



**Heart & Soul of Essex
Project Partner Meeting
June 5, 2013**

Executive Summary

On June 5, 2013, the Heart & Soul of Essex brought together our project partners to share the results of the Heart & Soul process so far, and to discuss ways to ensure that planning for the future incorporates the community's values (Local Economy, Health & Recreation, Community Connections, Education, Thoughtful Growth, & Safety). Over sixty Essex leaders participated in a series of lively and productive discussions at the First Congregational Church. Participants also enjoyed a delicious dinner featuring Nepalese food prepared by Sadhana Ruat.

"Hearing the common concerns from members of both the Town and Village was heartwarming. It was a fantastic event. Well organized and worthwhile."

Below are a few highlights from the meeting, followed by a meeting summary.

"This will be helpful to me in my decision-making and in my outreach to residents of Essex."

Meeting participants generated ideas to ensure that community values drive decision-making. Four strategies emerged.

- Create a set of tools that make it easy for leaders to incorporate community values into their planning.
- Continue to convene the community to keep them informed and engaged around values and related community activities
- Raise awareness about the values so they are widely known
- Seek local grant funding for start-up initiatives that are aligned with values.

Many project partners also express their intention to incorporate the community's values into their activities. Here are a few initial ideas from participants.

- Incorporate values in town planning
- Joint library planning & programming that is aligned with values
- Go to committee meetings and ask how decisions reflect values

"We will be incorporating these values into our new strategic plan..."

Of the 32 participants who filled out the follow-up evaluation, most report that the meeting was a good use of their time (96%). In addition, most people report having good understanding of the project (87%). All survey respondents say they are likely to incorporate community values into their decision making and planning (100%). To see the full survey, click here <http://svy.mk/12Qyjym>.

Meeting Summary

Make Connections

Participants discussed the prevalence of shared values identified by Heart & Soul of Essex (on a scale of 1 - 10, least to most prevalent). They also identified opportunities and challenges associated with each of the values.

<p>Local Economy Prevalence: 6</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1 million sq. ft. commercial space under development 2. Crescent connector 3. Business/school collaborations <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Challenges</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Traffic at 5 corners 2. Economic developers being at the table 	<p>Health & Recreation Prevalence: 8</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. increase bike paths/sidewalks to get town and village connected 2. Manage/plan for open spaces 3. Recreation study 4. Connect recreational values with zoning <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Challenges</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding 	<p>Community Connections Prevalence: 6 - 7</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coffee house/pub 2. Libraries 3 Free community sponsored events 4. Community Calendar 5. Welcome wagon 6. Maintaining diversity of options <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Challenges</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Money 2. Ensuring vitality of Essex Reporter
<p>Value: Education Prevalence: 8</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incoming "New" Americans 2. Outreach/service project beyond school-age (Y.A., Senior etc.) <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Challenges</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate & maintain value of education to community beyond those with school age children 	<p>Value: Thoughtful Growth Prevalence: 5</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public engagement/communication 2. Structure 3. Balance Economic Development (Business & Residential) 4. Collaboration between developers - public & private partnerships 5. Consider form and function (aesthetic planning) <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Challenges</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public involvement 2. Combined town & village planning 3. Being more proactive rather than reactive with planning 4. Disconnect with key stakeholders (developers, landlords, major employers, "land barons.") 	<p>Value: Safety Prevalence: 8.5</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased communication within neighborhoods 2. Bike/ped 3. Traffic calming <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Challenges</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connectivity funding

Identify Current Activities

Participants shared current activities that are well aligned with community values

Committees

Walk/Bike Committee
Recreation Advisory Council
Railroad Ave. recess committee (Safety)
School public safety committee
capital committee
bike/walk committee
Village wi-fi committee
SGA - Issues committee in school
Natural Playground/Summit PTO
Circ. alternate task force
Staff village planning, zoning & education
commission
Work on home energy challenge (energy
committee)
Railroad Ave Recess
Bikewalk committee
Teen Advisory Board

Communication

Irene's quarterly update
newsletter
Communication about value of Essex
Rescue
CCSU internal weekly newsletter
school communication newsletters and FPF
Calendar 2.0

