

## **Railroad Avenue Revitalization News & Updates**

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### **February 2010**

The All Aboard for Downtown Essex Junction forum on February 10<sup>th</sup> was a big success! 120 people were there including long time residents, new residents, youth, business owners and public officials. Participants identified these RR Ave & Main Street revitalization priorities: 1. Create an event series; 2. Renovate the train station; 3. Add green space.

#### **READ ALL ABOUT IT**

Click here for a summary of the forum <http://bit.ly/ejforumsummary>

#### **SAVE THE DATE**

**Wed. March 3, 7pm – Making Room for Cars & People – A Discussion.** Robin Pierce, Village Development Director, presents a proposal for a village center, focusing on moving traffic through Five Corners efficiently, reducing congestion, encouraging economic development, and making the center more pedestrian friendly. All welcome!

#### **STAY TUNED**

A RR Ave farmers market and an event series are in the works, and spring beautification projects are being planned. The RR Ave. Revitalization Project Steering Committee is also working on a set of recommendations to village trustees.

#### **AJ's KITCHEN NOW OPEN**

AJ's Kitchen reopened its doors in a new and expanded space on RR Ave.

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### **JANUARY 2010**

RR Avenue Revitalization efforts continue to well. Good news from the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce - a multi-talented group of individuals from this year's Leadership Champlain class has chosen the Railroad Avenue Revitalization effort as the focus for their Spring Project.

**1. PLEASE JOIN US** for the **All Aboard for Downtown Essex Junction** public form on **February 10<sup>th</sup>** from 5:30 - 9:30 p.m. at Essex High School. This fun, highly interactive meeting will help the community establish a more focused vision for RR Ave and Main Street, prioritize strategies for moving forward, and actually roll up our sleeves and do some work on RR Ave Revitalization projects that are already underway. Childcare will be available. Dinner will be provided by Martones. If you wish, **please bring a dessert to share.**

**3. ENVISION THE FUTURE.** Be sure to visit the Kolvoord Room at the Brownell Library to view several possible strategies for revitalizing RR Avenue and Main Street, and add your own ideas.

**4. FIND US ON FACEBOOK.** Please become a fan of "Downtown Essex Junction" and we will keep you posted on the latest RR Ave Revitalization activities and news.

**5. RIDE THE TRAIN.** Special low fares on the Vermonter continue through 2010.

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### **DECEMBER 2009**

RR Avenue Revitalization efforts are going well. Amtrak has agreed to invest money in repairing the train station roof and platform this summer. The first ever “train hop” was a success and plans are underway for a bigger and better version next year. A new restaurant will open soon at 10 Main Street. These are good signs and there is still much to do. We hope you will join our efforts. Here are a few ways to get involved in the New Year.

**1. JOIN US ON FACEBOOK.** Thanks to one of our wonderful volunteers, Downtown Essex Junction now has a fan page on facebook. Please become a fan and we will keep you posted on the latest RR Ave Revitalization activities and news. Just log in to facebook and search for “Downtown Essex Junction.”

**2. ENVISION THE FUTURE.** Beginning January 7, be sure to visit the Kolvoord Room at the Brownell Library to view several possible scenarios for the future of RR Avenue and Main Street, and add your own ideas.

**3. SAVE THE DATE.** We hope to see you at the **All Aboard for Downtown Essex Junction** Public Forum on **February 10<sup>th</sup>**. This fun, highly interactive meeting will help the community establish a more focused vision for RR Ave and Main Street, prioritize strategies for moving forward, and actually roll up our sleeves and do some work on RR Ave Revitalization projects that are already underway.

**4. RIDE THE TRAIN.** Special low fares on the Vermonter are being reinstated for 2010, beginning January 5!

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### **NOVEMBER 2009**

**1. JOIN US FOR DEC 2<sup>nd</sup> TRAIN HOP & TREE LIGHTING.** Take a few minutes before or after the Tree lighting Ceremony at 5 corners to wander down Main Street and RR Avenue. 500 luminaries will light the way as you enjoy train sets and train related art gracing the windows of downtown businesses.

**2. CREATE RAIL ART.** Are you artistic? Don't be shy! Bring your original rail related artwork to the Brownell Library and we will display it downtown during the Train Hop and month of December. **Due November 27<sup>th</sup>!**

**3. ENVISION THE FUTURE.** During the month of January, be sure to visit the Kolvoord Room at the Brownell Library to view several possible scenarios for the future of RR Avenue and Main Street, and add your own ideas.

**4. LEARN ABOUT OUR HISTORY.** Also at the Brownell on January 20 at 7:00 p.m., Essex/Essex Junction Railroad History: a slide show and talk by local historian Jerry Fox

**5. SAVE THE DATE.** We hope to see you at the **All Aboard for Downtown Essex Junction** Public Forum on February 10<sup>th</sup>. This fun, highly interactive meeting will help the community establish a more focused vision for RR Ave and Main Street, prioritize strategies for moving forward, and actually roll up our sleeves and do some work on RR Ave Revitalization projects that are already underway.

