

PREFACE

Growing Together Historically

Essex, including the Village of Essex Junction, is rich in history. From the first settlement at Page's Corner (Brigham Hill Road and Old Stage Road; circa 1784-1820) to the establishment of subsequent centers, including Butlers Corner (circa 1818-1822), the Center (i.e., Essex Center; circa 1820), Essex Junction (primarily at the height of the rail industry; circa 1850), and the new Town Center (adjacent to VT Route 15 and Old Stage Road), Essex has maintained a heritage and spirit of cooperation.¹

Throughout Essex's history, the Village of Essex Junction played (and continues to play) a critical role as a hub of transportation and commerce due to its proximity to the Winooski River, rail lines and important roadways. The Town Center is being built around historic buildings that served as community gathering places in the early 1800's. This center will serve a sector of Essex's population presently not as well served as those residing nearer the Village Area. Together, as the Town grows, it is intended that the history books will indicate that the Village and the Town Center symbiotically served their constituency for the betterment of the whole community.

In addition, the history of Essex, including the Village of Essex Junction, is rooted in cooperation. Partnerships exemplifying Essex's collaboration in defining the community's superior quality of life include, but are not limited to, the following highlights:

1. Developing jointly the community's first comprehensive plan in 1967 that recognized two distinct centers;
2. Completing existing segments of the Circumferential Highway;
3. Providing community services including fire, Mutual Aid, law enforcement and rescue, and other governmental services;
4. Creating the Tri-Town Sewer District;
5. Planning and celebrating Essex's Bicentennial;
6. Envisioning a transportation path connecting Village and Town neighborhoods;
7. Purchasing the state's former Tree Farm Soccer facility such that ownership would be shared, half by the Town government, half by the Village government;
8. Weathering the '27 Flood; and
9. Working to locate and retain IBM, including passage of a related tax commitment by the voters.

¹ The History of the Town of Essex, edited by Bent, Frank R., Essex Publishing Co., Inc., Essex, VT. November 1963, pp. 35.

Village Centers and Community

Lewis Mumford praised New England communities for refusing “to grow beyond the possibility of socializing and assimilating its members.” This plan underscores the notion that a community is linked to social cohesiveness. The essence of a small town lies in neighbors knowing one another as well as their teachers, local shop owners, and community leaders. Activities (e.g., shops, schools and offices) generally should be within walking distance. When growth takes a community beyond a small town size, the fraternity of small town life can be retained through neighborhood and village planning.²

Planning experts contend that populations of 8,000-10,000 need to be served by village centers providing a diversity of services. Essex believes that the community services offered by the Village well serve this threshold level of population for those residing in the Village Area. In addition, the Town believes the settled areas of Essex Center need similar service by another growth center – namely the Town Center off VT Route 15 at Butlers Corners. Combined, the Village and the Town Center provide Essex’s nearly 20,000 residents with the necessary community offerings within a short drive or walking distance along with the mixture of local ingredients that define the Town’s “strong community bonds...and the fundamental physical elements that embody community.”³

CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO GROW TOGETHER

Reflecting upon its past and upon the future envisioned herein, the Town’s community leaders believe that consensus-building in the present is good for all of Essex. This mutual gains approach needs to be continued by community leaders through donation of their expertise, time and enthusiasm.

Through the above reflection, Essex reminds itself that continuing collaboration with its citizens, whether they reside on Sawmill Road, Poplar Court or in any other areas of the community, will help build our Community. The bottom line: it’s a commitment to doing what is best for Essex residents, businesses and visitors. Therefore, the Town recommits itself and offers itself to carry out its vision in the spirit of community, unity and indivisibility.

² Mackin, Anne and Krieger, Alex, A Design Primer for Cities and Towns, prepared for the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. TDS Printing, Nashua, NH. September 1989, pp. 6. Note: the quotation from Lewis Mumford is taken from this source.

³ Duany, Andres and Plater-Zyberk, Elizabeth, Towns and Town-Making Principles. Harvard University Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, MA. 1991, pp. 21.