

# BELLOWS FALLS ISLAND AND UNDER THE HILL BROWNFIELDS AREA WIDE PLAN

MAY 20, 2022

PREPARED FOR:

THE TOWN OF ROCKINGHAM, VERMONT

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

The potential for continued reinvestment and redevelopment of the Bellows Falls Island and the Under the Hill area presents a unique opportunity for the Village of Bellows Falls, the Town of Rockingham, and the entire southeast region of Vermont.

The size, location, existing infrastructure, and physical features of the nearly 45-acre project area suggests the potential for a wide range of uses and opportunities. These assets include:

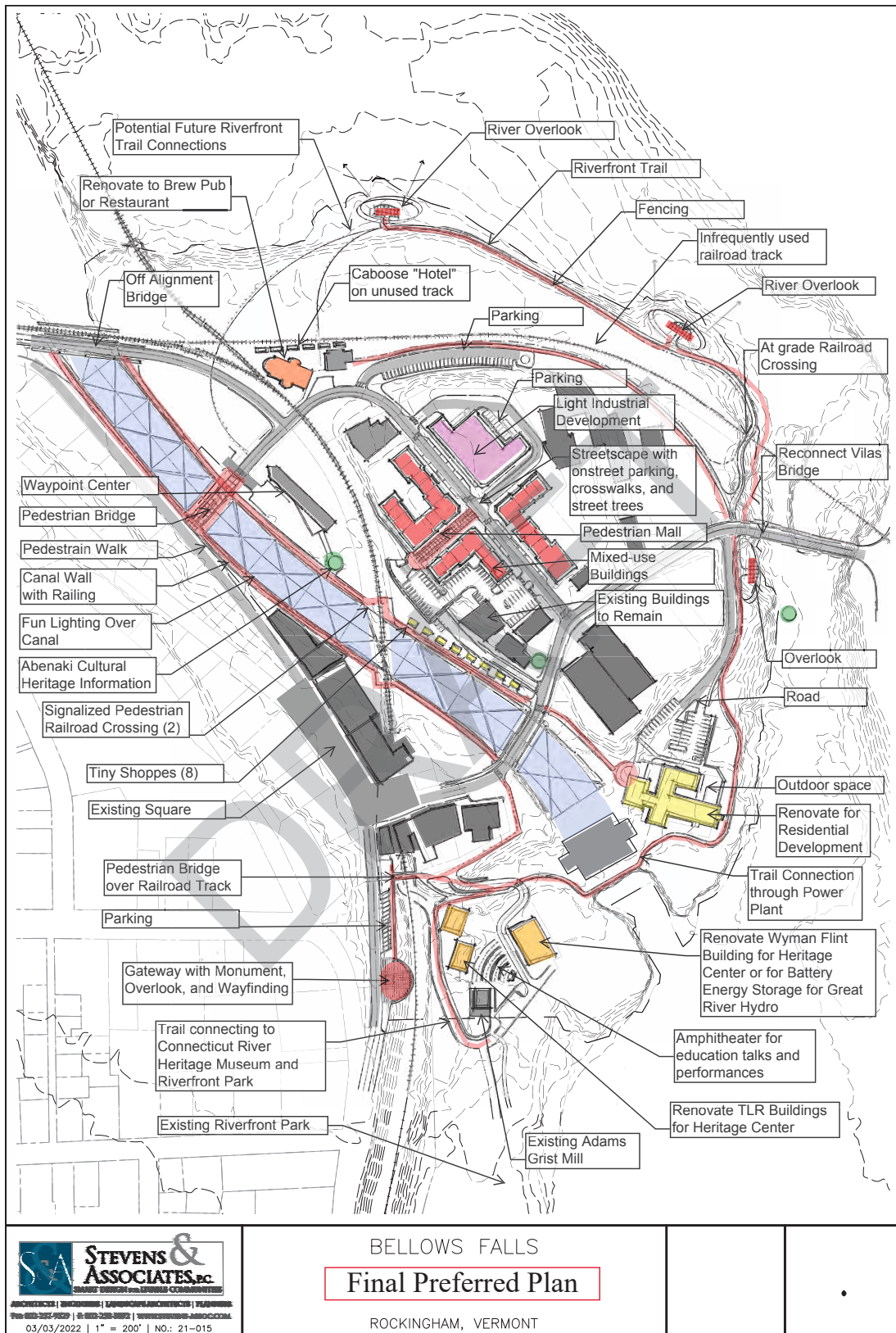
- Located along the banks of the Connecticut River;
- Located along an active rail line;
- Direct connection to the New England power grid;
- Existing water and sewer infrastructure;
- Direct proximity to downtown Bellows Falls;
- Close proximity to Interstate 91; and,
- Directly adjacent to New Hampshire.

In addition, the project area's unique cultural and historic importance, as well as the adjacent natural beauty of the Connecticut River valley, suggests a potential reuse that could also be tied to the land and its history.

This study, looked to develop a coherent plan for this area that is both aspirational and feasible. To accomplish this, the consultant team from Nobis and Stevens & Associates first worked to understand the physical conditions of the project area, including the complex issues related to brownfields. The team then developed a number of alternatives for how the project area could be reused or redeveloped in ways that would work with the physical conditions, history, culture, existing businesses, and other uses of the study area. In addition, the study looked to create elements that would add interest and character to the area—helping to further advance Bellows Falls as a unique and sought-after destination.

Input from the community was very important to the project process. A series of public stakeholder meetings were held early in the process to discuss the overall project and to receive input on potential uses and ideas for the study area. A second public meeting was held to discuss four alternative redevelopment concepts. Input from this meeting, including discussion and voting, led to the selection of the elements that make up the Final Preferred Plan.

The result of the study is a thoughtful and feasible plan for the future of the Island and Under the Hill that addresses a wide range of community needs including housing, job creation, increased tax base, recreational opportunities, and celebrating the history and culture of the area.



FINAL PLAN GRAPHIC

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

For many centuries, the study area and other nearby land was an important fishing and cultural place for the nomadic Abenaki tribes. Settlement of the town by English colonists' dates back to 1753, who called it Great Falls but later renamed the town after Colonel Benjamin Bellows, a prominent landowner.

The area of the Bellows Falls Island has historically been important due to the transportation and industrial capacity related to the water of the Connecticut River, and the significant change in river elevation at the falls. Originally the Island was not a separate "island," but the development of canals related to transportation, mill power, and eventually electrical power generation, led to the Island being a separate and distinct part of Bellows Falls.

The direct connection between the study area and downtown Bellows Falls has been a symbiotic relationship between housing, retail and cultural establishments, and large employers of the area. The Island was home to many paper mills such as the Bellows Falls Times Building, Moore and Thompson Paper Mill Complex, and Robertson Paper Company Complex.

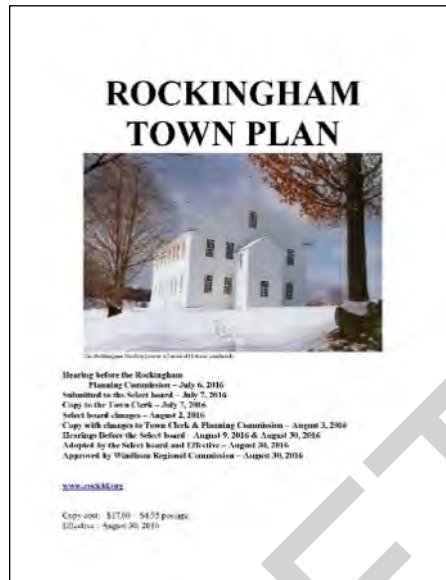
The railroad has also played a critical role in the history of Bellows Falls. Rail lines have passed through the study area for over a century providing transportation for the paper, textiles, and other good produced in the area, as well as milk and other agricultural products brought to the Island for shipment to Keene, Concord, Boston, and beyond. Rail service has transitioned over the years to primarily long-haul freight and Amtrak passenger service.

The Robertson Paper Mill is both a key element of the history of Bellow Falls and a key element in the current opportunity to re-envision and redevelop the Island. It operated from the early 1900s to the mid 1980s as one of the largest producers of waxed paper in the U.S. It was demolished in 2019 with cleanup being funded with federal, state, and local support, including grants from the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup Program. This effort has opened up a significant area of land for redevelopment and has led to this study and other initiatives related to redevelopment of the Island as a whole.

