

Lexington Hamlet Revitalization

February 24th, 2018 PUBLIC PRESENTATION MEETING MINUTES

Steering members – John Berger (town supervisor), Brad Jenkins (town councilman), Lynn Byrne (SWAC representative), Judd Weisberg (fisheries guide, SWAC representative), Suzanne McCabe and Paula Heisen (homeowners, 13A), Carl Giangrande (town code enforcement officer). **Others** - Ian Law and Mike Frederick (PLACE Alliance consultants); Keira Ritter (Keira Ritter Design Co.); and Michelle Yost (GCSWCD WAP)

Walk n' Talk: *9am-10am*

- The public asked whether we would be including prospective costs of the properties that we are including in our design concepts
 - We explained that we are the step that comes before any cost assessments
 - We also explained that the purpose of our workshop was to masterplan the Hamlet and get community 'buy-in' so when the time comes to find private investors or go after grants there would be a framework to strive for
- The director of the property has been showing the Ensemble Studio Property, including the Lexington House, to potential buyers
 - As we understand, they do not see a future in hosting programs on site anymore and are purely looking to offload the property
- We stressed the importance of civic buildings and quality green space (quintessential Hamlet common) within close proximity to the heart of the Hamlet
- It was expressed that this area gets heavy traffic as a by-pass along with 13a
 - There needs to be traffic calming measures put in place, many believed taking the heavy vegetation at the Ensemble Studio Property along Rt. 42 would go a long way in slowing vehicle speeds along that bend in the road
- The condition of the barn on the Ensemble Studio property is believed to be in good shape however the dormitories and house on site appear to be in disrepair and are too far gone
- Participants questioned why no acting board members joined us for the Walk n' Talk

Public Brainstorming Session: *10am-12:30pm*

- One of the early conversations regarding the Hamlet was its walkability and what that word really means (how comfortable someone feels)
 - We don't believe its necessary to have sidewalks given its density but many people made it clear that when vehicles use the Hamlet as a by-pass, especially 13a, they travel at speeds that make pedestrians walking on the side of the road feel unsafe
 - This is something that will be important to revisit as the Hamlet grows
- Participants expressed the need for more senior services within the Hamlet as there aren't any current resources for the aging population
- It was expressed that over time they have seen young people express a desire to live here and operate business within the Hamlet but there aren't any opportunities for them to do so

- Participants made it clear there is no current definable center of activity within the Hamlet
 - There is a possibility for a 'constellation of centers' throughout the Hamlet given the culture/history of certain properties and the potential for economic ventures on others
- It was expressed that the Hamlet and the Town as a whole do not need much, they just need enough to be able to function in a sustainable way
 - We cant afford to let Lexington become a 'dead town'
- Some of the private business ventures people would like to see in town included:
 - Ice Cream Shop
 - Brewery, given a successful precedent in Spruceton
 - General Store
 - Outdoor Outfitter
 - Cut-Flower Farm
 - 'Iconic' Restaurant, or culinary presence that would attract top-notch chefs
 - Indoor/outdoor facility to host events
 - Agrotourism
 - Food/Kitchen 'Incubator' – Provides solutions and support for start-up businesses and allows them to grow without the burden of purchasing equipment/facilities at the onset
 - Animal Rescue, non-profit
- What would it take to make Lexington a destination?
- "Honor the past, embrace the future"
- One way to attract young people, young families, and potential business owners would be to ensure they are digitally connected through the internet
 - From a visitor or weekender standpoint, it helps extend their weekend with the potential to work from 'home' for an extra day or two
- One of the most important topics to come out of this brainstorming session was the potential relocation of critical care facilities out of the floodplain as the route to funding is clear and the Hamlet is currently lacking a concentration of civic buildings within the core
- There was a conversation regarding the introduction of design guidelines within the Hamlet for home and business owners
 - Participants felt that is necessary to achieve a shared community vision
 - Design Guidelines vs. Design Standards – which has more 'teeth', but has to be done in a way that isn't oppressive enough to detract future investment
 - Hunter has an architectural review board that has been crucial in instilling a collective standard
 - Need to confirm whether it is in an advisory or compensatory capacity
- Our concepts need to capture the vast cycling community within the area
- The artisan community is very important to the culture of Lexington and has been brought up multiple times throughout this process
- There was a good conversation regarding the time and effort that it takes to run the farmer's market and what it might take to host it in a more central location to the Hamlet – As it stands there needs to be more involved to make that a reality

Design Review Presentation:***6pm-8:15pm***

- Overall the concepts were successful in conveying the essence of Lexington's culture and history
- The feedback for the concepts/ideas were overwhelming positive
- The general consensus was that the General Store was the most important project to get momentum going for Hamlet revitalization
- Structural/Cost Feasibility studies need to be conducted for both the Lexington Hotel and the Lexington House
- *Site 1: Post Office/Rt.23a Intersection Feedback*
 - Receptive of moving the Town Hall to this location
 - Receptive of the introduction of a classic general store to this location
 - Post Office building would remain and still function as such
 - This area should also try to offer opportunities for smaller business owners – we reserved an area in this design for more growth
 - This area will be very important to introduce design guidelines/standards as it will act as the gateway to the community
- *Site 2: Lexington Hotel Property*
 - Receptive of the idea to move it across the street, out of the floodzone, if structurally possible
 - Within this concept it will be possible to capture the charm of the history of the building
 - This led to a discussion regarding preservation/relocation vs. removal
 - Is there funding available to do so through the Watershed Assistance Program?
– short answer: no
 - Receptive of repurposing the old post office building (adjacent to the existing Lexington Hotel Location) as an ice cream shop
 - Receptive of creating river overlook at street level within the existing foundation of the Lexington Hotel
 - Receptive of the concept that places 3 residential units within the vacant property at the Rt. 13a/Rt.42 intersection
- *Site 3: Ensemble Studio Property*
 - This location itself is viewed as a great asset but a potential draw back is the grade of the slope and the fact that it is hidden
 - Needs traffic calming – any potential intervention should slow traffic due to the increased activity in that area
 - The presented concept was widely viewed as a potential destination
 - The concept seems practical for the nature of the community
 - Creating an artisan gallery/retail/maker-space community in this location could provide the opportunity to 'browse' and creates the economic power of being in a 'district'
 - The Lexington House would be a crucial historic anchor to be restored as an boarding house, event space, etc.
 - Receptive of repurposing the barn and making it the architectural anchor/highlight of the proposed development

Next Steps:

- Steering Committee Meeting
 - Review the workshop and the concepts presented
 - Develop a strategy of focus for a priority project
- Draft Preferred Concept Plan
 - Based on Steering Committee feedback
 - Prepare preliminary cost estimates
- Finalize Preferred Concept Plan/Estimate
- Draft Action Plan Matrix
 - Identify grants and programs to assist making priority projects a reality