

## Acknowledgments

The preparation of this report has been generously supported by several organizations. Housing Vermont has underwritten the costs of a housing study for Peacham and helped to secure a planning grant to the Peacham Planning Commission from Vermont's Small Growth Collaborative. The planning effort has benefited from two municipal planning grants from the State of Vermont. In addition, Vermont's Urban and Community Forestry Program has provided a tree planning grant to inventory the current condition of trees and other road-side, school, and cemetery vegetation and a follow-up grant to begin a multi-year tree planting program in each village and the cemetery.

***Many residents have actively participated in meetings and on volunteer committees . . . offered their perspectives on the issues facing the town and on alternative approaches for addressing those issues.***

David Jacobs, Landscape Architect, has provided professional consultation services for the village and tree plans. Burnt Rock Associates has undertaken the town and village housing study. The Northeast Vermont Development Association (NVDA) has assisted in mapping and images for the public meetings and the plan report. Richard Bohlen led a resident volunteer program to produce the first overall survey of the village streets. Neil Monteith has helped in the tree inventory work, and Marsha Garrison, Julie Lang, Betsy McKay and Marj Swenson conducted the tree inventory and tree planting programs.

David Jacobs and Barry Lawson, former member of the Planning Commission, have prepared this report and assume responsibility for its contents.

## The Planning Report

The village plan and any resulting implementation actions are, of course, designed to serve the citizens of Peacham and those residing in Peacham Corner. Many have actively participated in meetings, a community forum, and on volunteer committees, offering their perspectives on the issues facing the town and on alternative approaches for addressing these issues. Public involvement is essential to the planning process. Citizens serving on boards, commissions, and other committees ensure that actions eventually taken are integrated, cost effective, and consistent with the charm and beauty that defines Peacham.

This report is in several sections and provides information on the planning process, citizen input, possible plan elements, a preliminary schedule to show how plan elements might be ordered, and possible next steps. Only after more public discussion can the ideas presented be transformed into a plan of action.

### The Report – Contents

Acknowledgments -----	1
The Planning Report -----	1
Executive Summary-----	2
Recent History-----	3
The Peacham Corner Planning Process-----	4
Description of Plan Elements-----	17
Preliminary Implementation Schedule-----	19
Next Steps in the Planning Process-----	22
Appendix	

## Executive Summary

Decisions affecting Peacham will be made with or without a unified plan or strategy. Road work, land transfers, housing improvements, and actions influencing the future use of the Town Hall gymnasium will have to be made. This report suggests that the potential costs can be more effectively managed by planning wisely. It suggests also that by integrating these decisions with one another beforehand will result in a better village than if decisions were made in isolation.

This report examines a variety of issues confronting Peacham and Peacham Corner. Some of these issues involve renovating (or constructing new) buildings and infrastructure. Others reflect a desire for the village to continue to function well and be a source of community pride. It portrays possible approaches to address these issues in an integrated and cost effective fashion. After considerable public discussion and consideration by appropriate boards and committees, we envision that a plan and capital program will evolve and be adopted as part of the Town Plan. Much work remains to be done. This report identifies the type of work ahead, a list of specific plan elements, and an illustrative schedule for their accomplishment.

***Specific steps need to be identified and publicly confirmed, costs and feasibility assessed, priorities set, and a schedule for moving forward agreed upon.***

Some plan elements address village traffic concerns by encouraging lower speeds and improving parking and the layout of the principal village intersection. In conjunction with these traffic-related improvements, several suggestions address the village infrastructure (e.g., water system, drainage systems, lighting and possible placement of some facilities underground). It is, in effect, a first step toward a blueprint for the next decade or more.

Several ideas integrate recreation with other plan elements. These include several new projects focused on reuse of the old village water reservoir, the Upper Green area, a possible picnic area on cemetery land (reserved for future use), renovation of the tennis court, and establishment of a walking and running track at the athletic field. These and other village facilities will be linked to walking paths with informative signs for local residents and visitors.

Housing, particularly for seniors and those seeking more affordable housing is an important concern in Peacham. Improvements to or replacement of existing senior housing are suggested, along with modifications to the housing “footprint”, to integrate that housing with other land uses and services in the village. Burnt Rock Associates is completing a housing study to provide new insights for balancing housing supply and demand in the future. These and other ideas will be tied together through a series of plans, studies, and a capital improvement program.

This report encourages discussion, debate and further study. Those involved must identify and seek public agreement on future actions, assess costs and feasibility, and develop a schedule.

## Recent History

During the past four years a number of challenges and opportunities have arisen in Peacham Corner that have warranted the attention of the Selectboard, Planning Commission and others. The State has prohibited the town’s use of the gymnasium as a town meeting facility, concerns have been expressed about the structural integrity of one of the senior housing buildings, and criticisms have been voiced over village traffic speed and availability of parking.

In addition, the Vermont Land Trust has offered to transfer ownership of 3.75 acres of land in the village to the Town. The old

village reservoir, now superfluous, could be reused, possibly as a small public sitting area.

In due course, the Town must address several issues that are interrelated. Among these are possible exchange of ownership and use of the old town building and so-called bus barn just off the main intersection, continual erosion and sedimentation on Church Street, and the re-paving of Main Street (Bayley-Hazen Road). Also of interest are the maintenance of the old tennis court, the dangerous intersection of Church and Main Street, and convenient walkways for children and others. In the balance with these decisions and actions are dollars and cents, public safety and convenience, recreational opportunities, and housing choices and conditions.

In the past few years, significant investments in the village infrastructure have already taken place. Expansions to both the library and the firehouse have been proud additions, ones that already return dividends to village and town residents. Efforts to revive a village store and coffee shop, either in this village or South Peacham, have continued, although unsuccessful to date. A substantial effort has recently been made to plan for tree management in all three villages and the main cemetery. In fact, new trees have recently been planted in the cemetery with a distinct view to the future.

This report describes how the gradual process of adapting the village to meet new challenges can be continued. It requires careful consideration of the issues, realization of how one project can affect another, setting of basic priorities, determining demands of budgets and taking advantage of funding sources to reduce the burden on the town. As an example of this last point, during the past five years planning funds from outside sources have assisted in planning the expansion of the fire station and the library, helped in developing the Town and village plans, and funded a housing study and tree planning and planting programs.

