

St. Johnsbury Charrette 2001:  
A Community Planning and Design Workshop

April 26, 2001

Sponsored by:  
Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects  
in conjunction with the Town of St. Johnsbury, Vermont  
Planning Association, and the American Institute of Architects.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report documents the fifth annual community design charrette held on April 26, 2001 in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. The focus of the design charrette was to identify design concepts that unify the downtown area and create memorable gateways into downtown in order for residents and visitors to engage with the commerce, civic life, and cultural activity in St. Johnsbury.

Before we move on, what is a charrette? The term "charrette" originally derived from the famed design school L'ecole de Beaux Artes in Paris. For over 300 years, students at the L'ecole have referred to the cart that collected the creations of multiple artists at the culmination of each assignment. As it is French, the term "charrette" expanded to "I am the wagon" as deadlines loomed. Today, the term is used to describe an intensive design workshop. Charrettes are designed to stimulate ideas and involve the public in a dynamic planning/design process that is short and intensive. It is a valuable tool that sets a foundation to develop a more formal plan. A charrette is not a substitute for the formal planning and design process, but can be integral with it to focus ideas and priorities.



### Special Thanks goes to:

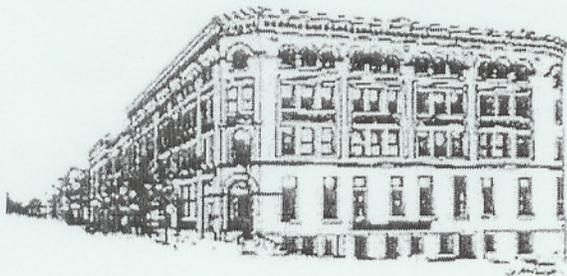
Mike Welch, Town Manager, St. Johnsbury, Vermont  
Alison Meaders, Downtown Program Coordinator  
Joel Swartz, Economic Coordinator  
Alan Boye, Bike Path, Lyndon State College  
David Jacobs, VT-ASLA President  
Robert White, VT-ASLA Past President  
Nat Goodhue, VT-ASLA, Community Outreach

The Vermont Planning Association, the American Institute of Architects, participating Design Professionals, and the supporting residents of St. Johnsbury, Vermont.

To learn more about St. Johnsbury Charrette 2001: A Community Planning and Design Workshop or to find out how your community could be involved with a charrette process, please contact the Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects at:

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Editors: Dave Jacobs, Robert White, and Nat Goodhue,  
Terry Boyle.



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*Aerial Photo of Downton St. Johnsbury and surrounding area (Vermont Mapping Company).*

NORTH

## INTRODUCTION

On a cold winter night in January 2000, St. Johnsbury lost part of its downtown heart. A disastrous fire destroyed several buildings on Railroad Street, leaving the commercial center of the town in pieces. In the ensuing months, the town rallied, the State of Vermont stepped-in, and plans began to form and rebuild the city center.

With the surprise of a spring snowstorm, those plans snowballed into a tremendous force of energy and devotion, benefiting one of northern Vermont's most diverse and rich communities. Over the course of the next year, the town was designated an official Vermont Downtown, with access to \$1 million in State Redevelopment Funds. Grants were received for streetscape improvements and private businesses responded with their own initiatives. The town schools embarked on a major renovation at the eastern end of town and St. Johnsbury Academy proceeded with a new fine arts center. As a further demonstration of unity and involvement, the town, the St. Johnsbury Atheneum, Catamount Arts Center and the Fairbanks Museum united in a planning process for new town and cultural facilities. The town of St. Johnsbury currently has an enormous number of projects underway. These projects are devoted to the revitalization of the downtown along with peripheral projects that will have an indirect impact on the downtown area.

The Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects joined this flurry of activity to benefit St. Johnsbury. The VT ASLA quickly discovered that the "crisis" of that January fire had been extinguished. In fact, the town was well tended to with almost 25 public and private projects under way to reclaim St. Johnsbury's prosperity and liveliness. However, as Landscape Architect Robert White stated, "After consulting with members of the community, we determined that there were areas yet to be envisioned for their greater potential. We wanted to contribute to the overall vitality of the downtown area by unifying it with a greater sense of identity."

In March 2001, the working relationship between VT ASLA and town officials evolved. Selected officials from the town and committee members of VT ASLA held a meeting (see appendix for meeting agenda). The result of the meeting was very positive as goals and objectives for the town were identified. As VT ASLA Outreach Committee Head Nat Goodhue states, "A vision for downtown St. Johnsbury is based on the goal of bringing people back to the center. After nearly three decades of gradual decline in our town centers, we need to start exploring ways of reclaiming downtown as centers of commerce, civic life, cultural activity, education, recreation and desirable places to live". Alison Meaders, the Downtown Program Coordinator for St. Johnsbury states, "We need to look at ways to eliminate the physical, psychological, and social barriers that exist in St. Johnsbury between "uptown", "downtown", and other areas in order to create a fully functional and united town center.

In order to accomplish this goal, town officials and charrette organizers identified (3) priority areas. They were: connections between uptown and downtown, gateways to

downtown, and connections to the River/Railroad corridor.

On April 26, 2001, over 25 professionals-including landscape architects, engineers, developers, graphic designers, architects, planners, and municipal representatives-volunteered a long day of thought, observation and talent to address St. Johnsbury's challenges. Charrette participants divided into (3) groups, corresponding to the (3) priority areas and, were asked to accomplish the following objectives:

Identify and design four gateways to downtown that create a sense of arrival, slow down vehicular traffic, and invite people to linger, shop, and socialize.

Connect "uptown" (Main Street) with "downtown" (Railroad Street) in a way that facilitates circulation between the two areas and contributes to the revitalization of the town's business/mixed use district.

Explore ways to transform the railroad and river corridor into an attractive destination with recreational parkland and trails, commerce, and multiple means of transportation. As Robert White stated specifically to this area, "The riverfront in St. Johnsbury is an untapped resource by all measures".

The following chapters of the report document site observations, conceptual design alternatives, specific opportunities and graphic illustrations prepared by the three teams. The information that follows contains an abundance of findings and recommendations for use by the town and its citizens.

## “UPTOWN” AND “DOWNTOWN”

### Team Members:

Elizabeth Cadwell, Landscape Architect  
Jeff Owen, Planner  
Jake Owens, Landscape Architect  
Mike McCrory, Landscape Architect  
Jim Nichols, Architect  
Ann Lawless, St. Johnsbury Atheneum  
Kevin Grenier, Architect  
Alan MacNaughton, Architect  
Diane Gayer, Architect



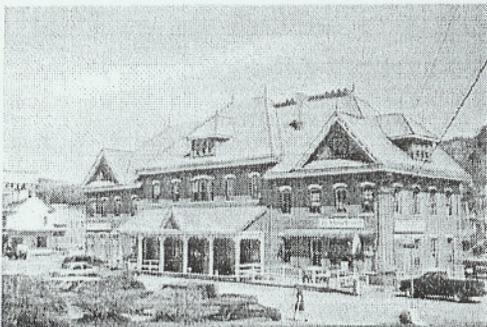
*Aerial Photo of Downtown St. Johnsbury with group study area highlighted (Vermont Mapping Company). (1) Atheneum, (2) Depot.*