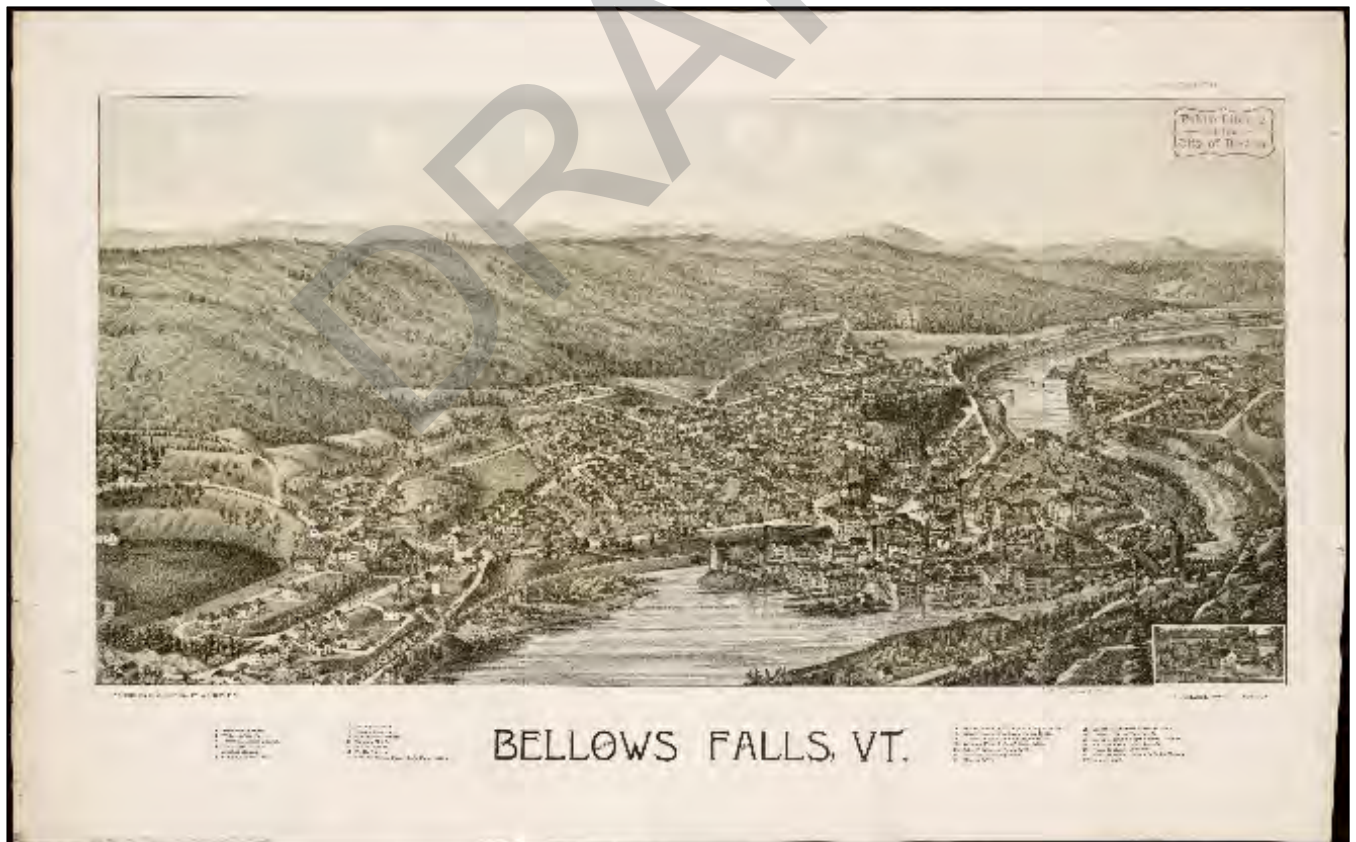
Other initiatives recently discussed and moving forward concurrently with this study include the reconnection with the Vilas Bridge, to allow vehicle traffic once again between the Island and New Hampshire, and the creation of the off-alignment bridge to connect the Island to Canal Street and Rockingham Road. Currently, efforts are underway to rehabilitate the train station for a new use.

Ongoing efforts to improve the Under the Hill area include the recent development of the River Front Park and the associated recreational trail and labyrinth. The Connecticut River Heritage Center is also working diligently to create convert the former T.L. Riley (TLR) site to a museum.

This study is the result of a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Windham Regional Commission.



TOWN OF ROCKINGHAM - TOWN PLAN



1886 BIRDS-EYE MAP

## STUDY AREA VISIT

On May 7, 2021, the project started in earnest with a site visit to the Bellows Falls Island and the area known as Under the Hill. Representatives from Nobis and Stevens & Associates met with representatives of the Town to walk the site and to better understand first-hand the study area, the history of the island, and the current state of the restoration and redevelopment effort.

The team walked the site to view and photograph much of the 45 acres. This was an important opportunity to understand first-hand the scale of the site, as well as the multiple sub-areas which could each be reused in a variety of ways or be included in a larger overall effort.

This opportunity underlined the complex relationship between former industrial sites and uses, with current businesses, artists, and activities. It also highlighted the opportunities to reimagine an interesting and vital place that could be.



ABOVE: SITE VISIT CONDUCTED MAY 7, 2021



ABOVE: SITE VISIT CONDUCTED MAY 7, 2021

## SITE UNDERSTANDING

Early in the process Stevens & Associates and Nobis developed a series of maps to better understand and document the site and context. This included a base map that depicted property boundaries and topography, and also included a recent high-resolution aerial photograph. A second, similar map used an aerial image from the early 1960s to help document and understand the changes that have occurred in the project area over the last 50+ years.

A second set of maps looked at items on the site that would restrict use in some way, or items that were strong assets of the site that might help direct the thinking of new ideas for the future use of the site. These include:

- Site Planning Assets Map
- Visual / Place Making Assets Map
- Site Planning Restriction Map
- Private Ownership Map

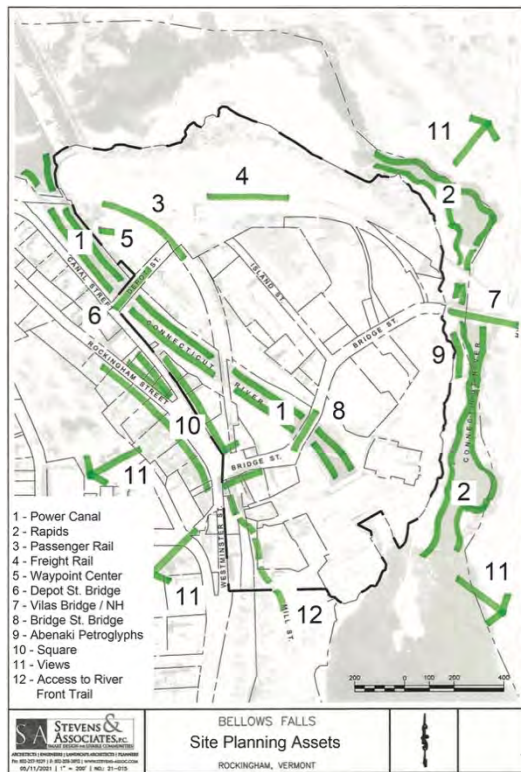
In addition to these, mapping from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources was accessed to better understand land development restrictions. This included mapping of wetlands, floodplains; rare, threatened, and endangered species; and other considerations that might impact development.



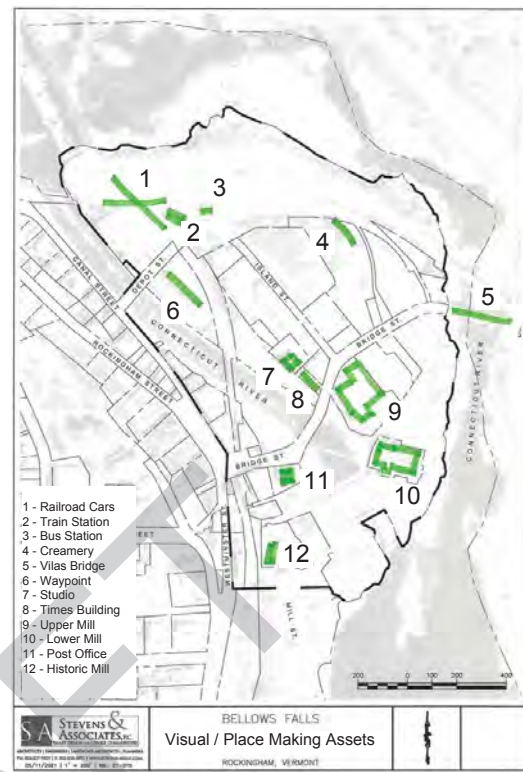
AERIAL OF EXISTING SITE: OVERALL BASE MAP