**Seven major elements of the village plan:**

**\* General Planning/Capital Improvement Program**

**\* Transportation      \* Utilities      \* Housing**

**\* Land Use      \* Town Hall      \* Recreation**

The State of Vermont has designated Peacham as a Village Center, qualifying the town as a high priority in the competition for scarce State financial resources. Help is out there, not only for planning but for implementation. Development, transportation, housing and recreation funds are potentially available as well. Accessing these funds and technical assistance will surely be necessary to supplement (and, in effect, make possible) the investments that the Town may wish to make in the next decade.

The plan concept presented in this report serves as a discussion piece. While it reflects considerable input from interested village residents in public meetings, it has yet to receive input from town organizations (including the Selectboard) or from the mainstream of Peacham's residents and taxpayers. The report, therefore, has identified the challenges, some steps to address them, and a schedule reflecting possible priorities and appropriate sequencing. It reports on the first step only, and is offered to the Planning Commission in this spirit for its consideration and appropriate action.

## The Peacham Corner Planning Process

The goal of the planning project has been to engage the citizens of Peacham in a participatory process to develop a plan for Peacham Corner. The citizens were invited to five meetings to address the issues and offer their input. The following issues were discussed:

- § Pedestrian safety and comfort
- § Vehicular traffic
- § Road layout-intersection
- § Town hall
- § Storm water drainage and erosion
- § Parking-everyday and events
- § Landscaping
- § Recreation (passive and active)
- § Best use of community lands and buildings
- § Community housing needs
- § Other potential land uses

The following section summarizes the public discussion of the issues by meeting.

### Public Meeting One-January 20, 2005

Community members were prompted with a series of questions related to the planning issues and general questions about Peacham. Comments were recorded and posted for review. The comments are as follows:

#### General questions about place.

What is Peacham 4 corners Village?

- § Geographical area
- § Neighborhood
- § Center-focal point of town

- § School, library, town services, church, historic activities
- § Crossroads (car)
- § Gathering place
- § People caring about one another
- § The land and our connection to the land
- § Summer and winter community

What defines the village “sense of place” (identity, image, distinctive qualities)?

- § Physical setting, special attractive place, views
- § Remoteness exasperated by climate beyond comfort
- § Trees, architecture, church steeple landmark, cemetery, general store
- § Important historical buildings (church, Governor Maddox, 14 taverns...)
- § Not over developed
- § Walkability (however no sidewalks on Church St., but school walk works)
- § Friendliness of people, people return and return
- § Different kinds of travelers (bikes, horse, cars, tractors)
- § Sense of continuity

What makes the village feel like a “town center”?

- § Post Office, Town Hall, building density
- § Safe - kids allowed unescorted throughout village

What does not feel like a town center? What takes away from the “sense of place”?

- § Awkward crazy corner
- § No village green in center, but some benches at former Academy site
- § Not enough parking for everyone
- § Steep climb from store to green
- § No gas station or full service store
- § Paved road and sheriff watching traffic

Comments on economic vitality

- § Would like a store that is open all the time
- § Not many visible businesses however there are home businesses

- § Art gallery, packaging, computer related, insurance, art guild

#### Activities, traditions and patterns.

What are the daily, weekly activities that need to occur in the village?

- § Post Office, dump, church, historic association
- § Library-coffee hour, lectures, meeting space for organizations
- § Sports activities, tennis
- § School busses stopping

Seasonal, annual, special activities

- § Fall Foliage, July 4th, Memorial Day, Town Meeting, memory tree, town tree lighting
- § Weddings, funerals, alumni reunions, village picnic, antique show, book sales, concerts

How well do spaces in the village accommodate activities?

- § No place for town meeting
- § Not enough parking
- § Rough roadside for walking
- § Tennis courts in bad shape
- § A variety of activities possible at athletic fields

What activities would you like to see added or expanded upon?

- § Auditorium, swimming pool, ice rink, bandstand, horseshoe pit, measured mile walking area

What is lacking related to activities or traditions?

- § Upgrade sidewalks
- § Repair water system, bury power lines (shallow bedrock and buried fiber optics are constraints)
- § Mixed signage (old and new) affects wayfinding
- § No public phone, poor cell service
- § Lack of information-kiosk, metal etched map of buildings, town

How does the "Green" function?

- § Parking
- § Running 1/3 mile, soccer, kids play (deed says keep it open for play)
- § VAST trail
- § Gathering place on Memorial Day

- § Center of new "programs" Fire Department on 4th
- § Few trees, lacks benches, lacks shelter
- § New green area-behind town hall? More parking, shade trees

What spaces encourage social interaction?

- § Post office, school playground, dump, library (future back yard), soccer field, green, cemetery

What spaces encourage passive recreation (sitting, watching, talking)?

- § Mr. Birdsall's bench, P.O. bench, bench at former academy site
- § Porch at store/art guild
- § School
- § Coffee hour at library
- § Town clerk office and gym upstairs
- § Church w/ picnic tables out back
- § Old reservoir site (future possibility)

#### Scenic Quality/Aesthetics

What are the most important elements that add to scenic quality of the village?

- § Landscaping and well maintained houses
- § Lack of businesses (not commercial looking)
- § Landmarks-steeple and Fickes barn
- § Farm activity, crop patterns in fields, cows in fields, farms
- § Tree lined roadways, dirt roads
- § Topography, rolling hills, distant views
- § Sense of history
- § Fire pond migratory birds, ducks herons, geese
- § Church, cemeteries, firehouse structure
- § Model of Academy
- § Horses
- § Vegetable for sale signs
- § No bad days in Peacham

What is visually distracting approaching the village?

- § Parked vehicles S. Peacham, junk cars E. Peacham, road conditions

What is visually distracting while in or traveling through the village?

- § Crazy pattern at intersection, fire hydrant
- § Power lines
- § Traffic and safety measures
- § Walking from the south to Peacham Corner
- § Buildings in need of paint
- § Tripods and leaf peepers in road
- § Lighting
- § Hanging wire

What are the major focal points?

- § Church Steeple, Fickes barn, General Store

What adds to the visual quality?

- § Contrast between country and village, no sprawl
- § Topography, variety of views
- § Lack of pollution including light
- § Quiet, safe, super
- § Chimney smoke
- § Architecture

### Sense of Arrival

At what point do you feel like you have arrived? What helps you know that you are arriving?

- § From Danville: view of steeple at Crisman's, Peacham settled and 30mph signs, Steven's School, visual edge at Kaplan's is strong where buildings are closer together.
- § From South Peacham: view of cemetery, Clemons/Bonfield edge is strong, 30mph sign.
- § From East Peacham: Bond's house

What would help strengthen the sense of arrival?