NORTH

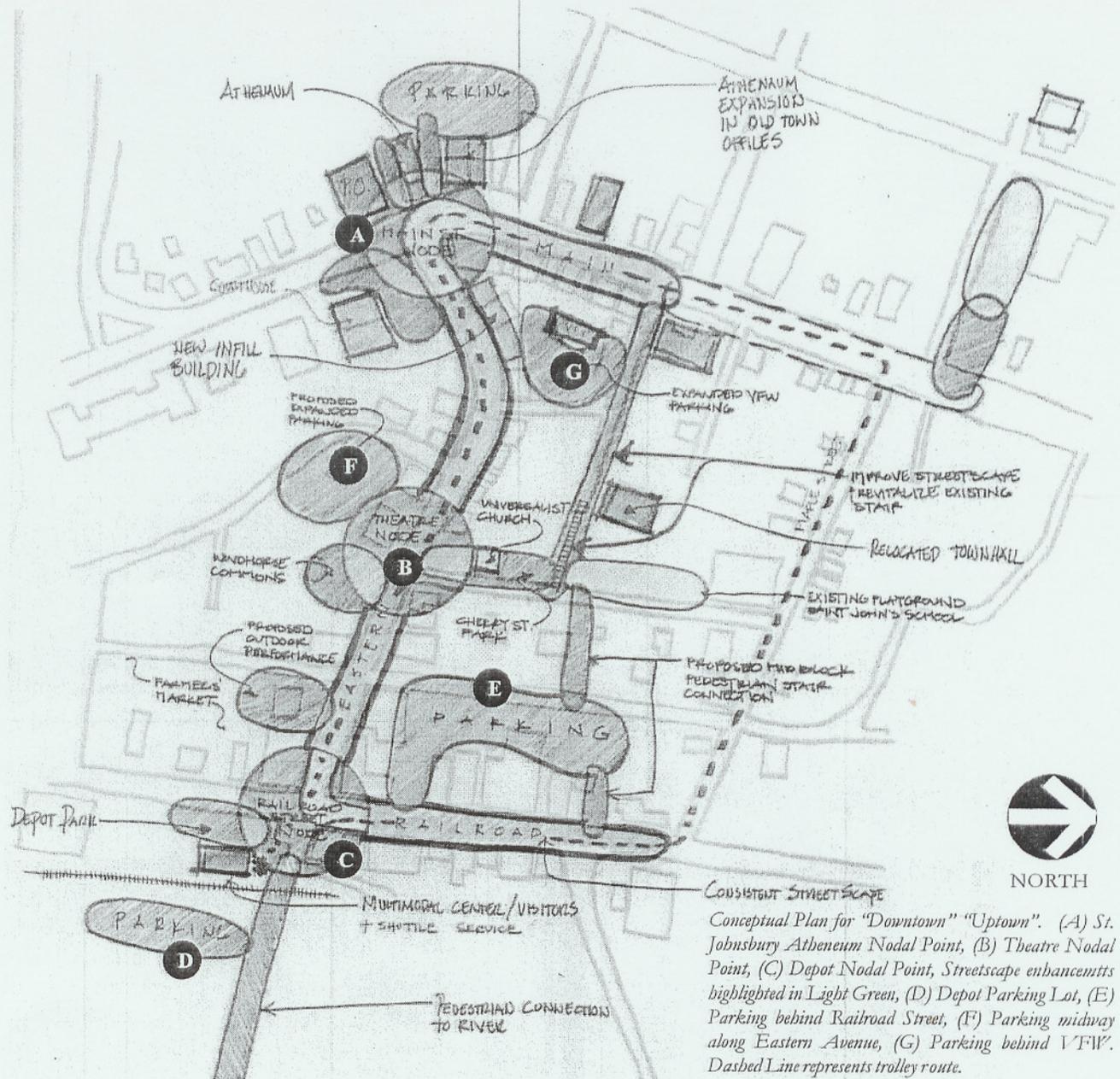
## SITE OBSERVATIONS

Standing near the entrance to the Atheneum **1**, you can imagine the beautiful view down along Historic Main Street. If you turn and look down Eastern Avenue, most of St. Johnsbury's downtown spreads before you, cascading from the hilltop promontory of Main Street to the valley below. However, after gravity has had its effect, drawing you downward to Railroad Street and the Depot **2**, you are now faced by the reality of "what goes down - must go up". Such is the dilemma of St. Johnsbury - a dual existence of the town on the hill and the town in the valley. When you stand near the entrance to the Depot, the view is daunting and the gradient of Eastern Avenue is an intimidating climb.

The "Uptown" and "Downtown" districts of St. Johnsbury have been separated from each other as long as anyone can remember. Like two positive charges, these two areas are adjacent to each other, but have always seemed to push each other apart. As time and change came to St. Johnsbury, the relationship between "Uptown" and "Downtown" became even more strained. Once, Eastern Avenue was a continuous streetscape of dramatic buildings containing commercial, offices, and apartments. However, many of those buildings that formed a continuous thread of the community, have fallen apart. Such was the challenge of the charrette group, tasked with rebuilding the uptown and downtown connections along Eastern Avenue.



*The Depot located at the intersection of Eastern Avenue and Railroad Street. Labeled (2) on Aerial Photo above.*



## DESIGN CONCEPT

The "Uptown" to "Downtown" group envisioned a unified town center that would be tied together through the development of three main nodal points. Nodal points are areas of activity and/or a recognizable landmark. For example, the Athenaeum and immediate surroundings is a nodal point. Supporting the nodal points, the group suggested the design of consistent streetscapes, available parking, enhanced circulation, and "cascades" of small intimate parks that act as places for gathering, socializing, and rest, similar to "pools" that pace a stream through a mountain valley.

Three main nodal points along Eastern Avenue would be the main organizing element to connect "Uptown" and "Downtown". The first nodal point would be focused around the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum **(A)**. The second nodal point would be situated midway on Eastern Avenue **(B)**. This nodal point would act as a Theatre Node, involving Catamount Arts Center and would be surrounded by two small intimate parks offering respite for pedestrians. The last nodal point would be the Depot **(C)**. The group agreed that developing the Depot into a Multi-Modal/Visitor Center would initiate a balance between the Athenaeum in "Uptown" and the area known as "Downtown". These three nodal points would initiate the connection and feed the unified vision for St. Johnsbury.

## SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

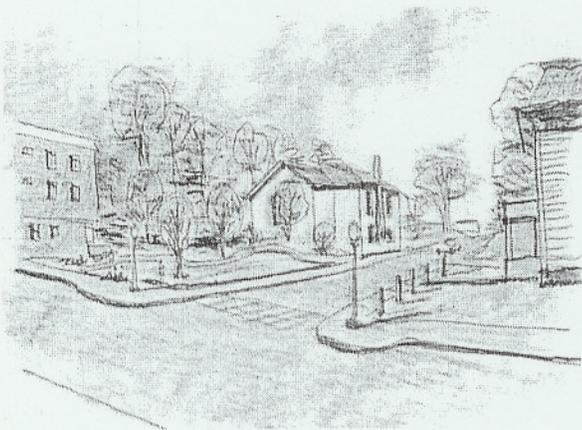
Streetscape enhancements along Main Street, Eastern Avenue, and Railroad Street would link the nodal points together. The streetscapes of St. Johnsbury are certainly not sub par with historic architectural facades and adequate sidewalks for pedestrians. However, elements such as street trees, light fixtures, and benches would provide better pedestrian amenities while enhancing the existing architecture.

Along with enhancing the streetscapes, available parking became a necessity. If people are to utilize the downtown, they need access and parking. The group recommended four main parking areas: the depot parking lot **D**, behind Railroad Street **E**, midway along Eastern Avenue **F**, and behind the VFW **G** (see Conceptual Plan on p5).

Pedestrian circulation is important in a downtown area. One circulation solution is to provide a secondary pedestrian way, which would traverse the hill with staircases. This pathway would provide an intimate setting while allowing pedestrian to move through St. Johnsbury's Downtown. Along with the pedestrian way, the group also offered the possibility of initiating a shuttle bus loop that would travel up Eastern Avenue along Main Street and down Maple Street.

A final opportunity involves small intimate parks along Eastern Avenue that would provide numerous amenities for citizens and visitors of St. Johnsbury. These pocket parks would provide relief from the hardscape elements of the street, places to socialize and gather, and would be connected to the Theatre Node, allowing places for people and outdoor performances.

The above opportunities would provide support for the nodal points and strengthen the "uptown" "downtown" relationship.