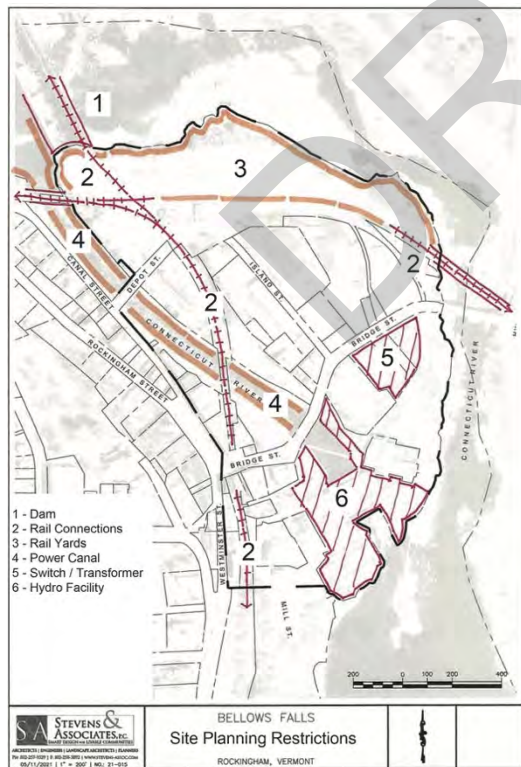
HISTORICAL AERIAL: HISTORIC BASE MAP



SITE PLANNING ASSETS



VISUAL/PLACEMAKING ASSETS



SITE PLANNING RESTRICTIONS



PRIVATE OWNERSHIP



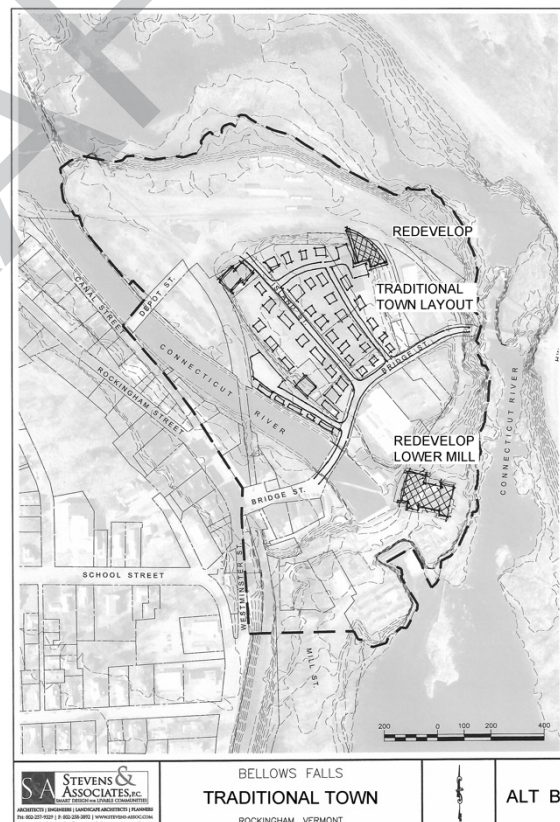
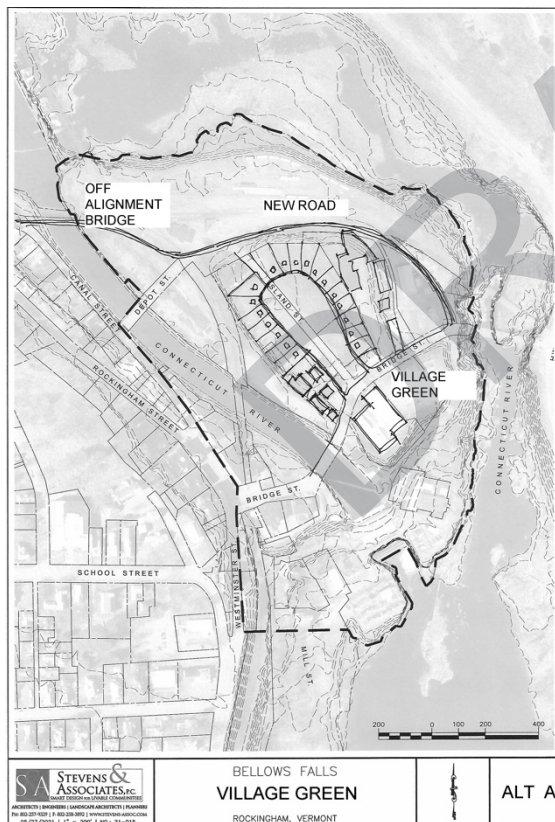
NOBIS – ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS – SITE OVERVIEW

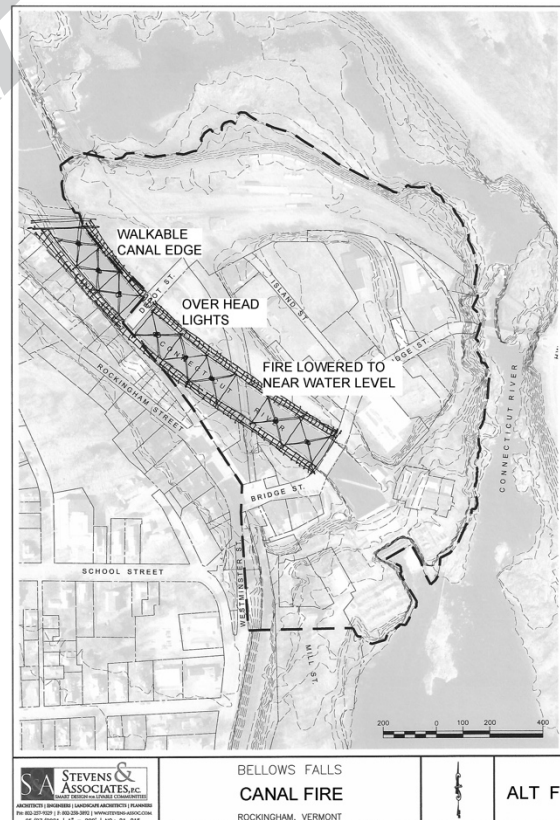
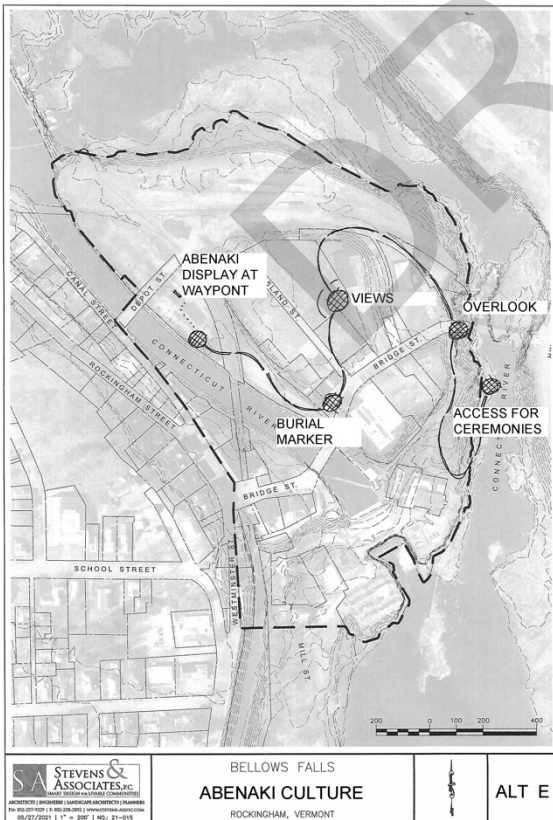
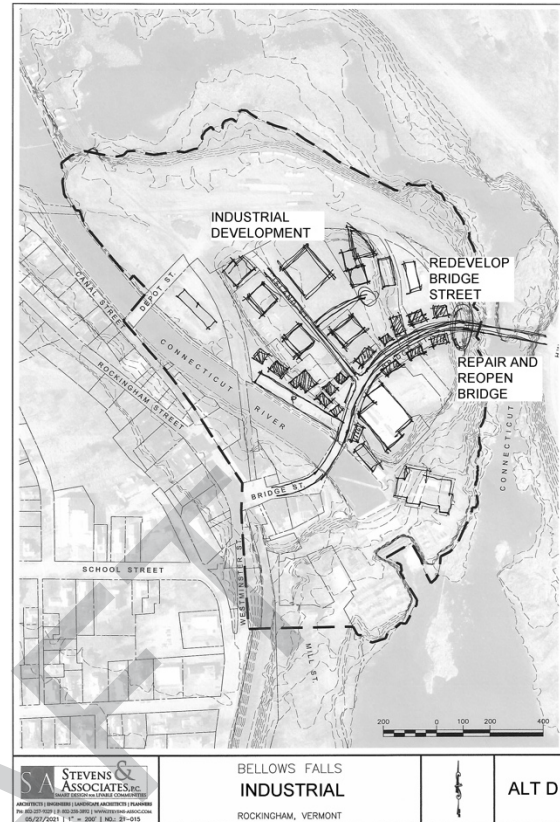
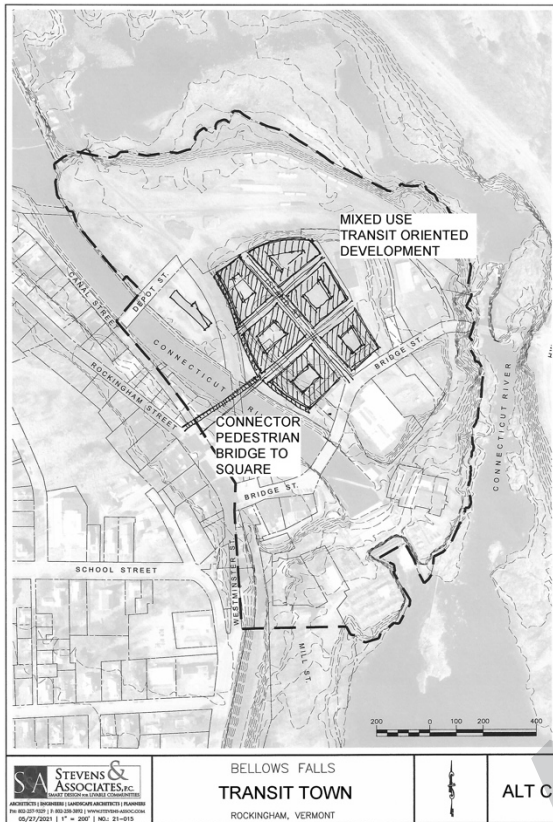
## EARLY CONCEPTS

The next phase of the project involved creating a series of ideas or concepts for the study area. These concepts were sketched out to better understand the viability of an idea and to better understand the “fit” between ideas and the space that could be available to accomplish an idea. Ideas explored include those discussed at the Study Area Walk as well as other ideas developed by the consultant team.

The goal at this point in the process is to create concepts and explore ideas without significant editing. This allows ideas to be put down on paper without the need for them to be a fully developed or to be a perfect fit for the area. This also allows for a level of creative problem solving that produces potential solutions that would not be considered if their viability needed to be confirmed immediately.

Below are a series of the more complete quick concepts. These are based on many other very quick sketches and studies undertaken during this phase.





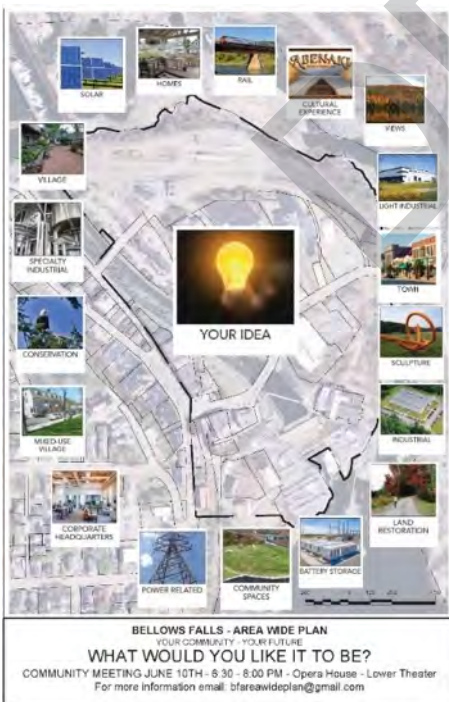
## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – ROUND 1

On June 10, 2021, a series of meetings were held with stakeholder groups and the general public. The goal of these meetings was to inform the public about the project, review the consultant team's understanding of the project area, including the impact of brownfields, and discuss priorities and ideas for redevelopment of the study area. The meeting was held in-person with the option to attend via Zoom due to COVID and social distancing concerns.

