut went from 10% of the visits collectively in October to 33% in January. Conversely, visitors from other states outside of the Northeast and international customers contributed 33% of recorded visits in October compared with only 16% in January. Ultimately, the visitor market remains equally strong in the fall and winter surveys but dramatically shifts from a broad market from across the nation to a much more compact regional market in New England.

Percentage of Visits by Location in October



Percentage of Visits by Location in January



## Project Funding and Support

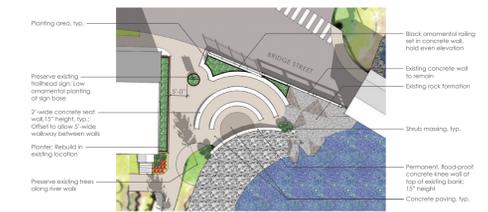
This project was supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery. The plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the State of Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development, the Division of Community Planning and Revitalization and the Town of Waitsfield. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of HUD or the State of Vermont. For more information on the Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) program and links to the detailed presentation and report for Waitsfield please visit [http://accd.vermont.gov/strong\\_communities/opportunities/revitalization/vdat](http://accd.vermont.gov/strong_communities/opportunities/revitalization/vdat) or call (802) 828-5229.



## Main Street Improvements/Traffic Calming

Waitsfield has successfully implemented a new sidewalk on the east side of Main Street and plans to continue improvements on the west side from Farr Lane to Old County Road. As additional enhancements are refined and implemented, the following should be considered:

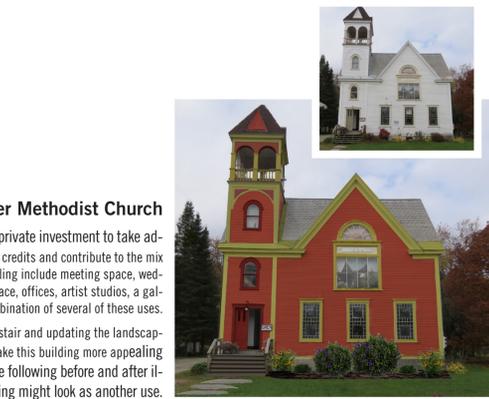
- Provide well-marked crosswalks at Main Street intersections, particularly at Bridge Street.
- Provide ornamental lighting.
- Provide street furnishings including benches and bike racks.
- Incorporate some segments of planting strips between the sidewalks and roadway between zones of parallel parking.
- Enhance entrance to public parking area opposite Bridge Street to narrow the pavement area at the entrance, providing shorter pedestrian crossing area as well as planting islands for canopy tree planting and low seasonal planting.
- As enhancements are being made to parking area entrance, incorporate electric vehicle charging stations into parking lot.
- Plant canopy shade tree planting behind sidewalk on easements within private property and within planting strip between curb and sidewalk where feasible and if permitted by VTRANS.
- Remove overgrowth at rock outcropping (near the Cottage Crescent area) to visually highlight this prominent natural feature



## Bridge Street Pocket Park

While the ultimate designs for the park are evolving, designs should consider the following:

- Continue to explore ways to minimize visual impact of overhead utility lines and utility pole on aesthetics of bridge, in coordination with Bridge Street streetscape improvements.
- Utilize the existing grade change to create a series of terraces that could also function as seating.
- Take advantage of long views down the river and avoid obstructions that might block these views.
- Consider the utilization of materials that both reflect the natural surroundings such as well placed stones to reflect the natural rock outcroppings, but will be resilient to future flood events.
- Provide for an information kiosk, particularly one that could advertise village events, businesses and attractions to users of the Mad River Path and visitors to the bridge.
- Provide areas for seasonal color.
- Consider cantilever decking to extend gathering area and create more dramatic opportunities to overlook the river if flood regulations allow.



## Former Methodist Church

Preserve the reuse of this structure for private investment to take advantage of state and federal historic tax credits and contribute to the mix of uses in the village. Ideal uses for the building include meeting space, wedding and event venues, classroom space, offices, artist studios, a gallery cooperative, restaurant or combination of several of these uses.

A new paint color scheme, new front stair and updating the landscaping are the few things that would make this building more appealing and inviting to potential tenants. The following before and after illustrations show how the building might look as another use.

## Cottage Crescent

Cottage Crescent represents one of the most unique and exciting opportunities to provide space for additional micro businesses that might have a small and specialized retail component (with potential to ship product around the country). This development would grow retail within the village core while enhancing the riverfront (provided the zoning is modified to allow commercial use). The concept would provide several retail cottages in an informal layout amidst the trees. The scale of the buildings reflects the existing cottage currently located on the property.



## The Waitsfield Brand

One of the important steps in establishing a brand is to understand the values for which it stands. The Waitsfield community rallies around the Great Eddy Covered Bridge and it is a natural symbol of the community. Moreover, it is a location that is not easily seen if traveling Main Street (Route 100) through the core of Waitsfield. The identity system pays homage to that and does several other important things:

- It reinforces that there is a center of Waitsfield and that it is historic.
- It fosters a connection to the Mad River itself and the Great Eddy Covered Bridge
- It quickly conveys that there is more to discover in Waitsfield