- § Plants and planters
- § 25mph sign, welcome sign, ID sign from all directions
- § Narrower roadway, borders along roadway, stone walls, tree canopy
- § Smaller historic lights, sodium shielded from sky
- § Speed limits between South-East and 4 corners to be lower.

### Safety as user (walker, driver)

What does and does not feel safe in the village?

- § Lighting not enough, coverage spotty bright/dark/bright
- § Visibility of cars/pedestrians particularly in winter
- § Kids travel by bike and on foot
- § Dust
- § Traffic volume is low
- § 4 corners-sight line issue, not signed, snow banks block sight, hydrant to go, clean out can be put in manhole
- § traffic circle
- § Wayfinding-people stop to ask

### Dreams

- § Pace to watch games
- § Parking with shuttle service
- § Fix intersection
- § Remove and rebuild new town hall

## **Public Meeting Two-February 1, 2005**

The discussion on the issues continued and the comments were as follows:

Comments about Gateways

- § Let's not make Peacham a gated community
- § Markers at gateway celebrating historic district to strengthen sense of arrival.

Comments on Streetscape

- § History of negotiations with GMP regarding lighting 15 years ago cobra heads were installed. Perhaps there is room for negotiations considering new lighting technology for historic lighting.
- § Resistance to paving on Cemetery road.
- § Unable to walk around village safely

- § No sense now of where pedestrians should walk around village, store, library, church, Town Hall
- § Safety is big issue especially in winter
- § Speed bumps possible
- § Existing centennial sidewalks need maintenance
- § Where are benches that were near the Academy

#### Dreams and Expectations

- § Ball field fixed with path to enable older people to walk around
- § Improve fencing around tennis courts
- § Picnic tables for relaxing in Village (public space)
- § Library will have patio in rear of building (private space)
- § Picnic table near tennis courts
- § Good to see kids using play areas in village
- § Plan for short and long term 25-30 years
- § Bury utility lines where possible over time
- § Create a phasing plan (sequencing) coordinate with a capital improvement plan
- § Consider assisted living center in community
- § Coffee shop (café) in village
- § Academy and church were moved from the green to present locations
- § Green is currently uninviting
- § Achieve short-term results to create impetus for long-term projects

#### Parking

- § North Country Chorus event example of lack of parking
- § Day to day parking-need better Town Hall Post Office parking
- § Large event parking-at church with signs, land trust land, Fire District land
- § Doesn't have to be paved or gravel for summer events.

#### Approaches and Gateways

- § To calm traffic-sign about Peacham settlement, historic district
- § Black top road encourages speeding
- § Perceived narrowing of road using vertical element on sides
- § Decoy police car
- § Median strip with shrubs/trees
- § Change of road texture

- § Fix ugly ditch, pipe, aquatic plants
- § Add trees along road for calming
- § Rotary at 4 corners
- § Rumble strip, but not as effective in winter
- § Flashing lights
- § Speed machine

#### Mack's Mountain Road approach

- § Tree at upper green to create terminus
- § Blind corner near F.D for cars to see pedestrians
- § Village signs with curve signs, pedestrian sign, sign w/ village landmarks could act as slowing device
- § Road corner near F.D. banked incorrectly on curve
- § Path for pedestrians at corner
- § Flashy clothing at night for walkers
- § Snowmobiles not stopping at road near F.D.
- § Create T intersection at cemetery on Mack's Mtn. Rd. eliminate curve

#### Walkability of Village

- § Create interconnected path to all Village facilities-basic
- § Crosswalks at top of hill or well away from it (sight line issue)
- § Tie paths to other paths outside Village
- § One way traffic thru Post Office/ Town Hall to help parking
- § Consider land swaps
- § Stop sign at top of Cemetery Road
- § More consistent lighting
- § Low path lighting 18-20"

#### Land Use Town Lands

- § Ball field should be more intensely used
- § Shelter for picnic tables close to Town Hall, upper green or near Senior Housing
- § Create sociable spaces where passive recreation can take place
- § Some lands underutilized or not maintained
- § Academy benches are potentially useful in Village center
- § Leave green spaces and concentrate buildings in existing area
- § Like having green space all around village

- § Assisted /Independent living on Land Trust Land, fit in a store or café

## **Project Goals and Outcomes**

The response of the citizens in attendance was rich in ideas, concepts, problem identification, and possible solutions. A set of project goals and outcomes was developed:

- § Traffic calming-invite traffic to slow down through the village.
- § Pedestrian opportunities-walkable village, safety and comfort.
- § Resolution of vehicular conflicts.
- § Foster land use discussions on housing, commercial and recreation.
- § Identify best use of town lands.
- § Celebrate historic and rural village character.
- § Provide adequate parking.
- § Streetscape in village center, lighting, walks, planting, seating.
- § Buried utilities through village.
- § Recreation opportunities.
- § Town Hall needs assessment.
- § Community involvement in decision-making process.
- § Clear vision of where to go from here...