*Pocket Park at Eastern Ave and Cherry Street. Supporting the Theatre Node.*



*Streetscape enhancements suggested for Main Street, Eastern Ave, and Railroad Street.*

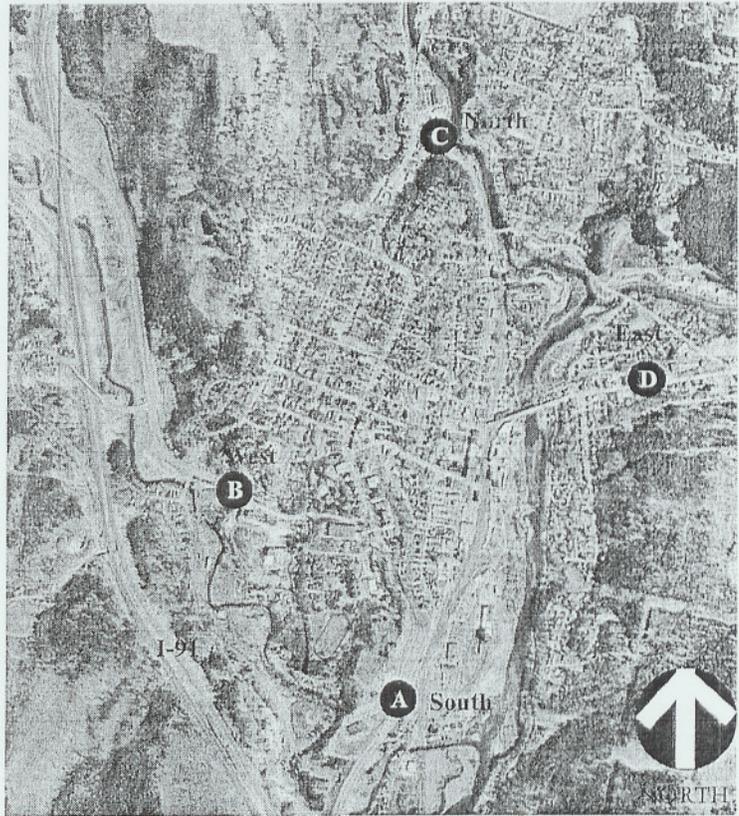


*Reconstructed Pedestrian Staircase providing through block access. See Conceptual Plan on p.5*

## GATEWAYS INTO ST. JOHNSBURY

### Team Members

Kathleen Ryan, Landscape Architect  
Audrey Augustin, Graphic Designer  
Jane Brown, Landscape Architect  
Keith Chamberlin, Graphic Designer  
Adam Portz, Landscape Architect  
Mike Buscher, Landscape Architect  
Robert White, Landscape Architect  
Dave Jacobs, Landscape Architect  
Scott Fortney, Planner  
Monroe Whitaker, Landscape Architect



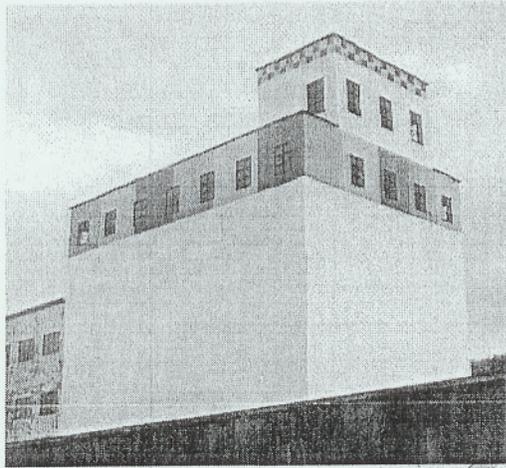
*Aerial Photo of Downtown St. Johnsbury with group study areas highlighted and Gateways labeled (Vermont Mapping Company).*

St. Johnsbury is a notable town along the I - 91 corridor. There are (3) exits serving St. Johnsbury: Route 5 South **A**, Route 2 West **B**, Route 5 North **C**, and Route 2 East **D**, which enters St. Johnsbury off I-93 as one travels along Portland Street. As entrances to the downtown, Route 2 and Route 5 are prominent locations for visitors as well as regional residents to access the downtown.

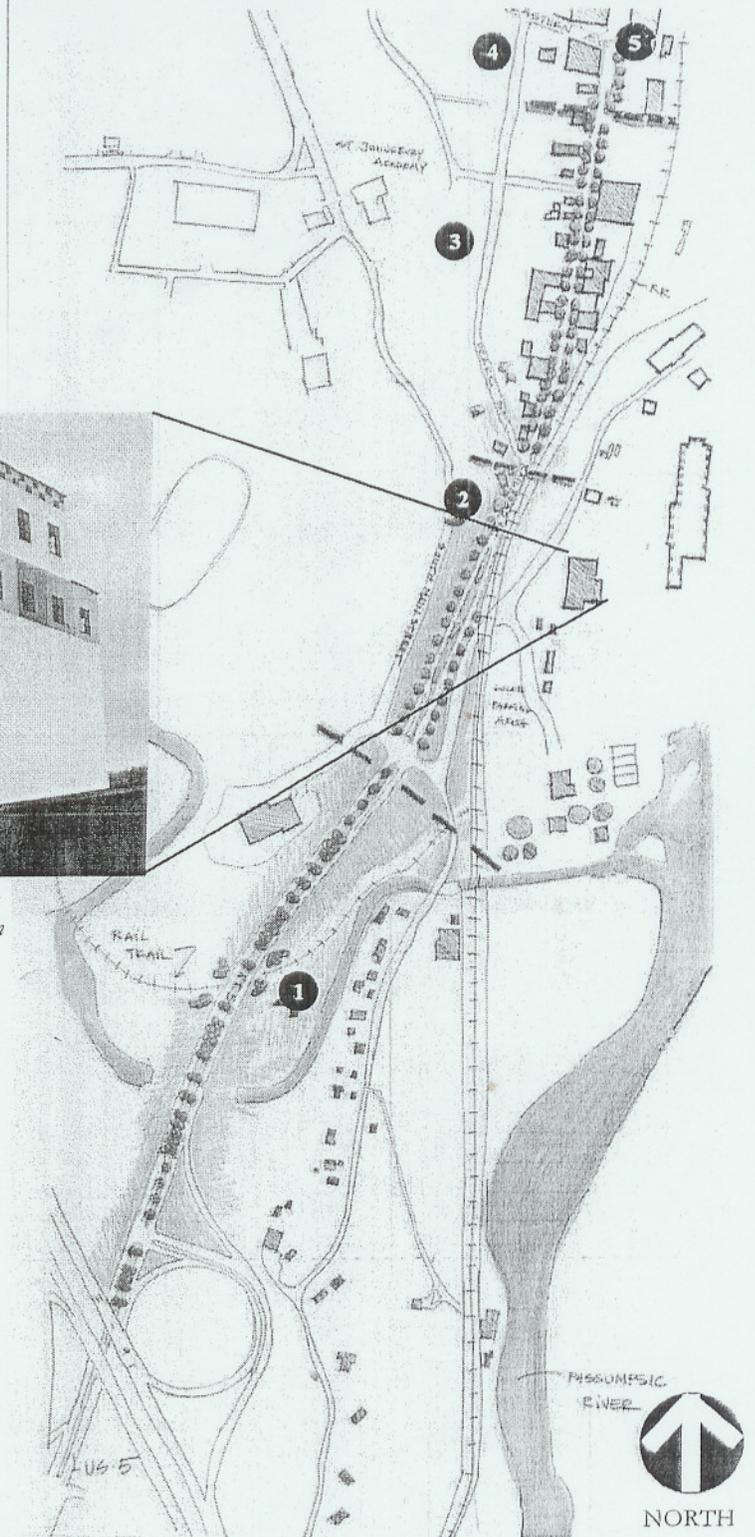
The entry roads into St. Johnsbury share common problems that detract from the visual and experiential arrival into St. Johnsbury. As perceived by the gateway design teams, these points of entry are unrealized potentials. In addition, the roads that enter the downtown area are more like state highways than attractive civic streets. These roads promote fast highway-like-driving and are overbuilt with too many traffic lanes at the expense of the attractiveness and safety of the experience entering St. Johnsbury.

Improvements to the gateways of St. Johnsbury's downtown will make for a safer experience entering the downtown area and heighten the sense of anticipation coming to St. Johnsbury - a place of dignity and grace. From this realization, two teams went to work on design concepts for the Southern, Western, Northern, and Eastern Gateways to downtown St. Johnsbury.

# THE SOUTHERN GATEWAY



*Graphic Scheme for the former Grain Plant presented by K. Chamberlin of Flek Design*



*Southern Gateway Conceptual Plan. (1) Widened median allowing boulevard effect, (2) and (3) Defined driveway access points, curb cuts, and better definition of on street parking, and (4) Improve Sidewalk system providing better pedestrian access, (5) Depot Nodal Point discussed in previous section*

## DESIGN CONCEPT

The design team for this area focused on the transformation of paved areas to landscaped areas with the removal of unnecessary travel lanes. The space gained would allow the center median to be widened such that a line of street trees could be planted in a generous boulevard design, making a dramatic landscaped entrance to the town ①.