**6. RIDE THE TRAIN.** Special fares to Brattleboro are still in effect. Need inspiration to get on board? There is a great article in the November issue of Vermont Magazine about the day trip to Brattleboro.

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### **OCTOBER 2009**

1. **TAKE A SURVEY.** All Front Porch Forum subscribers in the village were sent a survey, inviting them to volunteer to help with Railroad Avenue Revitalization efforts. We invite you to respond to this very brief survey and let us know how you might be able to lend a hand. Just click on the link below.

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Pu6eIFOd1IbOVC8D\\_2bsbLCg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Pu6eIFOd1IbOVC8D_2bsbLCg_3d_3d)

2. **WATCH THE MOVIE.** This movie about The Vermonter train (filmed in part at the Essex Junction train station) was #1 on the list of Most Popular Features in the Last Seven Days on Seven Day's website last week. Watch here <http://bit.ly/xmzoE> and take the train!

3. **LEARN ABOUT SMART GROWTH.** Noelle Mackay, Executive Director of Smart Growth, VT met with the Railroad Avenue Revitalization Steering Committee on October 1<sup>st</sup> and offered advice and potential resources for moving forward.

[www.smartgrowthvermont.org](http://www.smartgrowthvermont.org)

4. **SAVE THE DATE.** Please plan to attend a public meeting on **February 10** with the VT Council on Rural Development to continue make progress on this effort.

5. **UPCOMING MEETINGS.** The Railroad Works group is meeting Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 a.m. in the Brownell Library to plan several activities. The next meeting of the Railroad Avenue Revitalization Steering Committee is on Thursday, November 12 from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

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### **SEPTEMBER 2009 UPDATES**

1. **TAKE THE “ART” TRAIN** on Saturday, September 27 to Brattleboro (and spend a day enjoying good food, shops and the *Artists Choice Tour*). Click here for more information <http://bit.ly/dgrHH>. Eva Sollberger may be on board taping an episode of "Stuck in Vermont." The video will air on the Seven Days website on Wednesday, September 30. <http://7d.blogs.com/stuckinvt/>

2. **PLEASE JOIN US** on Thursday, October 1 at 4:00 p.m. at the Village office for a meeting with **Smart Growth VT**. They will be meeting with the Steering Committee to let us know what resources they may be able to offer us as we move forward. <http://www.smartgrowthvermont.org/>

3. **WATCH FOR MORE UPDATES.** We will be conducting a brief survey to find out how YOU might like to participate.

### **Key Action Areas from the June 09 Central Street Forum**

(for more details, please follow this link <http://bit.ly/wPMwM>)

1. Economic Development
2. Beautification
3. Railroad Avenue Events
4. Communication & Collaboration

### **Here is what has happened since the forum**

1. Thanks to the work of the Essex Police Department, a known drug dealer on Central Street has been evicted and others suspected of drug activity have left the neighborhood. At the moment, the neighborhood is feeling an increased sense of safety.

2. The Essex Junction Railroad Avenue Revitalization Steering Committee has formed and met several times.

- The Village has hired Susan McCormack to facilitate the work of this committee over the next several months.
- The committee will set goals for Railroad Avenue Revitalization, coordinate the work of groups that are implementing projects, keep the community updated about progress, and continue to engage community members
- **On February 10, 2010** The Vermont Council on Rural Development will be with us for a public forum to gather additional input from the community, identify

resources to help with our efforts and continue to build momentum and awareness. **SAVE THE DATE**

3. A work group (spearheaded by the Brownell Library and several EJ Railroad Avenue Revitalization Steering Committee members) has formed to begin to implement some of the ideas from the public forum. So far they have:

- Launched a letter writing campaign in support of increased investment in railroad infrastructure
- Created and distributed a flyer (see attached) to build ridership on the daily Essex Junction to Brattleboro train
- Inspired the VT Arts Council and Building a Better Brattleboro to also promote a special day train trip to Brattleboro's "Artist's Choice Tour," now through September 30.
- Contacted the producer of "Stuck in Vermont" (a cool video blog about VT happenings <http://7d.blogs.com/stuckinvt/>) to pitch the idea of an episode about EJ train station caretaker and taking a day train trip to Brattleboro.
- Begun planning several train themed events on Railroad Avenue to coincide with the Tree Lighting Ceremony in the Village.

4. The village manager, Dave Crawford, indicates that the Village staff is preparing a project proposal for train station upgrades and short term improvements. A volunteer work crew will be formed to help with the short term upgrades.

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### **Steering Committee Members**

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