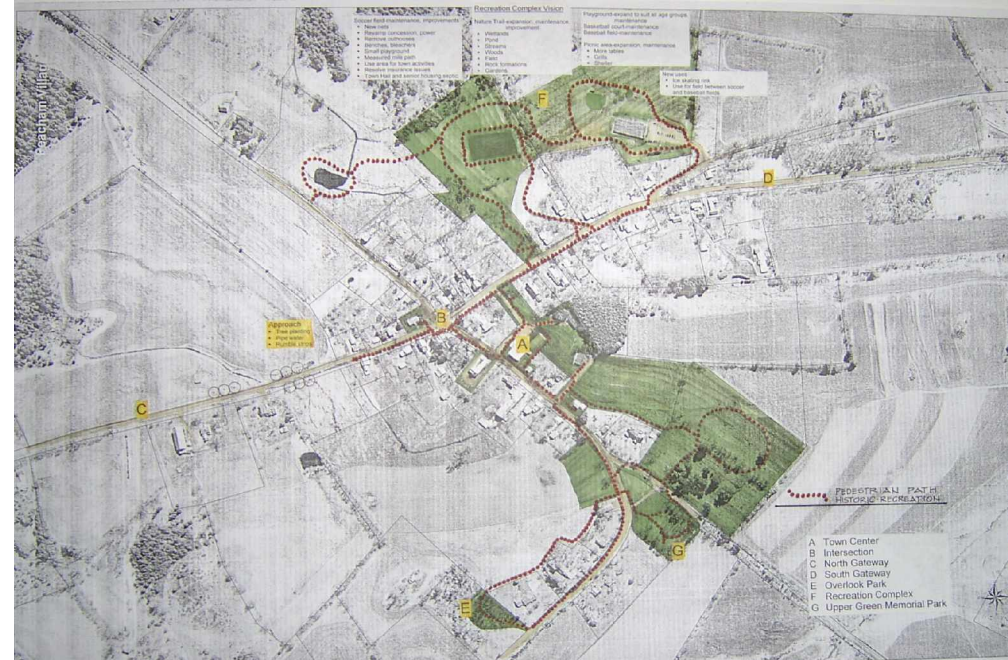


### **Public Meeting Three-March 15, 2005**

Preliminary concept plans were developed and presented at the March 15 meeting for discussion. The plans were a reflection of the needs, values and ideas generated by community members at previous meetings; by interviews with Phil Jejer-town administrator, Mel Reiss-recreation committee; and input from the 2004 Parking Committee report; Fire District meeting and discussion, Planning Commission meetings; historic research; discussion with Vermont Public Service Department, and meeting with the District Engineer of the VT Agency of Transportation. (See appendix for full-page version of plans.)



The **key map** shows an interconnected pedestrian system in red and all the plan components, letters A to G. The shaded areas are owned by the town, land trust or housing trust. The recreation committee vision is outlined at the top of this plan (see text below)



## Vision of Recreation Complex

Nature Trail-expansion, maintenance, improvement

- § Wetlands, pond, streams, woods
- § Rock formations
- § Gardens
- § Playground-expand to suit all age groups, maintenance

Basketball court

- § maintenance

Baseball field

- § maintenance

Picnic area-expansion, maintenance

- § More tables, grills for picnics, shelter

Soccer field-maintenance, improvements

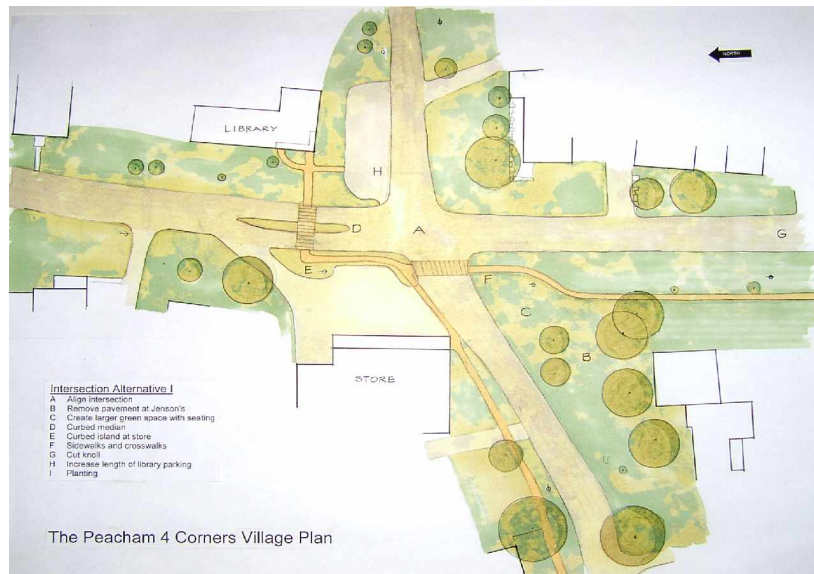
- § New nets
- § Revamp concession, power
- § Remove outhouses
- § Benches, bleachers
- § Small playground
- § Measured mile path
- § Use area for town activities
- § Resolve insurance issues
- § Town Hall and senior housing septic

New uses

- § Ice skating rink
- § Use for field between soccer and baseball fields

## Intersection Studies

The March 15 meeting also featured the first alternative sketch plans to address the concerns raised about the Church Street/Main Street intersection. Three intersection options were considered.



**Intersection alternative I** features A. aligning the intersection, B. removal of road at Jensen's, C. larger green space, D. curb median, E. curbed median, F. sidewalks and crosswalks, G. cut knoll, H. library parking squared, I. planting.



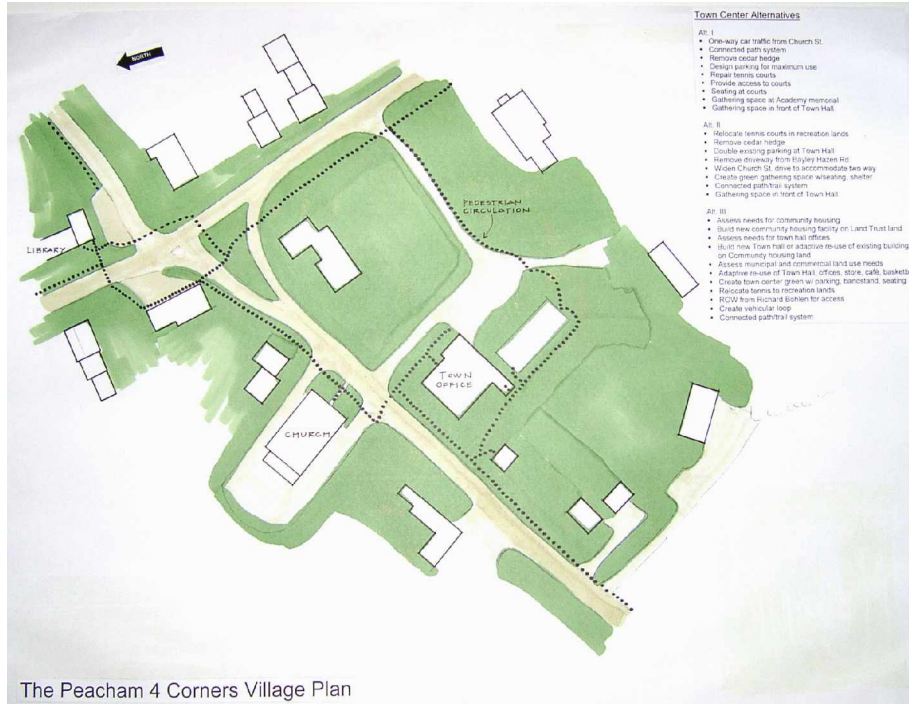
**Intersection alternative II** features A. aligned intersection, B. sidewalks and crosswalks, C. green space, D. curbed island, E. library parking squared, F. planting.