Events

Photo history hikes (Thoughtful growth,
Local economy, Health & rec. Community
Connections, Education)
Five Corners Farmers Market (Local
Economy, Health & Rec, Community
Connections, Education, Thoughtful growth,
Safety)
Essex 250th Birthday
History Hikes
Memorial Day Parade
4th of July
Essex 1/2 marathon
Supporting "free" community events
5 corners farmers market
Chalk it up

(Events cont'd)

ADL Booth
Artist in residency
Flowers for relay for life
Trivia night at Lincoln Inn
Shows @ Fairgrounds and the fair
Train Hop
1st Wednesdays
Book discussions
Art exhibits
Parent Dialogue Nights
Book sales
Promo summer reading
Book discussion sets
History Tour
Food pantry
Concerts at Congregational church

Infrastructure

Maple St. Bike Park (Health & Rec, Safety,
Local Economy)
Amtrak station renovation
Police facility
bike/ped access to Maple St.
Housing
Town/Village connectivity trails;
? x% low income/incentive
Solar Farm
trail clearing
Bike/ped grant
Crescent connector
multi-use safety path RFP
Pearl St. bike/ped (fire st. shopping area)
Storm water funding/addressing this issue
Affordable housing
Walking path Central Ave. to North St.
(Thoughtful growth, Health & Rec,
Community connections, Education,)
Little Free Library (building, painting)
Little Free Library (building, painting)
IBM master plan for industrial development

Partnerships

EHSPN (EHS sports network)(Community connections, Health & rec, economy)
(Partnerships cont'd)
Collaboration between public works dept.
Partnerships that work (Rotary & Economic development)
Rotary
Hosting tech @ Essex meetup
Farm to table
Village rep for Transportation Advisory Committee and Planning Advisory Committee
work w/ United Way- Chittenden County
Healthy Youth Coalition
Farm to school
Adopting a school
Vermont Library Association inclusion

People

School resource officer
Small business owners
Civic Participation
Superintendent search
Heart and Soul facilitation
Farmers market support
Community service
CHIPS leadership
Use of Essex shops, rec

Policy

Shared manager
Staffing on local committees

(Policy cont'd)

Zoning re-examination
Village & Town Planning/Zoning regulations
Saxon Hill
Citizen cider (efforts to keep in Essex)
Wellness policy
development review
large community issues (Saxon Hill)
municipal plan (Village)
Municipal guide for climate action
conservation design subdivision regulations
CCSU school board- common core curriculum & assesment
State legislature: Opiate addiction bill, flexible pathways (alternate ways to get through HS), assess mental health services available in schools
Strategic planning
Assessing Difference between Essex
Free/Brownell
conservation development

Programs

Neighborhood Watch (Safety, Community Connections)
Project North lands
Highway Safety
Gun Safety/Domestic violence
Community garden
Heart & Soul
Knitting group
Welcome wagon
Mentoring
Interlibrary loan

Community Values and Decision-Making

Participants discussed ways to incorporate community values into their work.

- **Incorporate values/guidelines in town planning**
 - Look at components of planning documents & see how values are affected
 - Try to make community engagement around town plans easier/user friendly – inform people about town plans
 - Plan for extreme weather events in ways that take our values into account
- **Library planning**
 - Joint planning
 - Make sure library programming is aligned with values
- **Go to committee meetings and ask how decisions reflect values**

Participants shared ideas for things Heart & Soul of Essex can do to facilitate the inclusion of community values in decision-making and planning.

- **Create a set of tools that make it easy for leaders to incorporate community values into their planning.**
 - Create scorecard to evaluate decisions based on values
 - Come up with a key question to help us focus on the values (i.e. “Is it value appropriate?”)
 - Have values visible and available in list form
 - Have specific examples as well as questions and a process for incorporating values in decision-making
 - Make sure whatever we create is accessible – include examples of specific actions
- **Continue to convene the community to keep them informed and engaged around values and related community activities**
 - Keep in touch with H & S participants when issues come up that they should know about
 - Maintain communications channels with H & S participants – find ways to inform people and gather input
 - Need mechanism to decide when values need to be refreshed
 - Quarterly community dinner to gather input and inform people about issues
- **Raise awareness about the values so they are widely known**
 - Advertise and reinforce values (repeat the message)
 - Visit Essex planning commission and let them know about H & S
 - Annual award for each of the values (Heart & Souly)
- **Seek local grant funding for start-up initiatives that that are aligned with values.**