There were three different meetings held that day. These meetings were recorded by Falls Area Community TV and are currently available through the Town's website or on YouTube. While the meetings were open the focus for each meeting was:

- Community Organizations
- Property and Business Owners Focus Group
- General Public

In addition to reviewing the information about the overall project and the study area, these meetings were used as a way to collect ideas and information about what the community would like to see in the future. To assist with this, an idea board was developed to spur conversation and ideas. A three-dimensional model was also used to help people better understand the project area. These both led to good discussion from the group, including those on Zoom and in-person attendees.



IDEA BOARD



IMAGE OF MODEL

## PLAN ALTERNATIVES (A-D)

From the early ideas discussed with the community and the initial sketches, four concept plans were developed. These explored ways to solve the problems and concerns related to the project area as well as ways to develop and include the ideas supported by the community. Along with the need to explore a range of solutions, there are several reasons to develop multiple concept plans for a project, these include:

- Developing multiple solutions forces a level of exploration and creative problem solving beyond the initial “obvious” design solution.
- It allows the community to compare and contrast ideas, which can spur input and discussion that does not happen when a single option is presented.
- Multiple ideas often allow community members to feel that they can contribute other additional ideas, which are often valuable because of local knowledge.
- It allows for the best ideas from each option to be mixed and matched in the next round of plan development
- It shows that multiple solutions are viable, which may become important if the preferred solution proves unattainable.

### The Alternatives:

**Canal Focus** – This plan looked to take advantage of the visual interest of the power canal to create a unique destination. It envisions walkways along the edge of the canal and overhead lighting crisscrossing the canal. Other plan elements include several eating establishments and an amphitheater integrated into the Connecticut River Heritage Center.

**Walk and Culture Focus** – This plan developed a series of walking opportunities including an inner loop along existing streets and an outer loop with River Overlooks. It also included a series of locations to provide information about the Abenaki people and culture.

**Mixed-Use Village** – This alternative focused on the potential to develop the core area of the Island into a transit-oriented residential development with shops and restaurants on the first floor. Other ideas in this plan include renovating the Lower Mill for residential use, and a new arrival and way-finding point for the Village of Bellows Falls.

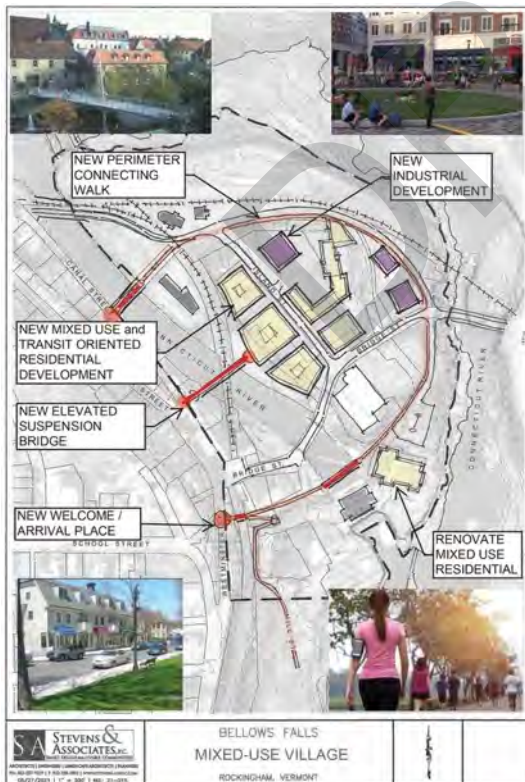
**Industrial Focus** – This plan looked to include a substantial amount of industrial development in the core area of the Island. Other ideas include renovating the Lower Mill to house a power-intensive use, and some small-scale mixed-use development.



CANAL FOCUS CONCEPT PLAN



WALKING FOCUS CONCEPT PLAN



RESIDENTIAL FOCUS PLAN



INDUSTRIAL FOCUS PLAN

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – ROUND 2

On August 12, 2021, a public meeting was held with the primary focus of presenting and discussing the four alternative concept plans. In addition, the goal of the overall project was discussed and input from the first round of meetings was reviewed.

The meeting was held in person with the option to attend via Zoom as well, due to COVID and social distancing concerns. The hybrid meeting proved somewhat difficult to manage due to competing input from in-person and on-line sources, however in the end the preferences of the community were made clear. Additional discussion and voting was allowed after the meeting to allow those on-line to better review the concept plans. Here is a tally of the voting in the presentation room.

### Site Uses Strongly Supported

- Riverfront Trail (9)
- Abenaki Cultural Places (9)
- Canal Walk with Fun Lighting (7)
- Station Café (7)

### Site Uses Moderately Supported

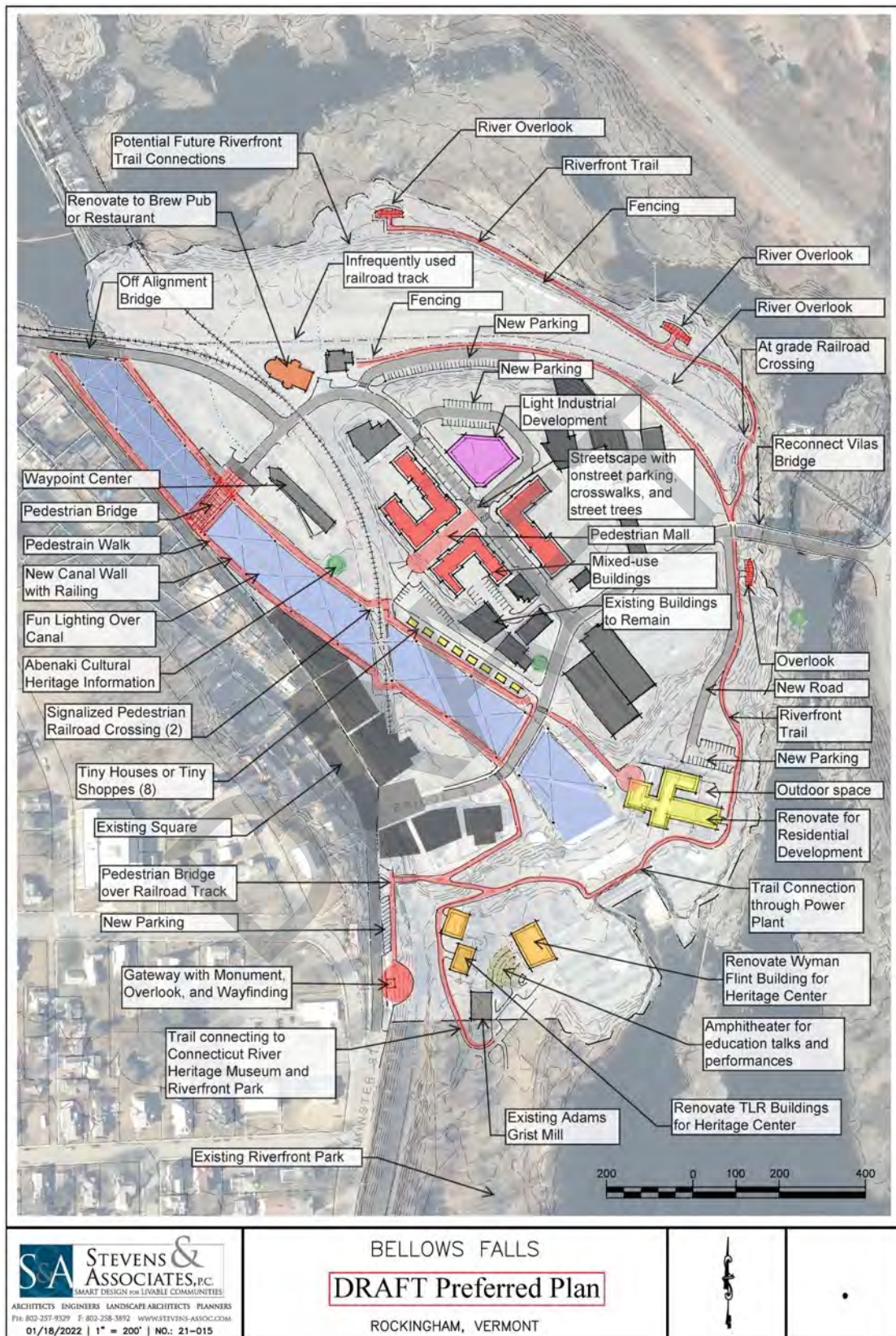
- Industrial Development (6)
- Tiny Houses (6)
- Mixed-use Transit-oriented development (4)
- Renovate lower mill for mixed-use residential (4)
- Amphitheater (3)
- Renovate lower mill for power use (3)

## DRAFT PREFERRED PLAN

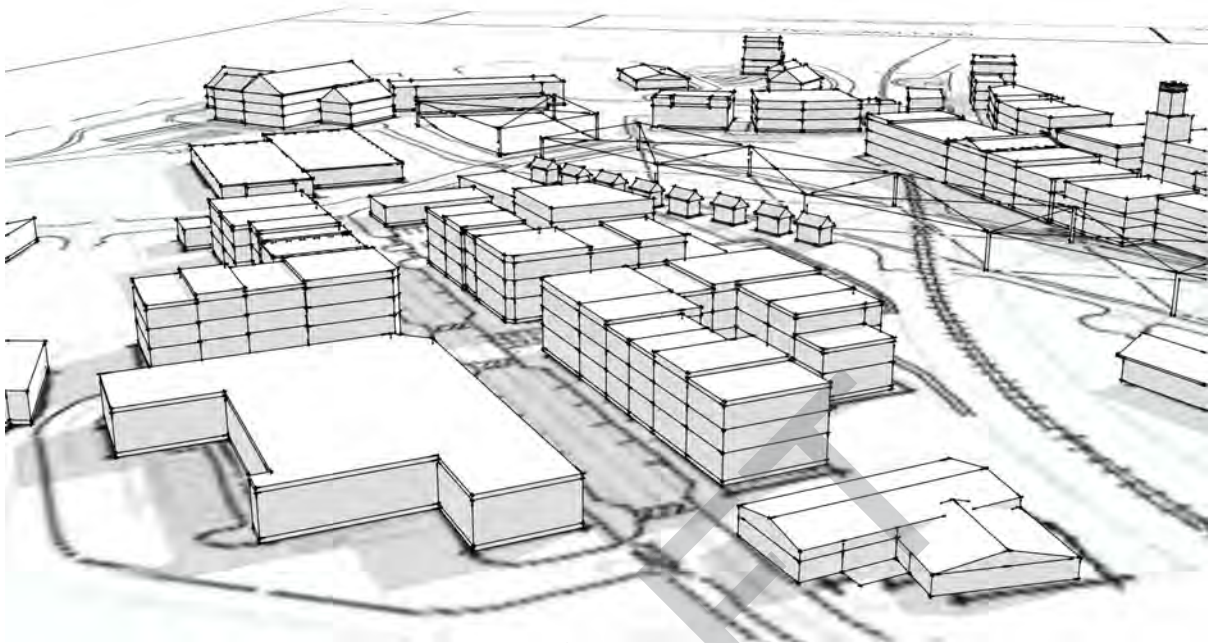
From the input received during Public Meeting #2 a Draft Master Plan was developed to document the preferences of the community and put forth a coherent plan for final input and discussion.