**Intersection study III** features A. T intersection at Church St., B. new green space, C. parking, D. library parking squared, E. sidewalks and crosswalks, F. curbed island, G. cut knoll, H. planting.

## Town Center Options

Several concepts were put forth and discussed for the town center including options for town hall, tennis courts, parking, land use, and housing.



The Peacham 4 Corners Village Plan

A general **Town Center Plan** was presented with alternatives in written form.

## Town Center Alternatives

### Alternative I

- § One-way car traffic from Church St.
- § Connected path system
- § Remove cedar hedge

- § Design parking for maximum use
- § Repair tennis courts
- § Provide access to courts
- § Seating at courts
- § Gathering space at Academy memorial
- § Gathering space in front of Town Hall

### Alternative II

- § Relocate tennis courts in recreation lands
- § Remove cedar hedge
- § Double existing parking at Town Hall
- § Remove driveway from Bayley-Hazen Rd.
- § Widen Church St. drive to accommodate two way
- § Create green gathering space w/seating, shelter
- § Connected path/trail system
- § Gathering space in front of Town Hall

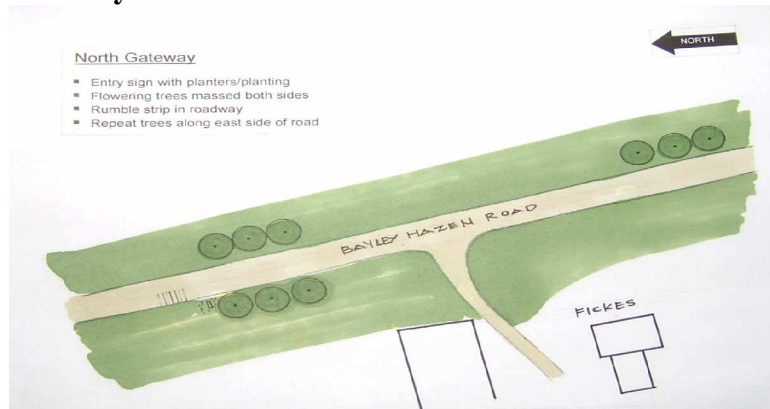
### Alternative III

- § Assess needs for community housing
- § Build new community housing facility on Land Trust land
- § Assess needs for town hall offices
- § Build new Town Hall or adaptive re-use of existing buildings on Community Housing land
- § Assess municipal and commercial land use needs
- § Adaptive re-use of Town Hall, offices, store, café, basketball
- § Create town center green w/ parking, bandstand, seating
- § Relocate tennis to recreation lands
- § ROW from Richard Bohlen for access
- § Create vehicular loop
- § Connected path/trail system

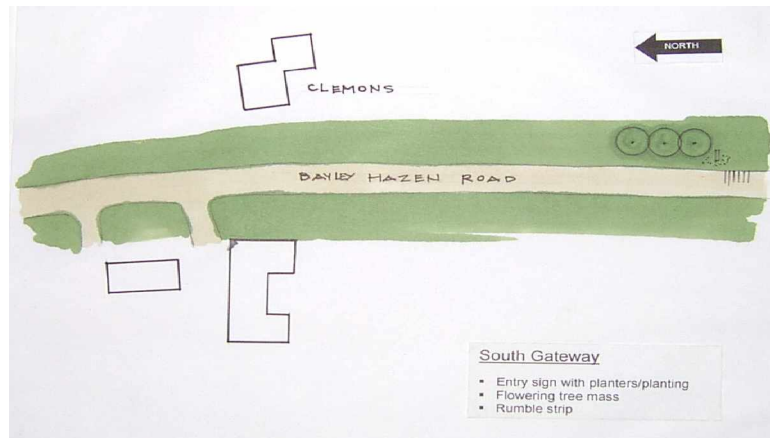


Sketch plans of the gateways to the village and two potential park areas were presented and discussed.

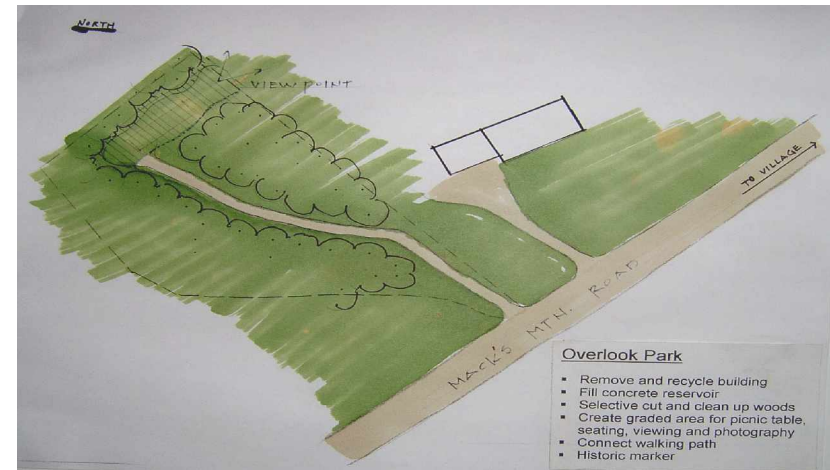
## Gateways



The north and south gateway plans feature an entry sign, planters and rumble indentations to announce the entrance to the village area, with tree planting between the gateway and the village for traffic calming.



## Parks



Overlook Park at the former reservoir site.



Upper Green Memorial Park between the fire department and the cemetery.

The attendees of the March 15 meeting came up with the following comments:

#### Sidewalks

- § People will take the shortest route
- § Sidewalk in front of store will be buried in snow from roof
- § Sidewalk on south side of intersection then across Old Cemetery to Library
- § Position sidewalks out of plow throw zone

#### Parking and Green Space

- § Green space in front of store, parking on side
- § Parking beside Fire Dept. detracts from view, though will be lower than road level
- § Parking in front of Jensen's removed

#### Car Circulation

- § One way from Bayley-Hazen instead of Church St.

#### Land Use

- § Future of Bus Barn?
- § Need for small single family homes w/garage (not low income)

#### Trails

- § Extend trail system to the east

### Public Meeting Four-May 3, 2005

In consideration of comments received at March meeting additional conceptual plans were developed, including an intersection and sidewalk concept plan and three town center alternatives. The new and previous versions were presented at the May 3 community forum, and more comments were offered.