Reduction of the motor vehicle travel lane width in village areas is one of many traffic calming techniques. The Agency of Transportation publishes a wide range of Traffic Calming techniques for towns and villages to adapt in order to create more opportunities for all users to safely share the roadway (AOT). The design team recommended several of these techniques. It was also noted in group discussion that there is 5% mortality in pedestrian accidents when vehicles are traveling 20 mph versus a 80% mortality in pedestrian accidents at 40 mph. Reverting Route 5 to a safe boulevard or parkway like entrance to downtown was the primary concept for the group.

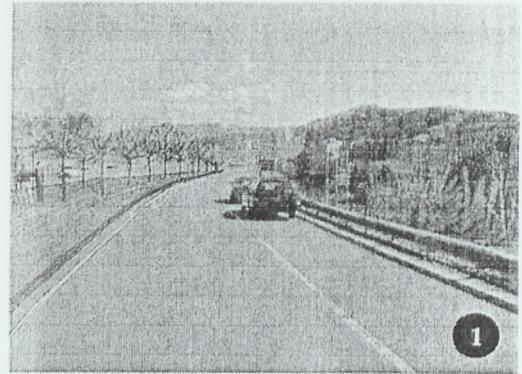
## SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

As the road enters the downtown area ② and ③, improved definition of driveway access points, narrowing curb cuts, and better definition of on-street parking was highly recommended. Sidewalks need much improvement. A complete sidewalk system with cross walks will allow pedestrians to safely travel throughout St. Johnsbury, making Railroad Street more pedestrian friendly. This would provide people improved access to some of the businesses in that area of the downtown ④.

Some of the buildings could also contribute to the enhancement of the gateway. A handsome graphic, scheme for the former grain plant was presented by Keith Chamberlin of Flek Design with great enthusiasm.

The concepts for improvements to roadway corridors and gateways could be readily funded through Transportation funds from VTrans (Vermont Agency of Transportation), either through NVDA (Northern Vermont Development Association) or the Vtrans Enhancements Program. Each gateway will require an engineering analysis of the safety and appropriateness of the lane reductions so that safety and efficiency of the road will not be compromised.

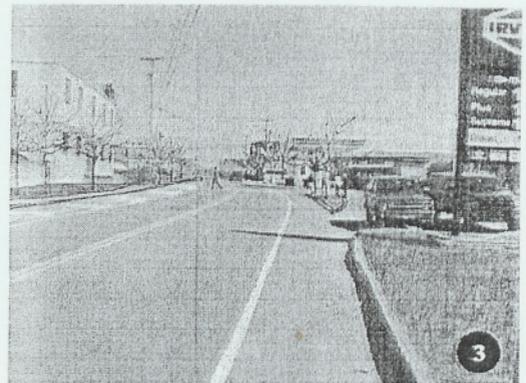
The benefit of the "Uptown" and "Downtown" group establishing a nodal point at the Depot offers a terminus for the Southern Gateway and strengthens the sense of arrival to St. Johnsbury ⑤.



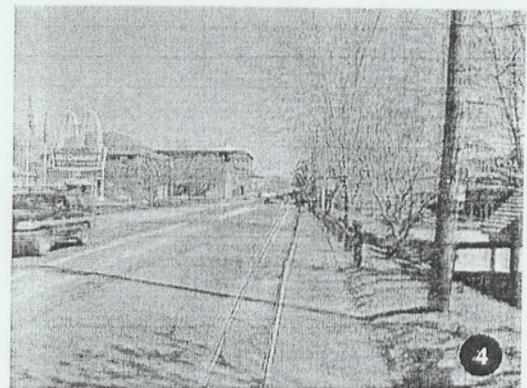
*Widened median allowing boulevard effect.*



*Defined driveway access points, curb cuts, and better definition of on street parking.*

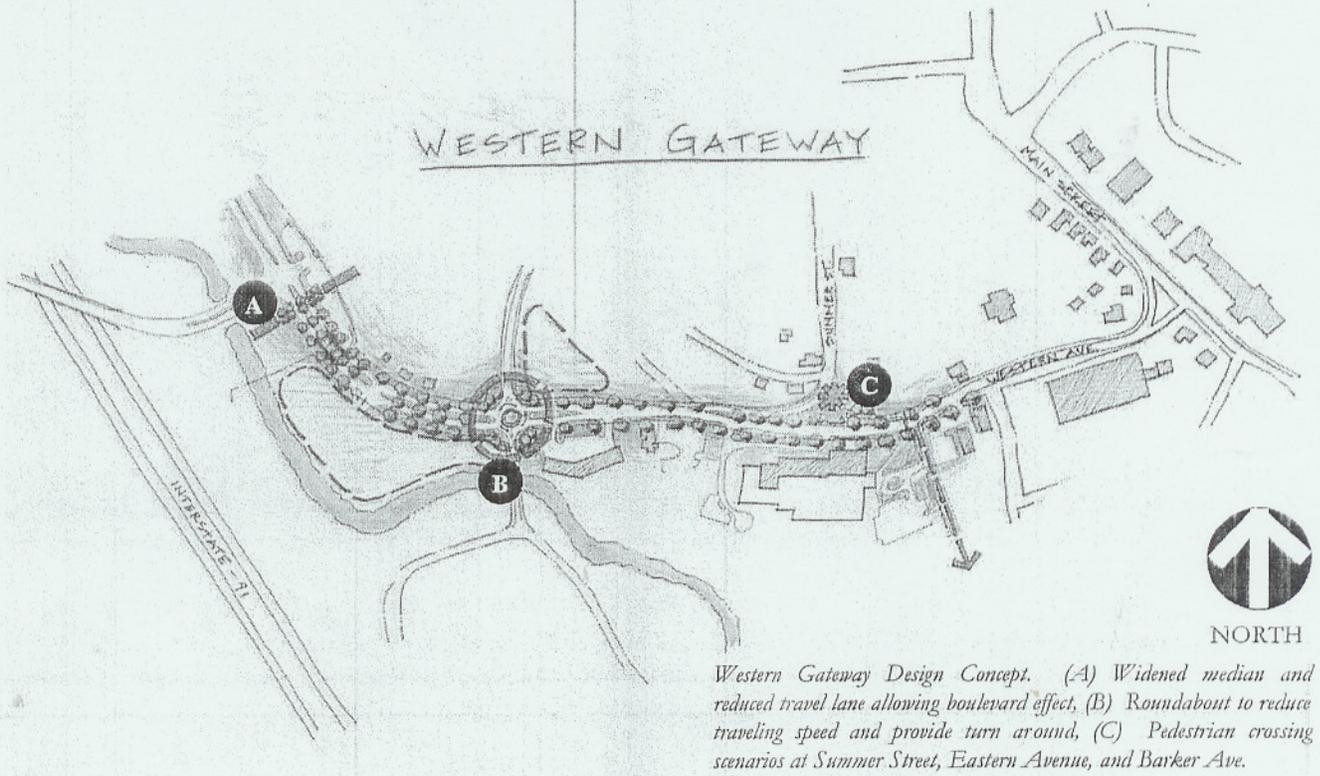


*Defined driveway access points, curb cuts, and better definition of on street parking.*



*Improved sidewalk system providing better pedestrian access*

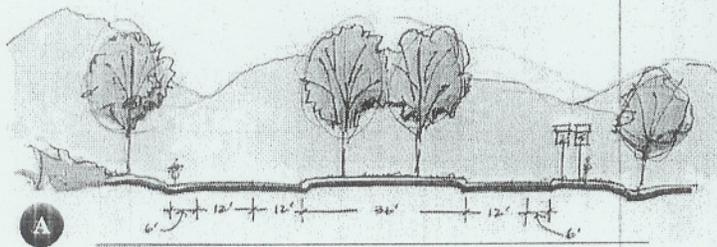
## THE WESTERN GATEWAY



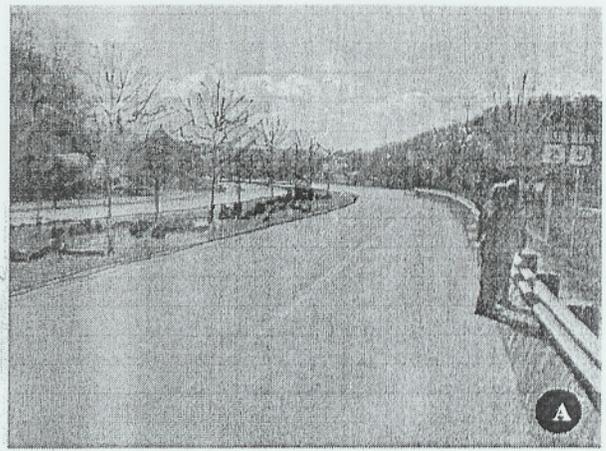
### DESIGN CONCEPT

Route 2 has some of the region's most severe speeding problems and the entrance to St. Johnsbury from the west is noteworthy in this concern. Slowing traffic to a safe speed was the paramount concern of the western gateway team. Also noted was the development of the new combined St. Johnsbury Elementary and Middle School building being developed on the edge of the downtown along Western Avenue, down the hill from Summer Street.