This plan took many of the ideas from Canal Focus Concept from Option A(above) but included the Mixed-Use Housing from Option C, the Historic Preservation from Option B, the Abenaki Cultural Display and the Recreational Access shown in Option E, and the Industrial Development shown in Option D.

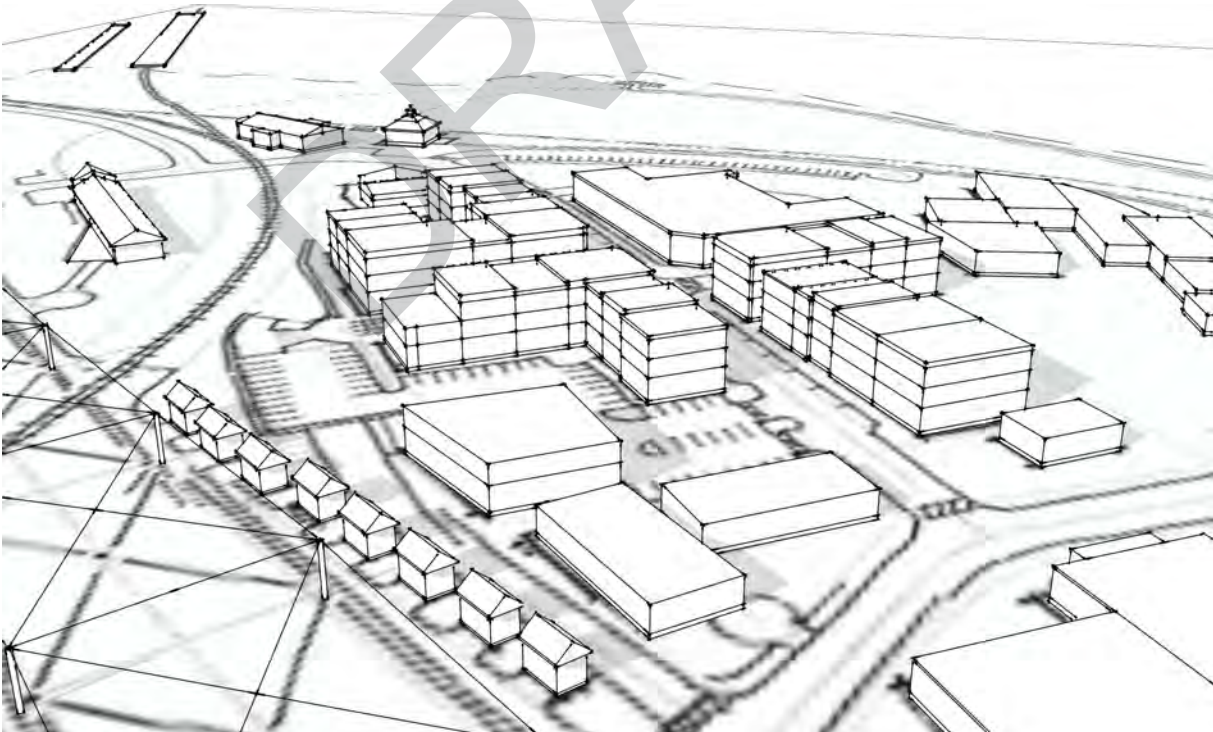




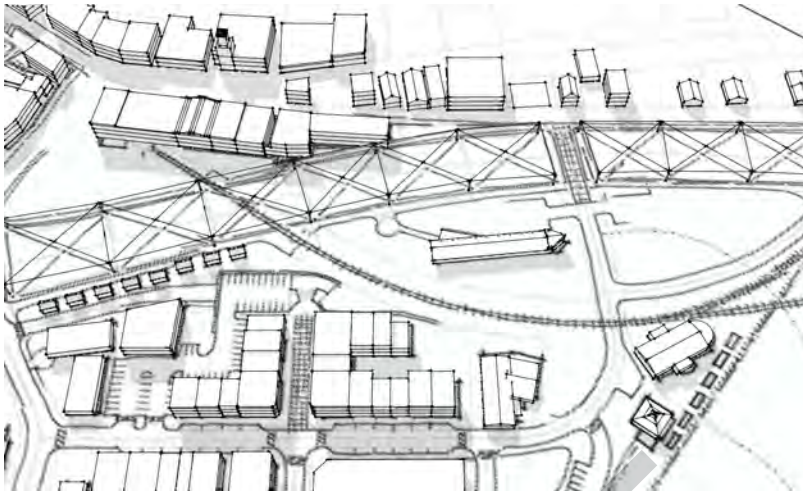
DETAILED PLAN



BIRDSEYE VIEW FROM NORTH



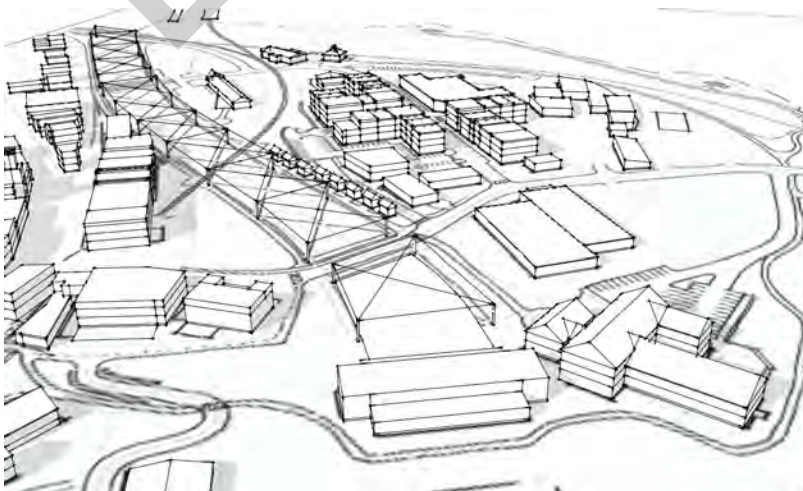
BIRDSEYE FROM SOUTH



CANAL FOCUS



OVERHEAD VIEW FROM NORTH



OVERHEAD VIEW FROM SOUTH

## CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL PRODUCTS

This Area Wide Plan addresses the primary concerns related to the study and sets a vision for the reuse, redevelopment, and reinvigoration of the Island and Under the Hill. When implemented, the study area will once again become a vibrant element in the Town of Rockingham and the Village of Bellows Falls. The primary elements of the plan include:

- A vibrant mixed-use village with housing, caf  s and restaurants, on-street parking and sidewalks, and crosswalks for pedestrians.
- A regionally known canal walk that will attract tourists to Bellows Falls for strolling along the canal and for special events.
- Additional light industrial development that will provide employment opportunities, work-force training, and increased tax base.
- Recreation in the area with the significant additions to the existing walking and trail opportunities.
- Support efforts to develop the area as a cultural destination with artists and museums, as well as increasing historical and cultural information.

### Economic Impact

Another critical aspect of the plan is the economic development potential and increase to the property tax base contained in the plan:

- Over 170,000 Gross Square Feet of new or renovated building construction,
- In today's construction climate this would equal at least \$1M in construction value,
- And, likely generate as much as in property taxes per year.

### Cost

The cost to complete this project will be substantial, however, much of the costs for the building construction depicted in the study would come from property owners or developers looking to make site improvements to properties.

Public improvements will also be costly, however, these should be shared between the Federal government, State government, and the Town. A concerted effort should be made to involve the appropriate state agencies in projects related to housing, economic development, brownfield remediation, recreation, cultural heritage, and tourism. This plan weaves together all these elements in a way that should be supported at the state, regional, and local level.

## Fact Sheets

A critical final product of the Area Wide Plan is the development of individual “Fact Sheets” for each of the primary initiatives. The goal is a clear, concise document that can be shared with others to describe and promote individual aspects of the plan.

These fact sheets are also meant to address the critical steps that will need to be taken to accomplish the goal, as well as the significant impediments and critical partners in the process.

## Report

This report is the final element of the Area Wide Plan. It is intended primarily to summarize the process of developing the final plan, including:

- Substantial investigation of the existing conditions of the study area and the community including: a site walk and photography of important aspects of the study area, mapping of natural resources of the area, and mapping of known environmental concerns and brownfields.
- The development of multiple ideas and alternatives for the reuse, redevelopment and reinvigoration of the study area, including multiple early sketch plan ideas and four proposed alternative plans.
- A robust public engagement process including meetings with stakeholders and a public meeting to present alternative plan and receive input that led the preferred plan.