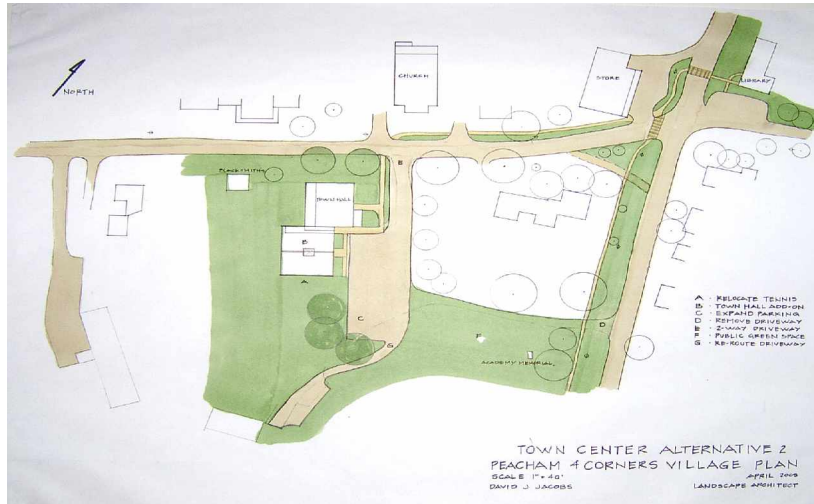
### Intersection and Sidewalk Concept



The intersection and sidewalk concept above combines the best of the three alternatives based on comments made at past meetings.

### Town Center Alternatives





The three town center alternatives were presented in detail.

## Comments from May 3 community forum:

### Intersection Plan

- § Some favor keeping curved lane near Jensen's
- § Some have nostalgic attachment to lane at Jensen's
- § Use lane for pedestrians only
- § Relocate telephone box and pole in front of store
- § Concern about blasting knoll
- § Have well defined walking area
- § Lane is accident waiting to happen
- § Need wide turning radii for Fire Dept and trucks
- § Sidewalks wide enough for two people side by side
- § Intersection is better in summer than winter
- § Possible one way for lane near Jensen's
- § Not many accidents, many close calls

### Town Center Plan

- § 2 exits on to Church Street good
- § Good to eliminate Town Hall entrance from Bayley-Hazen Road.

## Public Meeting Five-August 16, 2005

The same set of plans was presented at the final meeting on August 16, 2005. The results follow:

### Gateways and Approach to Village

- § In planting trees along the approach, be careful not to block views inadvertently.
- § Speed limit between villages to 40mph.
- § Village speed limit at 25.
- § Engage the sheriff's office in at least 6 months of active enforcement to precipitate driver behavior change.
- § The concept was accepted as satisfactory.

#### Overlook Park

- § There was general agreement on the proposed design.

#### Path System

- § There seemed to be general acceptance of the notion, although some felt that only a few people walk around town.

#### Upper Green Memorial Park

- § It was recognized that the current snowmobile trail could be a problem and that we would have to work with the Fire Department for modification of the current trail's route.
- § It was suggested that the recreation committee be responsible for maintaining these trails.
- § The walks included here and elsewhere in town could become the subject of a walking tour (brochure) and that safety and pleasure would be assured the walker – currently there is very little direction for tourists who like to walk the village.
- § The site line problem at Furr's corner was discussed without solution.
- § Edna Furr pointed out that the road used to be further away from her house but that it had crept closer over time. This may exacerbate the traffic problem for road walkers and the sharper than desirable curve at that corner.

#### Church and Main Intersection

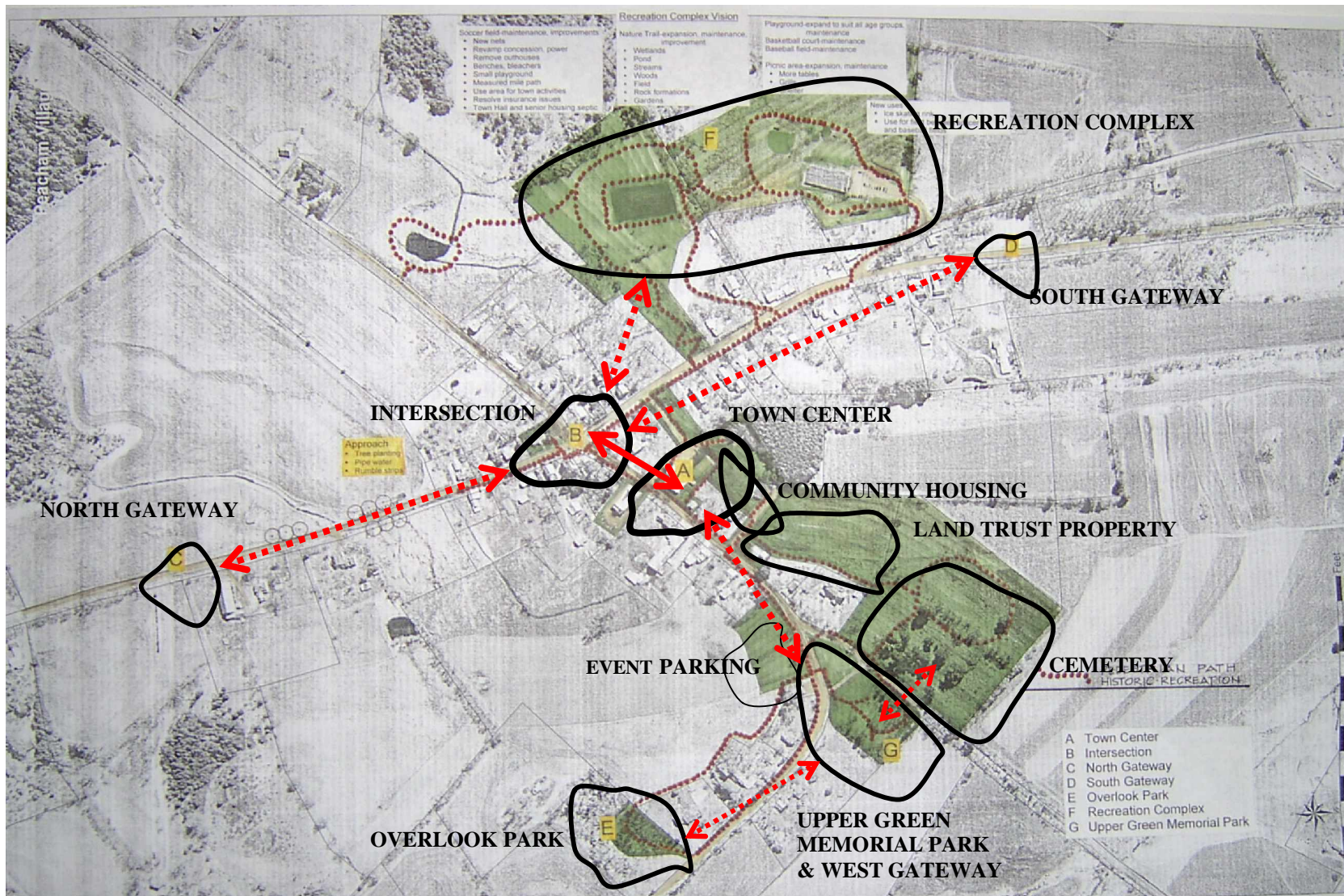
- § The point was made that over time we could expect the demand for local shopping to increase in the village as gas prices rise.
- § Some emphasized making provision for the possibility of a convenience shopping for grocery goods.
- § Discussion included the potential damage from blasting the knoll if that was required to improve sight lines for traffic approaching the intersection from South Peacham. It was pointed out by several people that modern blasting techniques are far less damaging than in the past; in fact, some blasting was done for the water system improvements a few years ago, and there were no complaints.
- § Drainage problems on Church Street were documented – erosion, bumps, etc.