This team, similar to the Southern Gateway team, decided that Route 2 also needed adjustments to the roadway width, and reduced the number of lanes entering the town while strategically placing turning lanes. Many other interchanges along I-91 share similar problems and have been found to be "overbuilt", thus the loss of lanes has little bearing on the loss of roadway function, and in some cases, the larger faster road is more dangerous than a single lane road would be. The plan advocates space for a median and improvement to sidewalks. This would slow cars down, improve safety for children approaching the school, and make space for improved landscaping.



Section: Widened median and reduced travel lane allowing boulevard effect



Widened median and reduced travel lane allowing boulevard effect

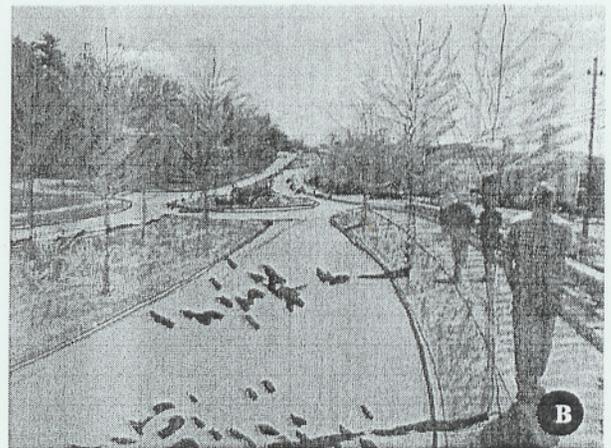
## SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

The team also looked at the possibility of a roundabout at the intersection of Route 2 and High Street. This diversion would slow vehicle speeds to below 25 mph as cars approached the school **B**. Additionally, the roundabout would allow school buses coming from downtown a place to turn around and head west. This would allow a right hand turn into the renovated school and prevent traffic congestion along Western Avenue.

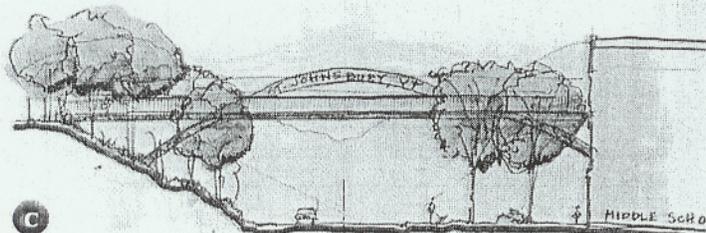
Additional concepts provided by the group suggested two alternatives for the school area. First, a staircase/walkway cascading down the hill from the top of Summer Street. The second concept called for a pedestrian bridge spanning Western Avenue and connecting directly to the Middle School. The Pedestrian Bridge could also serve as a entry gate marking the arrival to St. Johnsbury **C**. These two alternatives create a safer environment for the students of St. Johnsbury and pedestrians alike.

Finally the team felt that enhancing the park and ride located on Route 2 would provide a destination point, serving commuter and bicyclist parking before their travels along the Lamoille Valley Rail Corridor.

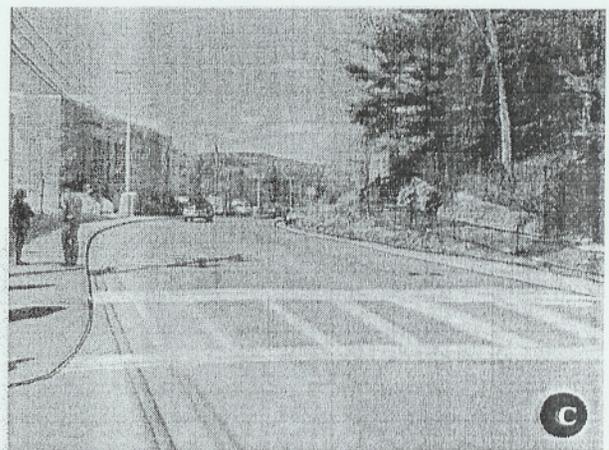
The above efforts proposed by the design team would define and calm highway traffic, reduce traveling speeds, and provide a safe entry to St. Johnsbury.



Roundabout to reduce traveling speed and provide turn around.

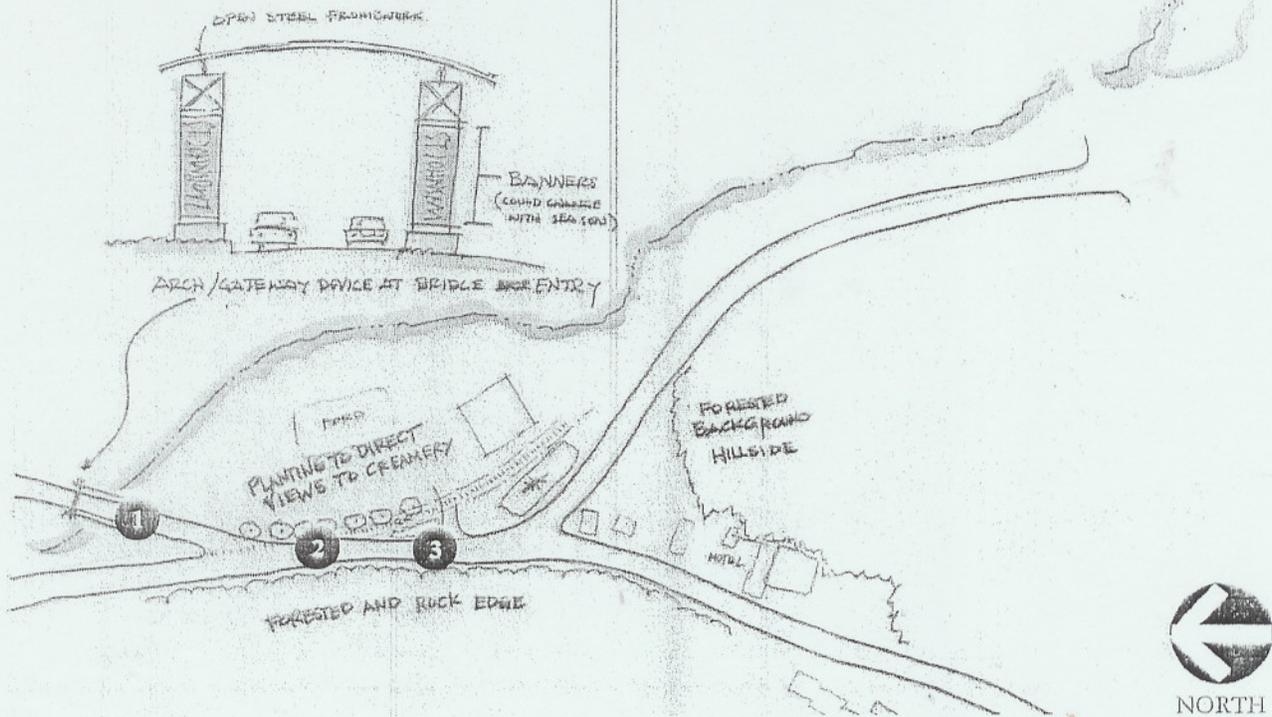


Pedestrian bridge at Summer Street and Eastern Avenue



Pedestrian crossing scenarios at Summer Street, Eastern Avenue, and Barker Ave.

