

PRESS RELEASE

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## **Essex and Essex Junction to reimagine planning**

### **Thoughtful Growth In Action launches with Sept. 9 community workshop**

ESSEX, Vt. – The Town of Essex and Village of Essex Junction will launch an exploration of their planning and zoning structures with a community workshop on Sept. 9.

Residents are invited and encouraged to attend the Thoughtful Growth In Action (TGIA) workshop, which will run from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Essex High School cafeteria. Refreshments will be provided. Workshop attendees will learn about the TGIA's purpose and goals, and learn how to participate throughout the process. The workshop will include a primer about planning in the Town and Village. Attendees will have an opportunity to say what works well with planning, and what could be improved.

"As Town and Village officials start to talk about coordinating our planning efforts, this open process gives community members an opportunity to be part of the conversation. We need to hear from them," said Village President George Tyler. "The aim is to create a more holistic approach to community-wide planning."

Currently, the Village and the Town outside the Village each has a planning commission and a zoning board of adjustment. Starting with the community workshop, two consultants and a TGIA working group will begin to consider alternative options for planning governance in the Town and Village. The 26 members of the TGIA working group were appointed by the Essex Selectboard and Village of Essex Junction Board of Trustees. The working group's diverse membership includes residents of Essex from inside and outside the Village, elected and appointed officials, planning and zoning staff, and developers. TGIA will recommend which option or options would best enable Essex to plan for a shared vision that retains the unique identities of the Village and the Town outside the Village.

TGIA emerged from the findings of Heart & Soul of Essex, a two-year project that engaged residents to identify shared values and a vision for the future of the community. Heart & Soul identified Thoughtful Growth as one of the community's top six values.

"This effort is the logical next step from a two-year civic engagement in which a central community value was identified to have planning for one vision for the entire Essex community," said Max Levy, Selectboard chairman. "It is important to determine what planning and zoning governance model best accomplishes that community value. I am looking forward to seeing what the Thoughtful Growth In Action project's recommendations will be."

The working group will gather for an orientation meeting at EHS just prior to the community workshop, at 4:30 p.m. Future working group meetings are scheduled for the evenings of Sept. 30, Oct. 28, Nov. 18, and Dec. 9. At those meetings, the working group will review its objectives, explore key issues of planning governance, consider different planning governance options, and help develop a preferred option. The public is welcome to attend any of the working group meetings.

*More information about the project is available online at [www.essextgia.com](http://www.essextgia.com), or by contacting Town Planner Greg Duggan at 878-1343 or [gduqqan@essex.org](mailto:gduqqan@essex.org).*