## NEXT STEPS

This report sets the stage for a number of continuing efforts:

- Share this plan – This plan describes the hopes of the community for a valuable and important area of Bellows Falls. Partners within the Region and State should be informed of plan and invited to Rockingham to see firsthand the available opportunities and vision for the future.
- Develop political support – Work with State and Federal representatives to garner support for the plan. Use the Master Plan Graphic, the Fact Sheets, and this report to inform representatives of the potential benefits to the community and constituents.
- Continue remediation and cleanup efforts – Continue working with the EPA, the State of Vermont, and Windham Regional Commission in regard to the cleanup of brownfield sites on the Island that could be beneficial to the industrial, commercial, or residential development depicted in the plan.
- Grant opportunities – Use this plan and report as a tool when seeking additional grants or other funding that could support reuse of the site. This should include grants at the state level with the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, as well as potential US Economic Development Administration grant funding opportunities.
- Consider steps the Town of Rockingham could take through revisions to current town plan, committee structure, regulations, connections to region groups, or other efforts that might help set the stage for reuse of the Island and Under the Hill.



## Canal Walk with Lighting

Transform the existing power canal into a regional destination for strolling, outdoor café seating, and special events.

Create a walkable edge along the existing power canal, including improved canal walls, pedestrian walkways with good quality pavers, decorative railings, benches, and other pedestrian amenities. Tall poles along each side of the canal (approximately every 100') will support overhead lights and other attractive elements. At grade pedestrian crossings of the railroad with appropriate signalization will likely be required.

This will be a new, signature element for the community. Celebrating the connection between water, power generation, rail, history, indigenous cultures, people, and the community.

<b>Examples:</b>	Providence, RI – Water Fire Shelburne, MA – Bridge of Flowers San Antonio, TX – River Walk
<b>Timing:</b>	2 – 3 years, once permitting and design are undertaken in earnest. Construction could be connected to the short-term closing of the power canal for removal of the Depot Street Bridge in 2025.
<b>Leader:</b>	Great River Hydro
<b>Partners:</b>	Town of Rockingham (community input) Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance (local advocacy) Bellows Falls Historic Preservation Commission (input related to historic elements) Windham Regional Commission (regional support) Vermont Arts Council (support for cultural heritage initiatives) Vermont Department of Tourism (support for tourism related initiatives)
<b>Next Steps:</b>	Publish Area Wide Plan Discuss collaborative effort/potential with Great River Hydro Work with Railroad on at-grade crossings Work with Abenaki Nation on appropriate cultural heritage information Work with adjacent property owners Apply for grant funding to support design effort Develop schematic level design
<b>Project Details:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 3,200 Lineal Feet (LF) of walkway (1,600 each side)</li> <li>• Approximately 3,000 LF of improved Canal wall</li> <li>• Approximately 3,000 LF of railing</li> <li>• 2 at-grade pedestrian railroad crossings</li> <li>• 27 poles (13 east side, 14 west side)</li> <li>• 4,500 LF of cable / lighting strings</li> </ul>

- Potential Funding:** Great River Hydro  
Tourism related grants and programs  
Economic development related grants and programs
- Primary Properties:** Parcel 246060019 – Great River Hydro – 12 Mill Street  
Parcel 234500029 – 29 Canal Street – Sewer Pump Station  
Canal Street ROW (near Depot Street)  
Railroad ROW (track and bridge over canal)
- Other Properties:** Parcel 234480020 – 20 Depot Street – Sewer Pump Station  
Parcel 234480050 – 54 Depot Street – State Owned (edge of parking lot)  
Parcel 234480017 – Waypoint Center (edge of parking lot)  
Parcel 236060012 – 0 Bridge Street (edge of parking lot)  
Parcel 234500007 – 7 Canal Street (Adjacent – possible impact)  
Parcel 234500001 – 1 Canal Street (Adjacent – possible impact)

### Existing Conditions:

The water in the canal has strong visual interest however, the canal walls and edge condition have a deteriorated look that detracts from the area. Several portions of the site adjacent to the canal are walkable but are not attractive and are not connected. Unobstructed water flow related to the Great River Hydro must be maintained.

### Environmental Concerns and Brownfields:

- The area is likely downgradient of several dry cleaners (source of CVOCs) and closed gas stations (source of petroleum).
- Near the south end of the walkway the property at 10 Bridge Street is the location of a former electrical substation and is a VTDEC State Site with a Land Use Restriction (LUR).
- The existing Great River Hydro Power Station also is flagged as a VTDEC State Site with a LUR.
- See Site Inventory of Target Study Area for additional / detailed information. (Note: Sites are sorted by street address.)

### Recommended Next Steps:

- ASTM Phase I ESA
- Phase II Site Investigation (shallow soil assessment)
- Review Land Use Restrictions (LURs) for 10 Bridge Street Parcel and Great River Hydro Site

See Site Inventory of Target Study Area for additional / detailed information.  
(Note: Sites are sorted by street address.)

### Necessary infrastructure:

- Improvements to the canal walls, adjacent pedestrian walking areas
- Bury phone and power lines along the Canal and adjacent area
- Pedestrian railroad crossings
- Improved access to power for lighting, displays, and events

## Gateway and Overlook

Develop a new gateway element to the downtown including new parking, overlook and wayfinding information.

This will be a significant improvement to the site as well as an important marker for visitors coming to Bellows Falls for the first time. The overlook area will provide outstanding views of the railroad, Connecticut River Heritage Center, Riverfront Park and the Connecticut River to the south. It will provide wayfinding to local attractions as well information about local businesses.

<b>Examples:</b>	River Overlook Park in Cohoes, NY
<b>Timing:</b>	1-2 years, once project design and permitting is undertaken in earnest
<b>Leader:</b>	Town of Rockingham
<b>Partners:</b>	Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance (local advocacy) Windham Regional Commission (regional support) Vermont Arts Council (support for cultural heritage initiatives) Vermont Department of Tourism (support for tourism related initiatives)
<b>Next Steps:</b>	Publish Area Wide Plan Discuss Brownfield Cleanup with WRC and VT DEC Work with property owners Apply for grant funding to support design effort Develop schematic level design Apply for grant funding or find other support for construction
<b>Project Details:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5,000 square foot plaza space with monument and overlook</li> <li>• Significant wayfinding signage</li> <li>• Business directory</li> <li>• Visitor parking for 12 cars</li> <li>• Connection to pedestrian bridge spanning railroad corridor and Mill Street</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Funding:</b>	State Economic Development State Tourism
<b>Properties:</b>	Parcel 235030046 – 46 Westminster St. – Meatland Property Parcel 235030014 – 14 Westminster St. – Town Owned Parking Lot Westminster Street ROW Railroad ROW

### Existing Conditions:

The Meatland Building is currently in a deteriorated condition and is a VTDEC Hazardous site. The property is at approximately elevation 320 (feet above sea level) while the adjacent land to the east and to the south ranges in elevation from 295 at the adjacent railroad track to 225 at the banks of the Connecticut River allowing views to the east and the southeast.

**Environmental Concerns and Brownfields:**

- 46 Westminster Street (Meatland) is a VT DEC State Hazardous Waste Site and has recently been the location of car battery storage. PAHs and metals (arsenic and lead) in soil.
- 46 Westminster Street (Meatland) Building contains hazardous building materials.
- 14 Westminster Street is noted as a Historic Drycleaner (Chlorinated VOCs in groundwater).
- Railroad ROW parcels – typical concerns include petroleum, PAHs and metals.

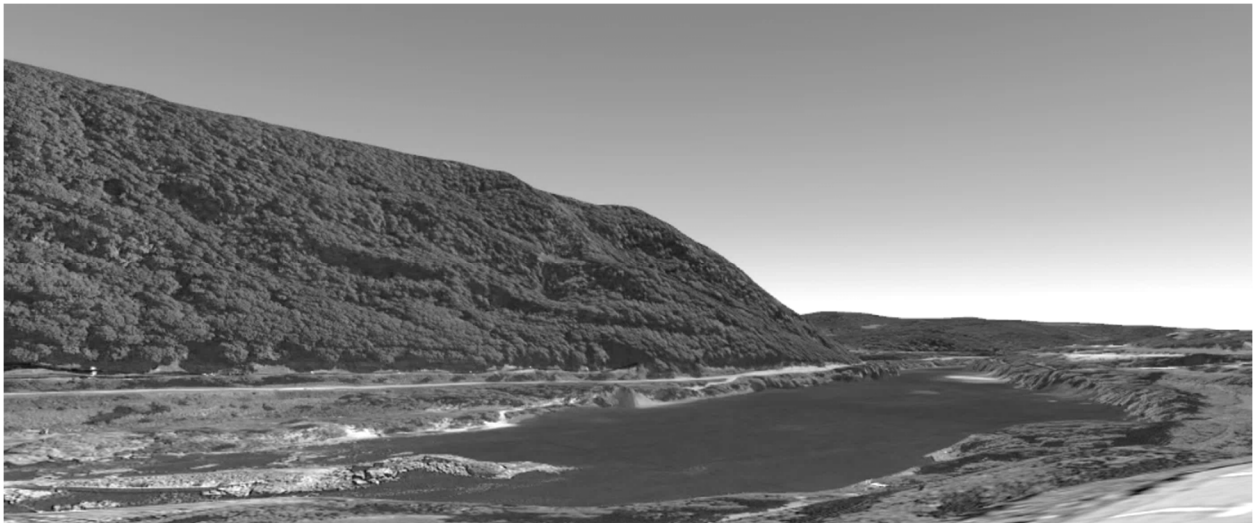
**Recommended Next Steps:**

- ASTM Phase I ESA
- Hazardous Building Materials Assessment (Meatland – 46 Westminster St)
- Vapor Intrusion Evaluation (Meatland – 46 Westminster St)
- Re-evaluation of Corrective Action Plan (CAP) in relation to proposed development

See Site Inventory of Target Study Area for additional / detailed information.  
(Note: Sites are sorted by street address.)

**Necessary infrastructure:**

No significant infrastructure improvements will be needed for this project.