# THE NORTHERN GATEWAY



Northern Gateway Conceptual Plan. (1) Location of Archway Structure, (2) Sign location, (3) Improved streetscape character.

## DESIGN CONCEPT

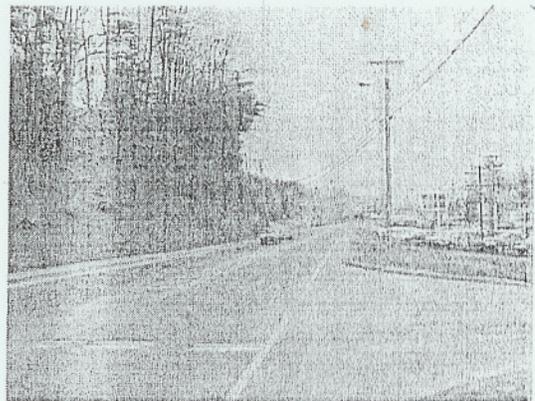
Approaching St. Johnsbury from the north offers a different experience than the previous gateways. After you exit I-91, you travel through a commercial strip area until you reach the juncture of Hastings Hill and Railroad Street, where the historic creamery is located. Although there are scenic views of the near by mountains, the Passumpsic River, and other natural features, the hill top town is not apparent.

The design team for this area developed a design concept for an enhanced entry into St. Johnsbury. Strategically placing an archway structure that would span the roadway as Route 5 crosses the Passumpsic River, would inform travelers of the arrival to St. Johnsbury ①.

## SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the archway, other “way finding” devices should be incorporated to provide travelers with informative directional cues. For example: providing signs that direct one to Historic Main Street Athenaeum or the Depot located on Railroad Street. The signs would provide simple cues to acknowledge and enhance the arrival to St. Johnsbury ②.

The design team also noted that enhancing the streetscape with improved definition of driveway access points, narrowing curb cuts, adding street trees, and lighting would increase awareness of entering downtown ③. The town has a grant to implement some of those improvements and should plan to extend Railroad Street to a Northern Gateway.

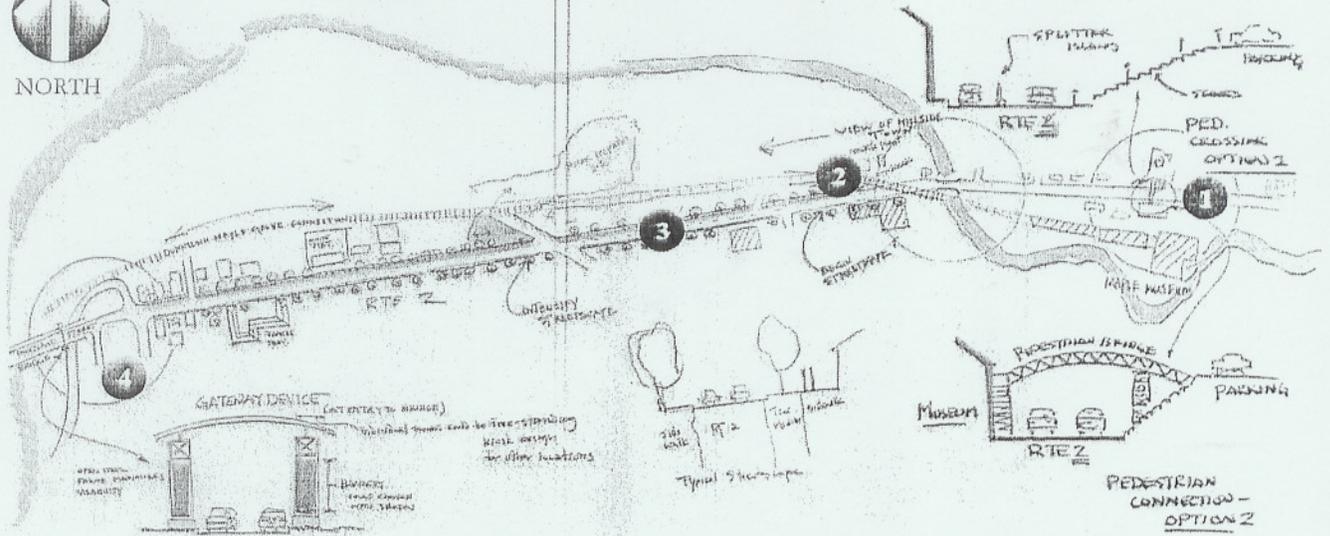


Looking North along Route 5

# THE EASTERN GATEWAY



NORTH



Eastern Gateway Conceptual Plan. (1) Pedestrian Amenities, (2) Multi-Modal path connection to Portland Street, (3) Streetscape Improvements, (4) Gateway device

## SITE OBSERVATIONS

Entering St. Johnsbury from the east is a different experience from the other three gateways. Portland Street is not connected directly to the interstate and contains characteristics of a city street. There is a strong visual connection to downtown with Railroad Street in the foreground and the church towers and historic buildings along Main Street protruding above.

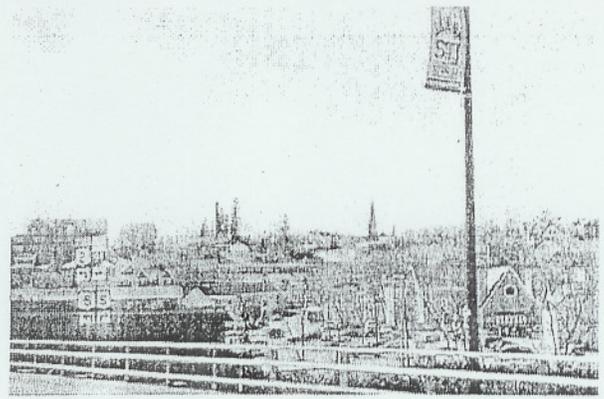
However, the entry way does contain some unrealized potentials: unorganized parking, poorly marked pedestrian walkways, inadequate sidewalks, lack of street tree planting, and unattractive lighting combine to form a negative arrival experience to St. Johnsbury from the East.

Contrasting the strong visual connection to downtown are the architectural facades along Portland Street. As with the previous gateway teams, the Eastern Gateway Team was tasked with developing a safe and strong entry to St. Johnsbury's downtown.

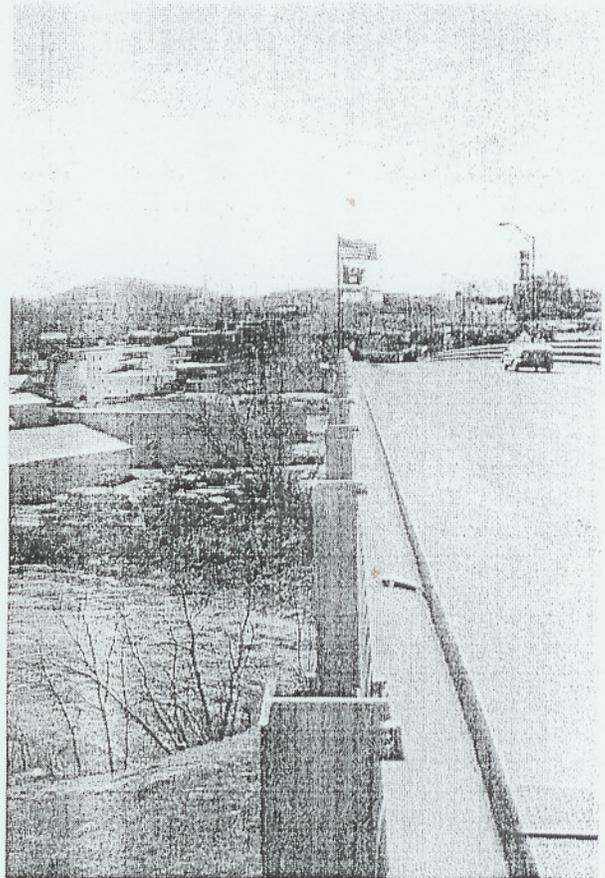
## DESIGN CONCEPT

The design team addressed the following issues in their conceptual plan for the Eastern Gateway. Among their recommendations were: pedestrian amenities ① that included pedestrian crossing adjacent to the Maple Museum with a cross walk/signal or pedestrian bridge and increasing the access of pedestrian along Portland Street with new sidewalks. Continuing towards the town, the next idea focused on utilizing the railroad corridor for a multi-modal path ②. This path would allow bicyclist and pedestrian a safe and alternate route into St. Johnsbury or out to the Maple Museum. The path could also be linked into the Lamoille River Corridor or the Connecticut River Byways Program. Closer in to downtown, streetscape improvement should begin ③. Adding street trees and lighting would provide an enhanced arrival. Finally, as one crosses the Passumpsic River, a gateway device would be located signaling the entry into downtown ④.