- § With regard to the issue of all the roads coming into that primary intersection, it was noted that people are ingenious about finding and using the line of least resistance. Some thought that traffic approaching the intersection from Danville (and wanting to go up Church St) would be tempted to cut across in front of the store rather than go through the intersection as planned. Some said that only one entrance/exit to the parking area was necessary if there were to be a designated parking area (within the curb) in front of the Moore's store.
- § There remains an issue regarding the road that goes in front of the Jensen's house. It seemed that among the attendees there were more people in favor of eliminating that road than keeping it, but it was acknowledged that this remains a potential source of controversy. Old habits are tough to overcome. But other aspects of the planned intersection received general agreement.

#### Town Hall and Complex

- § Discussion of one-way traffic through the town hall area – and if so, which way? This issue deserves more attention and should await information from consultants regarding the need for housing.
- § There was some support for moving the gymnasium down to the school area, readapting the town hall for other uses, the possibility of designing a new office building for the town, and assuring that there was adequate public emergency vehicle access.
- § The idea of a road that went in roughly where the Bohlen's drive now is and circling around to the senior housing (assuming new housing is provided), going past a new town office building and out the current drive by the current town hall was generally well received.
- § It was suggested that even if the tennis court was eventually relocated to the athletic fields, the current court could, in the meantime, be renovated (estimated cost about \$5,000) for use by tennis enthusiasts. Perhaps this could be a joint public/private endeavor.
- § It was suggested that an enlarged plan would be helpful to bring out some of the important details.
- § Snow management was a concern.
- § Possible transfer of land from the Vermont Land Trust to the Town.





Drawing shows all plan elements and the relationship between them.



## **Description of Plan Elements**

### **Gateways**

The plans propose entry signs, ‘rumble’ strips, and planting at each entry to the village. The purpose of THESE would be to announce the village limits and reduction in speed to 25 and calm traffic through the village proper. It is also suggested that trees be planted on both sides of the street along the approach to give the perception to an automobile driver that the road is narrowing and one should slow down, especially approaching from the north and west.

### **Path System**

The concept of a walkable (safe and comfortable) village for residents and visitors came up at meetings time and again. The large plan depicts an interconnected system of sidewalks, trails, mowed paths and roadside paths in and around the village. The system is designed to be used for everyday safe walking between the Post Office, Town Offices, Library, Store, School, for recreation exercise or pleasure walking or skiing between the parks, cemetery, recreation complex and beyond, and for use as an historic interpretive walk connecting the various historic buildings and sites around the village.

### **Overlook Park**

The park is named for its topographical position overlooking the Four Corners Peacham Village. It is the property where the former town reservoir sits, a sugarhouse-style building over an eight-foot concrete hole on about a third of an acre. The property can be accessed by a right-of-way off Mack’s Mountain Road. There is expressed concern that the building poses a safety risk to children playing near or trying to get in it.

The proposed plan suggests removing and recycling the building, filling the hole in and grading and cleaning up the area. There would then be an opportunity to place a few benches and tables in the area to be used as a sitting/viewing stop along the walking path, a place for small picnics, and a place to photograph the village. An historic marker may be placed to describe the water supply history of the site.

### **Upper Green Memorial Park**

The Upper Green is the area between the fire station and the cemetery. It is now used for special events, parking at times, and as a play area. It is in fact deeded to the town to remain open for people to play on. Adjacent to the Upper Green to the west is additional town property where the Civil War Memorial sits. Behind the war memorial the land is mostly overgrown other than where the historic roller barn is. The area also is a gateway to the village as one approaches from Mack’s Mountain Road.

The proposed plan addresses a number of issues. A gateway sign and planting would announce the entry to the village. Tree planting along both sides of Church Street would create a perceived narrowing of the road and aid in calming traffic speed. The trees on the park side would establish separation between the park and the roadway with plenty of room left to play. A small bandstand could be built on the main green for summer concerts. The land adjacent to the Fire Station (now part of the hay field) could be mowed when necessary, an access built and used for overflow parking during special events. There are still the issues of pedestrian safety and vehicular sight lines that require additional attention.

The plan proposes the roller barn parcel be selectively cleared. The property could then be used as part of the walking path with a variety of settings for sitting, viewing and new war memorials. The existing and new war memorials would be set in areas of planting, terraces, landings, and seating.

### **Intersection**

The intersection and sidewalk concept plan is a compilation of comments from all the meetings, taking the most accepted elements from the previous three alternatives. The general idea is to make the intersection safe for pedestrians and vehicles by reducing the confusion of roadways and create a logical walk that connects present and future uses in the village center.

The proposed plan considers aligning Church Street and Old Cemetery as close to one another as possible by moving Old Cemetery and Church slightly south with turning radii to be adequate for trucks and emergency vehicles. The road at Jensen's would be for foot and bike traffic only. The knoll south of the intersection would be cut down by several feet to allow drivers a safer sight line to turning traffic. An island in front of the store is proposed to better define the parking, pedestrian, and driving functions. The future of the store, guild, and bus barn must be determined. The island and the triangular green space to the south could be used for seasonal plantings. Painted or textured crosswalks allow safe crossing for pedestrians and calm traffic traveling through the intersection.