View from overlook of Connecticut River Valley

## Connecticut River Heritage Center

Transform the existing TLR and Wyman Flint properties and buildings into the Connecticut River Heritage Center. The project will include the Adams Grist Mill Museum and its working, interactive grist mill.

Efforts related to the project have been underway for since 2001 with several studies and plans undertaken over the years. Most recently control of the buildings and project was transferred to the Sustainable Valley Group which is working to move this project forward.

Project will also include improved pedestrian and vehicle connections to the existing downtown and the Island as well as the construction of a small amphitheater which could be used for educational discussions related to the Connecticut River Heritage Center and as an outdoor performance venue.

<b>Examples:</b>	Museum of Our Industrial Heritage, Greenfield, MA Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation, Waltham, MA
<b>Timing:</b>	3-4 years once project design and permitting are undertaken in earnest
<b>Leader:</b>	Sustainable Valley Group (owner of Wyman Flint, lease holder of TLR) Bellows Falls Historical Society (owner of Grist Mill)
<b>Partners:</b>	Town of Rockingham (public funding related to access east of rail tunnel) Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance (local advocacy) Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (development expertise) Windham Regional Commission (support for brownfields related efforts) Vermont Arts Council (support for arts / heritage related tourism) Vermont Department of Tourism (support for tourism related initiatives)
<b>Next Steps:</b>	Publish Area Wide Plan Communicate with state partners Apply for grant funding to support design effort Develop an updated schematic level design for the project
<b>Project Details:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Renovate former T. L. Riley Building including:</li><li>• Russell Building (northern building)</li><li>• Moore Building (middle building)</li><li>• Renovate former Wyman Flint Building</li><li>• Incorporate working, interactive grist mill</li><li>• New pedestrian and vehicle access</li><li>• Small amphitheater and band shell</li></ul>
<b>Potential Funding:</b>	Tourism related grants and programs Economic development related grants and programs

**Properties:** Parcel 234220020 – 14 Mill Street – TLR Complex  
Parcel 234220024 – 26 Mill Street – Wyman Flint Mill  
Parcel 235020057 – No Address – Steep bank behind Howard Block  
Parcel 245060019 – Great River Hydro (access road)

**Existing Conditions:**

TLR building is in deteriorated condition and will take substantial effort to renovate. Wyman Flint building has some structural damage. Adams Grist Mills brick façade is in need of repair.

**Environmental Concerns and Brownfields:**

- The TLR Parcel has 1 VT DEC Brownfields Site and 3 VT DEC State Sites on the property.
- The Adams Grist Mill Parcel has a Land Use Restriction (LUR) on a portion of the Parcel that is within the Study Area.
- Potential Hazardous Building Materials (asbestos and LBP) associated with structures (Russell, Moore and Wyman Flint) The town-owned parcel at the rear of Howard Block is undeveloped but has a steep bank. Suspect petroleum and/or hazardous substances in soil due to proximity to former paper mills.

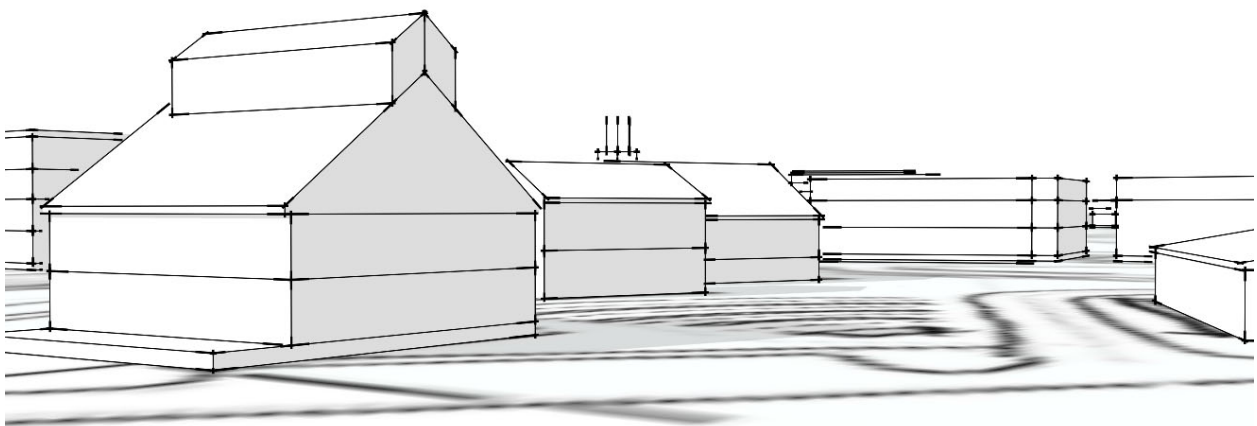
**Recommended Next Steps:**

- ASTM Phase I ESA
- Hazardous Building Materials Assessments

See Site Inventory of Target Study Area for additional / detailed information.  
(Note: Sites are sorted by street address.)

**Necessary Infrastructure:**

- Upgrades to electrical power
- Repairs to brick façade
- Accessibility upgrades



Sketch image of Connecticut River Heritage Center

## Lower Mill Residential Development

Renovate the Historic Lower Mill into a high-end residential building with views to the Connecticut River and Mount Kilburn.

The project would be adjacent to walking trails and have good connections to nearby shops and restaurants. Portions of the building will likely need to be removed due to deterioration, and also to accommodate the needs of a residential building. Remaining portions will require substantial repair and renovation.

This will be a signature element for the community and the redevelopment of the Island - celebrating the rebirth of an important building as an important contributor to the community and the tax base.

<b>Examples:</b>	Exeter Mill, Exeter, NH Yarn Works, Fitchburg, MA Lockwood Mill Waterville, ME
<b>Timing:</b>	3 – 4 years, once permitting and design are undertaken in earnest
<b>Leader:</b>	Island Corporation (building owner) Great River Hydro (property owner) Private Developer / Development Partner
<b>Partners:</b>	Town of Rockingham Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (development expertise) Windham Regional Commission (brownfield programs) Agency of Commerce and Community Development (development expertise)
<b>Next Steps:</b>	Publish Area Wide Plan Discuss collaborative effort/potential with Island Corporation Discuss access and site use with Great River Hydro Apply for grant funding to support design effort Develop schematic level design
<b>Project Details:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demolition of approximately 8,000 SF building likely</li> <li>• Approximately 32,000 GSF of building renovated (after demolition)</li> <li>• Approximately 30 Residential Units and other amenities for residents</li> <li>• Outside amenities should be incorporated to</li> <li>• \$12 -15 Million in Construction costs</li> <li>• \$3 - \$5 Million in Soft costs</li> </ul>
<b>Property Tax Details:</b>	Assumed Property Value = \$12 Million (low end of construction value) Common Level of Appraisal = 91.24% Appraisal / Assessed Value = \$10.95 Million Combined Tax Rate ~ \$3.50 = per \$100 (\$3.65 homestead, \$3.40 non-homestead) Combined Tax = \$383,000

**Potential Funding:** VT ACCD Programs (BRF, VCDP, VHIP, Downtown Tax Credits)  
Historic Tax Credits  
Opportunity Zone (C)  
New Market Tax Credits 9670 (severely distressed)  
US EDA

**Properties:** Parcel 246060029 – 29 Bridge Street – Moore and Thompson Lower Mill  
Parcel 246060019 – 12 Mill Street – Great River Hydro

**Existing Conditions:**

The Lower Mill Building is currently vacant and shows significant deterioration.

**Environmental Concerns and Brownfields:**

- Moore & Thompson Mill parcel suspect hazardous substances present in subsurface and suspect hazardous building materials in structure.
- Great River Hydro Parcel is a VTDEC State Site with extensive assessment and remediation (soil removal) conducted in late 1990s. Contaminants include: petroleum, PCBs and asbestos. Remedial strategy included implementation of Land Use Restriction (LUR).

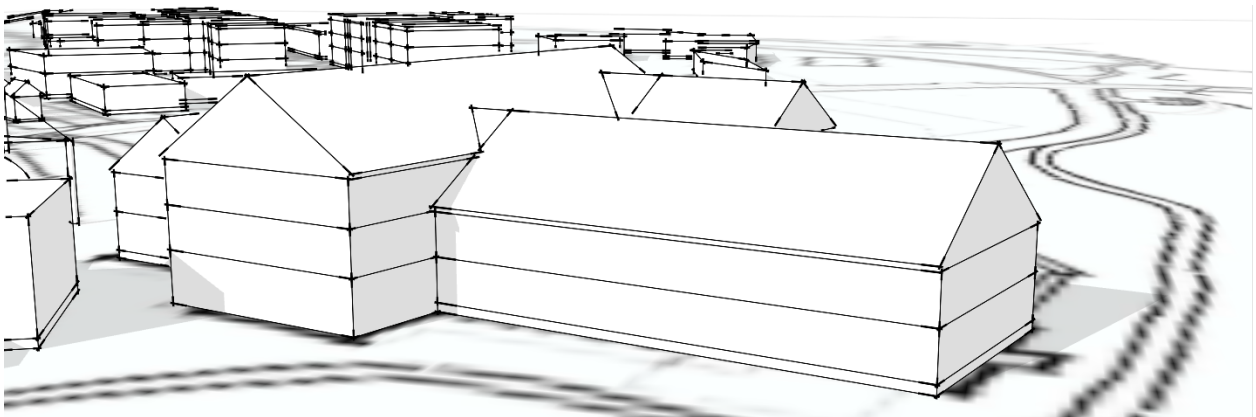
**Recommended Next Steps:**

- ASTM Phase I ESA
- Hazardous Building Materials Assessment
- Phase II Site Investigation (data gaps in support of new construction)
- Review Great River Hydro LUR in relation to proposed new construction

See Site Inventory of Target Study Area for additional / detailed information.  
(Note: Sites are sorted by street address.)