The improvements to the gateways of St. Johnsbury's downtown will provide a safer experience entering the downtown area and heighten the sense of anticipation and arrival at a place of importance. The concepts for improvements to roadway corridors and gateways could be readily funded through transportation funds from Vtrans, either through NVDA or the Vtrans Enhancements Program. As in the other gateways, the Eastern Gateway will require an engineering analysis of the safety and appropriateness of the lane reduction so that safety and efficiency of the road will not be compromised.



*View to Downtown St. Johnsbury as one enters from the East*



*Crossing the Passumpsic River into St. Johnsbury*

## THE RIVER AND RAIL CORRIDOR

### Team Members

Nat Goodhue, Landscape Architect  
Amy Hale, Graphic Designer  
Andrea Turner, Natural Resource Director  
Corey Bennett, Planner



*Aerial Photo of Downtown St. Johnsbury with group study area highlighted  
Vermont Mapping Company.*

### SITE OBSERVATIONS

The Pussumpic River is an important part of St. Johnsbury's heritage as it provided the resources for industrial growth and development. The continued decline of industry has had adverse economic, environmental, visual, and social impacts for the city and currently, the corridor is under-used. The unrealized potential is the corridor's strategic location adjacent to the downtown. The flood plain and steep slopes provide a beautiful natural resource with many opportunities.

Access to the river front is difficult because limited connections from downtown result in a poor perception of the area as an asset and destination. A number of current and planned projects could significantly influence or be influenced by the corridor and provide a diversity of opportunities.

### DESIGN CONCEPT

The river/railroad corridor is an important place for fulfilling the vision of a fully functional and united town center. Balancing industry and commercial use with public space for civic events, recreation or contemplation, is vital to the success and protection of the river corridor.

Priority land uses in the corridor should take advantage of

proximity to river and/or railroad -- the right industry in the right place and commercial and recreation opportunities that benefit from visual and physical access to the flowing water.

The riverfront should be ecologically restored and become a place of beauty and community pride that is used for major outdoor gatherings, impromptu meetings, and solitary contemplation. By incorporating a sustainable, ecologically sensitive and diverse agriculture and wood products industry would help revitalize the St. Johnsbury community and marketplace.



Looking South along the Passumpsic River

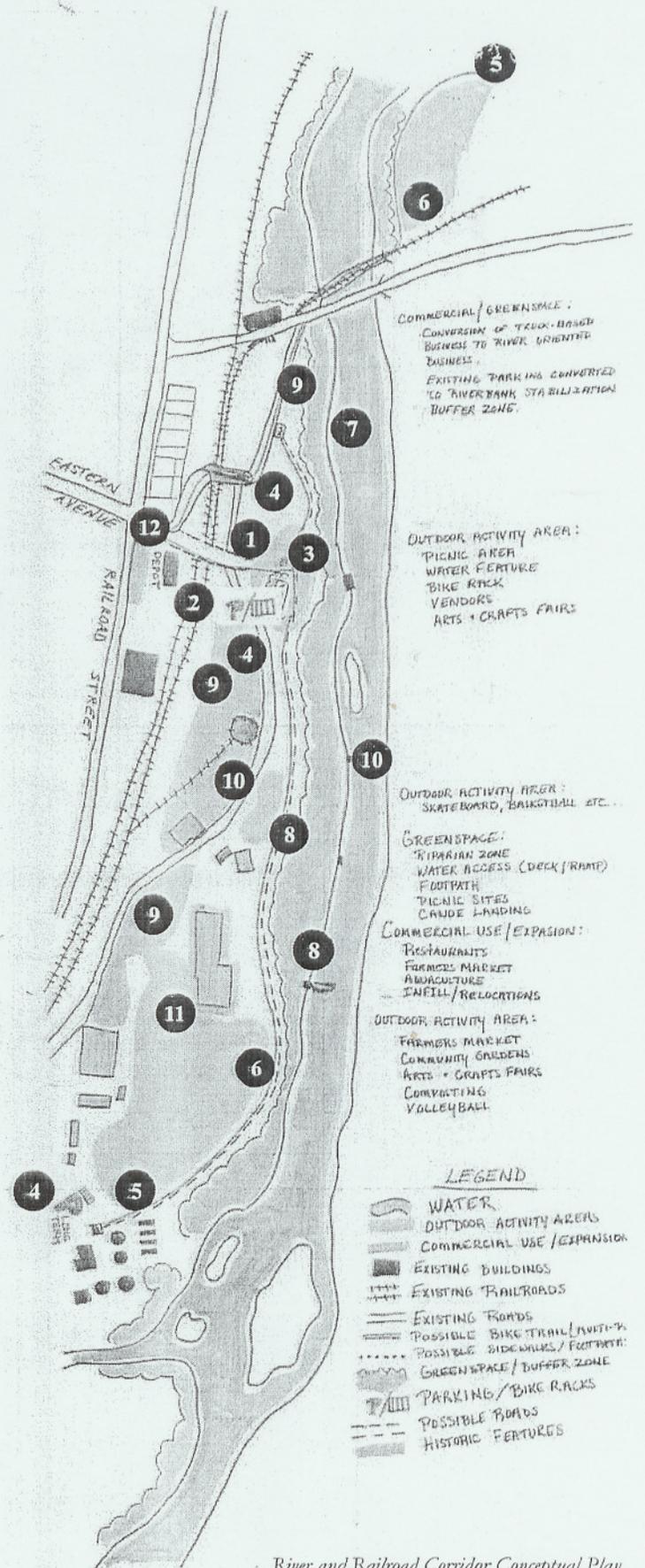
### SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES

① By extending Eastern Avenue with parallel parking, bike lanes, and tree-lined sidewalks across the railroad tracks and into the heart of the corridor would improve access to existing and future businesses on the other side of the tracks. Opportunities would be created for downtown workers, residents and visitors to more quickly access the river front, and enhance the effectiveness of Eastern Avenue as a unifying feature of downtown.

② Alternatively or in addition to the Eastern Avenue extension, the creation of a parallel roadway with bike lanes and tree-lined sidewalks on the south side of the historic railroad depot would provide another, and perhaps less congested, means of access across the railroad tracks to the river. Either of these means of access to the east side of the railroad tracks would relieve the need for motor vehicle use of the narrow, winding, horn blowing underpass which is better designed for pedestrian and bicycle use and well-located to lead to the northern end of the soon-to-be-built multi-purpose bike path along the river to the school complex.

③ Create a major focal point by the river and bike path with direct access from the heart of downtown -- a water feature, that takes water from and returns it to the Passumpsic River with a pavilion and seating in the midst of native tree, shrub and groundcover plantings, views of the water and downtown, and appealing places for small or large groups of people.

19 River/Rail Corridor



River and Railroad Corridor Conceptual Plan.



*Recreational Fields along the River/Rail Corridor*

4 Provide parking and restrooms that contribute to the downtown river front as a destination or trail starting point. Care to locate these facilities where they will not interfere with the focal point and gathering place for people is important.

5 Additional potential multi-purpose paths include: a) an upriver connection across the river to the two baseball fields, continuing on to Fred Mold Park, another baseball field, and the Municipal Forest; b) an easterly continuation being conceived as a cross-New England trail to the Maine coast; c) a down river connection south to the Connecticut River (a potential component of the Connecticut River Byway); and d) a westerly multi-purpose trail (Cross Vermont Trail) to Lake Champlain, the west coast of New England.