### **Town Center**

The three town center alternatives are intended to present the wide array of possibilities available to the town in designing around the municipal offices, post office, and housing complex. The plans present the concepts of land swaps in the

case of the Gilman Housing lands and land acquisition in the case of the Land Trust lands. There is the question of adaptive reuse of Town Hall, adding on to the existing Town Hall or building a new Town Hall with a town green.

The plans portray various road and parking configurations for discussion. The options are one-way traffic flow, two-way traffic flow, single entry or a new road and building as in alternative 3. Lastly, the location of the existing gymnasium and tennis courts must be factored into the formula.

Town Center details to be considered are lighting, wayfinding signs, seasonal plantings and green space seating areas.

The final decisions on a plan for the Town Center are contingent on the housing study in progress, a needs evaluation of the current municipal space, a cost assessment of repairs or additions to existing facilities versus new facilities, exploration and market studies of commercial land uses, consensus on leaving the gymnasium where it is or building one at the school and the associated costs, consensus on tennis court location and reconstruction or relocation and new construction with cost assessments, lighting audit and energy efficient design, and finally, further public discussion of the results to find the solution that best meets the needs of the people.

### **Cemetery**

Cemetery lands can be linked to the rest of the village by pathways, and the lands reserved for future use could be available for picnic and other passive uses. Tree maintenance and replacement programs are already underway.

## Preliminary Implementation Schedule

In order to integrate the various elements of the draft plan presented in this report in a logical manner, the authors have developed the illustrative schedule on the following two pages. This project management schedule suggests the types of tasks and activities that might be taken over the next several years. It does not reflect any adopted plan, has not been subjected to economic analysis, and does

***The final plan and schedule must be flexible to adjust to realities, but also should be seen and used as the major blueprint for decisions and actions in the future.***

not reflect official town or village priorities. All of these are to come in the future after considerable discussion, study and consultation with experts in each planning area.

We thought it important to include such a schedule, however, to suggest the need for, and value of, a realistic sequence eventually and the inter-relationships among plan elements.

The bottom line with regard to the schedule is that it reflects the critical importance of developing a multi-year plan and implementation schedule based on costs, priorities and integration of plan elements. The final plan and schedule must be flexible to adjust to realities, but also should be seen and used as the major blueprint for decisions and actions in the future.

The Schedule differentiates between categories of activities (e.g., G-General Plan and Capital Improvement, T-Transportation, U-Utilities, H-Housing, L-Land Use, TH-Town Hall, and R-Recreation) and types of actions (e.g., Engineering Studies, Implementation Actions, etc.) For purposes of this chart, the plan activities have been sorted according to the order in which activities might begin.





## **Next Steps in the Planning Process**

While the authors emphasize that this report is only a first step, we have also identified further steps that are appropriate for the Town, and especially the Planning Commission, to consider. All of these steps, we believe, should be undertaken or started in the next year, and require the support and active involvement of the Selectboard and others.

1. Planning Commission should review the concept reflected in this report, identify important unanswered questions that need to be addressed, and determine a strategy for moving forward. Eventually, the elements of the village plan should be incorporated in the overall Town Plan, but it could also stand on its own.
2. Discussion among a variety of town groups and committees is essential. Recreation interests, the Cemetery Committee, the Conservation Commission, the Listers, Peacham Community Housing, Historical Association, Planning Commission, Library Board, Fire Department, Church, Selectboard are the most obvious. Almost every organization in town has some stake in the future of the village. Each should have, and take advantage of, an opportunity to weigh in on the concept and how the Town should move forward and how its organization can play an effective role. A first step is to share this report with others.
3. The Planning Commission should prepare a draft capital improvements program with the aid of a municipal financial expert and in consultation with the Selectboard. It is critical to determine the magnitude of the projected costs of various elements of the plan and identify creative ways by which these costs can be met. This may include identifying available outside funding, grant-application writing, establishing municipal reserve funds, and creating opportunities and incentives for private investment.
4. One or more public meetings to discuss the strategy of the Planning Commission and the Town are essential to ensure that questions are answered, concerns expressed, and the general benefits to the Town maximized. There will be disagreements, but a civil discourse can provide confidence to Town leaders that they can develop a plan that has the understanding and support of town residents.
5. Printing and distribution of a concept report will be essential so that every family and organization can learn what the Planning Commission is considering. This report can provide a basis for the Planning Commission report. Typically, such exposure provides the impetus for interested people to get more deeply involved.
6. Village Center Designation by the State of Vermont, originally obtained in 2003, must be renewed by the Planning Commission and Selectboard. An even stronger case can be made for such designation in 2006, and it provides a sign to state and federal agencies that Peacham deserves priority consideration in assistance and funding. The Town has already benefited from this designation.
7. The current housing study (now being undertaken by Burnt Rock Associates through the auspices of Housing Vermont) will be completed and then be more fully integrated into this concept. One way to ensure this is to involve Peacham Community Housing. Clearly, decisions regarding senior and other affordable housing in the village are key ingredients in the concept and in Peacham's future.
8. Town officials should meet with regional and state officials and members of the Small Growth Collaborative regarding the village planning concept with an eye to getting input

from these agencies and groups at an early stage. This early collaboration can be critical in ensuring success and timely delivery of monies and assistance.

9. The Planning Commission and Selectboard should mandate a recreation plan for the village and town and a housing plan for the village that recognize the importance of these two functions and their integration into the other town functions and residents' activities. Modest funds to support the housing plan are available through the Vermont Housing Finance Agency. Comparable funds may be available for continuing the planning already initiated by the Recreation Committee.
10. A Town Hall study focusing on a needs assessment for municipal functions and offices for the future should be started. This could help in the consideration of the most cost effective ways that the Town Hall can be used, again with an eye to how the building and its uses fit into village life. Important functions may stay within the building, others might well be moved to other space in town.

All of these steps can begin in the next year, but they will require strong leadership and commitment. The Planning Commission and Selectboard should consider establishing a subcommittee of individuals who will commit to moving the process along, providing progress reports, and developing a report in 2007 of progress and next steps. Under the grant to the Planning Commission from the Smart Growth Collaborative, there are funds to support the gradual refinement of the concept plan. Other funds may also be available to assist in this effort.