**Necessary Infrastructure:**

- Road and parking improvements
- Reconstruction and upgrades for potable water, sanitary sewer, and power



Sketch of Lower Mill

## Mixed-Use / Transit Oriented / Residential and Arts Focused Development

Develop a new, mixed-use village, focused on residential development and the arts.

This project will take advantage of proximity the railroad station, the existing downtown Bellows Falls, nearby employers, connections to New Hampshire and adjacent arts related studios and businesses. Includes 90-100 apartments on the second and third floors as well as restaurants, cafes, retail stores, professional offices, galleries, art studios, maker spaces and other ground level opportunities.

This project will be a very significant addition to the economy and vitality of the community, the region, and the State of Vermont.

<b>Examples:</b>	Storrs, CT                      Devens, MA
<b>Timing:</b>	4 – 6 years, once permitting and design are undertaken in earnest
<b>Leader:</b>	Project will be primarily led by a private developer Bellows Falls Area Development Corporation (owner RPM and 10 Island Street) Sustainable Valley Group (owner VT Farm Machine)
<b>Partners:</b>	Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance (local advocacy) Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (development expertise) Windham Regional Commission (support related to Brownfields and TOD) VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development (support TOD and TIF)
<b>Next Steps:</b>	Publish Area Wide Plan Partner with Planning Commission to develop support Revise zoning to accommodate mixed-use residential development Work with current land / business owner on relocation and site control Formulate TIF district to support public infrastructure Complete schematic design level study of site
<b>Project Details:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walkable connections to train station (800' +/-) and downtown (1/4 mile +/-)</li> <li>• 45,000 GSF of 1st floor retail / shops / studio / maker space / restaurant</li> <li>• 90,000 GSF of residential = 90 – 100 apartments = 150 bedrooms</li> <li>• Limited surface parking / reliant on shared resources or parking structure</li> <li>• \$40 - \$50 Million in Construction Cost</li> <li>• \$10 - \$20 Million in Soft Cost</li> </ul>
<b>Property Tax Details:</b>	<p>Assumed Property Value = \$40 Million (low end of construction value)</p> <p>Common Level of Appraisal = 91.24%</p> <p>Appraisal / Assessed Value = \$36.5 Million</p> <p>Combined Tax Rate ~ \$3.50 = per \$100 (\$3.65 homestead, \$3.40 non-homestead)</p> <p>Combined Tax = \$1.28 Million</p>

**Potential Funding:** VT ACCD Programs (BRF, VCDP, VHIP, Downtown Tax Credits)  
 Opportunity Zone (C)  
 New Market Tax Credits 9670 (severely distressed)  
 USDA Community Food Project (Food Desert low access ½ mile, 10 mile)  
 US Economic Development Administration

**Properties:** Parcel 234460025 – 21 Island Street – Former Robertson Paper Mill (part)  
 Parcel 234460024 – 4 Island Street – NAPA / Sanel  
 Parcel 234460010 – 10 Island Street – Parking (behind NAPA/Sanel)  
 Parcel 244460007 – 15 Island Street – Parking Lot  
 Parcel 236060012 – Municipal Parking Lot

### Existing Conditions:

NAPA / Sanel is an existing business that operates in a large building within the limits of this specific project site. A portion of the Robertson Paper Mill site is also included in this concept. Other portions of the project site are mostly unused open land or land used occasionally for parking. Bellows Falls Area Development Group and the Sustainable Valley Group have (or are working to have) site control.

### Environmental Concerns and Brownfields:

- Former Robertson Paper Mill property was the site of extensive state and EPA brownfield remediation and cleanup effort (for hazardous substances). The US EPA considers this site to be “ready for redevelopment and to shepherd the next phase of the Island’s history.” The final cleanup remedy included a plan for implementation of a Land Use Restriction (LUR). Confirm LUR has been recorded.
- 4 Island Street (NAPA/Sanel) - A ASTM Phase I was conducted on NAPA/Sanel parcel (4 Island Street) in 2007 but no RECs were identified. Fuel oil AST in use. Building age is circa 1900. Suspect HBMA present. No HBMA of structures conducted.
- Other Parcels (0 Island, 10 Island, 15 Island and Municipal Parking Lot) - A former hotel/inn (building age/construction unknown) was located on 0 Island Street (Parcel 244460007). Unknown if subsurface soils on this and adjacent parcels meet residential standards.

### Recommended Next Steps:

- Review Land Use Restriction (Former Robertson Paper Mill Parcel -21 Island St)
- ASTM Phase I ESA (0, 4 , 10 and 15 Island St and municipal parking lot)
- Hazardous Building Materials Assessment (NAPA/Sanel – 4 Island St)
- Phase II Site Investigation (0, 4 , 10 and 15 Island St and municipal parking lot)

See Site Inventory of Target Study Area for additional / detailed information.  
 (Note: Sites are sorted by street address.)

### Necessary Infrastructure:

- Roadways, parking, parking deck, complete streets and pedestrian improvements
- Reconstruction and upgrades for potable water, sanitary sewer and power

## Overlook Trail

Construction of a walking trail along the eastern edge of the Island that will provide recreational, exercise and bird watching opportunities as well as linking key areas of the Island to new river overlooks.

The trail will connect a new Village Gateway and the Connecticut River Heritage Center at the south end of the study area with the area of the Great River Hydro Power Station, the renovated Lower Mill, an overlook of an Abenaki Heritage Site, the Vilas Bridge, and several viewing points / overlooks on the north edge of the rail yard. In the future it is possible that the Overlook Trail could connect to the proposed Canal Walk.

The southern portion of this project could be developed relatively quickly since many of the elements are already in place. The northern portion will require working with the State of Vermont to allow access through the railroad land in order to connect to the northern river overlooks.

<b>Examples:</b>	Wamesit Falls Overlook, Lowell, MA Deerfield River Reservoir, Shelburne MA
<b>Timing:</b>	1-2 years once project design and permitting are undertaken in earnest
<b>Leader:</b>	Town of Rockingham
<b>Partners:</b>	Bellows Falls Downtown Development Alliance (local advocacy) Abenaki Nation (support for cultural heritage initiatives) Windham Regional Commission (regional support for project) Vermont Arts Council (support for cultural heritage initiatives) Vermont Department of Tourism (support for tourism related initiatives) Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) (access through railroad land)
<b>Next Steps:</b>	Publish Area Wide Plan Discuss trail with VTrans regarding crossing of railroad siding Discuss trail access and overlooks with Abenaki Nation Discuss trail routing with Great River Hydro Apply for grant funding to support schematic design effort Develop schematic level design for project
<b>Project Details:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately 1,200 lineal feet of new trail along north edge of the Island</li> <li>• Approximately 1,200 lineal feet of fencing to separate trail from rail yard</li> <li>• Pedestrian rail crossing over rarely use portion of track</li> <li>• 3 overlook areas</li> <li>• Approximately 1,000 lineal feet of new trail along southern edge of island</li> </ul>
<b>Potential Funding:</b>	VT VoRec Grant Program VT Forest, Parks, and Rec Grants

**Properties:**

- Parcel 235030014 – 14 Westminster St – Parking
- Parcel 235020057 – Steep Bank at Rear of Howard Block
- Parcel 246060019 – 12 Mill St. – Great River Hydro
- Parcel 234480050 – State Owned Rail Yard

**Existing Conditions:**

The trail route as currently laid out is mostly open, walkable areas so construction of the trail is feasible. It does include land currently owned by Great River Hydro as well as VTrans - Vermont Rail so site access and coordination is needed

**Environmental Concerns and Brownfields:**

- The existing Vermont Rail Yard parcel likely contains petroleum and hazardous substances in shallow soils. Soil contaminants typically associated with “railroads/railyards” include fuel oils/diesel, PAHs and metals (arsenic and lead). .
- The town-owned parcel at the rear of Howard Block is undeveloped but has a steep bank. Suspect petroleum and/or hazardous substances in soil due to proximity to former paper mills.
- Great River Hydro Parcel is a VTDEC State Site with extensive assessment and remediation (soil removal) conducted in late 1990s. Contaminants include: petroleum, PCBs and asbestos. Remedial strategy included implementation of Land Use Restriction (LUR).
- It is expected that the riverfront trail can be designed to avoid significant interaction with these areas.

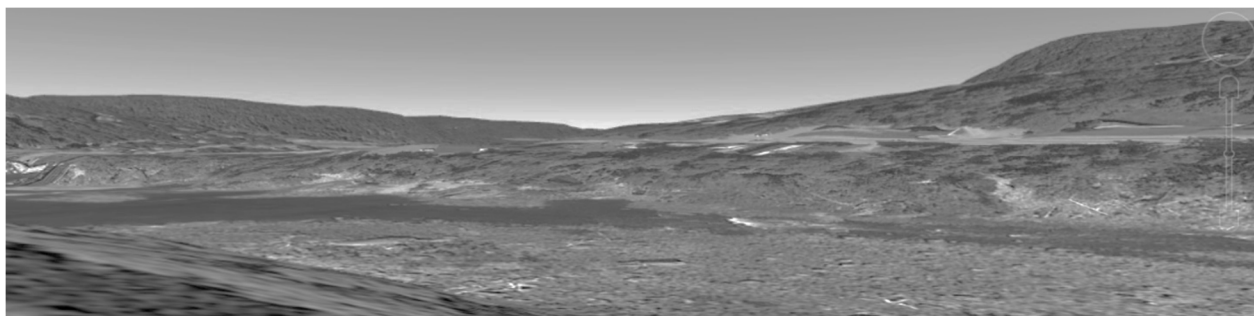
**Recommended Next Steps:**

- ASTM Phase I ESA
- Phase II Site Investigation (shallow soil focus)
- Review Great River Hydro Land Use Restriction in relation to proposed new trail construction.

See Site Inventory of Target Study Area for additional / detailed information.  
(Note: Sites are sorted by street address.)

**Necessary Infrastructure:**

- A pedestrian railroad crossing may be needed to cross the siding.
- Lighting may be desired along portions of the walkway.



View looking north from overlook