6 Create distinctive off road gateways to downtown St. Johnsbury on the above north, east, south, and west trails that match the message ("Welcome to St. Johnsbury. We love it here; come and join us!" for example). There would be a consistency of welcoming for all modes of transportation.

7 Ecological restoration of the river corridor entails a) removal of all potential sources of contamination and encroachments on the riparian zone and b) addition of plants that stabilize the river bank, provide food and shelter for wildlife, and filter run-off from paved areas. On-site displays explaining these measures will add to visitor and student understanding of historic uses and river ecology.

8 Outdoor recreation in a river-oriented greenway will attract visitors and provides opportunities for a healthy lifestyle: a) canoeing and kayaking with put-in/take out served by a nearby parking area set back from the river; b) summer and winter trail activity with nearby benches and picnic tables at which people can linger to enjoy the scene and each other's company; and c) more concentrated recreation activities such as skateboarding, outdoor basketball, volleyball, tennis courts, and possibly swimming and ice skating.

9 Commercial development should be facilitated outside the flood plain and take advantage of proximity to the railroad (including those that ship by rail) and the view of the river (such as restaurants and bed and breakfasts). Undeveloped land adjacent to the railroad tracks is a potential location for transferring commercial development rights from

areas not suited for commercial land use -- such as the area near the elementary/middle school complex and Western Gateway. Or, Businesses that do not have adequate space for their operation due to the constraints of the river might find more space and more suitable locations further from the river -- such as the refuse truck fleet that is in extremely cramped, inefficient quarters on the northerly end of the downtown river bank.

10 Historic sites and features that increase awareness of the industrial heritage such as the railroad round house and remains of dam in the river should be preserved and/or remembered by signs and photographs.

11 A campus for agriculture and wood products industry in the vicinity of the Purina building with indoor and outdoor spaces for: a) educational programs for all ages in collaboration with existing institutions, retired farmers, and senior citizens (forestry, animal husbandry, permaculture, gardening, food preservation and preparation, land conservation, riverbank stabilization and buffer management, and wildlife habitat protection and restoration); b) agricultural production (composting, community gardens, community supported agriculture and aquaculture, and experimentation and use of wind, solar and other sources of renewable energy); c) marketing (farmers' market, agricultural product store fronts, coops for agricultural products, arts and crafts fairs, umbrella organizations that provide a seal of quality for local products, and special days to educate the public about locally produced products, and a senior center meal site, a trail side roof top restaurant with panoramic view of the downtown hillside and river valley café using local produce.

12 Establishing the historic Railroad Depot as a multi-modal transportation and visitor center would take advantage of its central location and restore the historic use of an architectural landmark. The River/Rail corridor facilitates multi-transportation (car, truck, freight and passenger trains, bus, taxi, bicycle, rollerblade, pedestrian, and boat). Visitor information, education, hospitality, and a meeting place large enough for community gatherings -- such as downtown design workshops -- would provide a Waypoint Visitors Center for the Connecticut River Scenic Byways Program.

## PUBLIC PRESENTATION AND COMMENTS

Public involvement and input is critical to the entire process of a design charrette. Public involvement allows for town officials and residents to participate in a community oriented event and discuss ideas concerning future plans for their town. The town of St. Johnsbury and VT ASLA communicated numerous times before the charrette and still today. Pre-charrette meetings, dialogue, and the public presentation and comment sessions provide valuable input for charrette participants and town residents alike.

Concluding the daylong work session was a public presentation. For the residents unaware of the charrette's purpose, an introduction was presented providing the history and process of the charrette. Then, each team presented their site observations, design concepts, specific opportunities, and finding/recommendations. The presentation allowed for interaction as attendees asked questions and provided feedback along the way. That dialogue spurred an exciting and valuable public comment period.

Once the teams completed their presentations, Past President of VT ASLA, Robert White orchestrated a public comment period where town officials and residents were challenged to offer their personal input concerning the ideas presented. Implementation and cost was discussed for some specific ideas along with possible "how to recommendations. The following comments pertain to some or all of the designs and offer possible next steps to be taken by town officials and residents to continue the revitalization of St. Johnsbury.

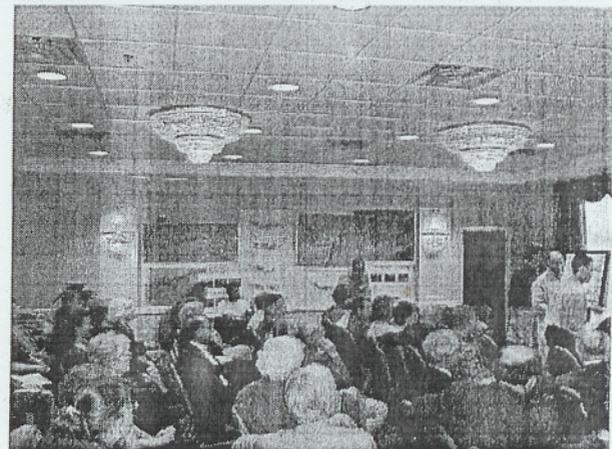
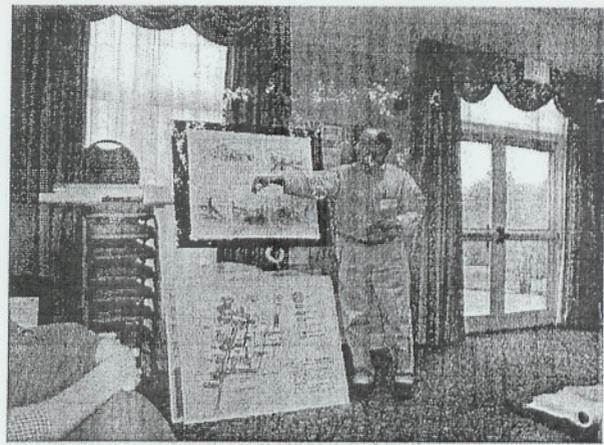
The expansion of the Depot into a Multi-Modal Transportation/Visitors Center would create a destination in the downtown area and strengthen activity in that area.

Pocket parks and site furnishings would allow visitors and residents to congregate and engage with public outdoor places. It was suggested that downtown businesses support these initiatives through funding of materials and/or donations for elements such as street trees, benches, etc.

Traffic studies were suggested for the gateways into St. Johnsbury. The concepts for improvements to roadway corridors and gateways should be readily funded through transportation funds from Vtrans, either through NVDA or the Vtrans Enhancements Program. Each gateway will require an engineering analysis of the safety and appropriateness of the lane reduction so that safety and efficiency of the road will not be compromised.

Safety issues related to school location was commented on. Traffic speed and congestion were discussed and the ideas presented received positive feedback.

The Park and Ride could be developed into a destination for



people car pooling and/or using the bike path.

Entry signs for St. Johnsbury are necessary. The location and prominence is important. Existing signs lack both.

Development along the river corridor should balance mixed use development, recreational and educational facilities, along with ecological concerns for the water way and supporting systems.

## APPENDIX

### Pre-Charrette Meeting Agenda Defining the Program for The Downtown St. Johnsbury Design Charrete

7:00 pm	What is happening in Downtown St. Johnsbury? Background Current Issues Anticipated Activities	Alison Meaders
7:10 pm	What is a charrette and how could it be useful What is ASLA and what is its newest chapter Inspiration for community design charrettes in Vermont What a charrette does well and what it does not.	David Jacobs Nat Goodhue Robert White
7:20 pm	St. Johnsbury Program Starting Point (AIA newsletter notice)	Robert White
7:25 pm	Program Development Critical Issues Charrette Objectives Geographic Area Design Program Needed end products	Dave, Nat, Bob
8:00 pm	Conclusions of Program	
8:15 pm	Consensus on program statement for St. Johnsbury Charrette	
8:30 pm	Summary/What's Next	

### Charrette Day Agenda April 26, 2001

8:30 am	Informational Presentation
8:45	Site Orientation
10:15	Design Team Work Session
12:30pm	Lunch/Team Discussions and Feedback
1:30	Design Team Work Session
5:00	Conclusion/Pin-up
5:30	Dinner
7:00	Public Meeting St. Johnsbury Background and Objectives VT-ASLA Community Design Charrette Purpose Team Presentations Public Comments Conclusions and Next Steps Public Comments

### Contacts

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