

THE CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION COMMUNITY
VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

THINK-TANK REPORT

VERMONT, USA

NOVEMBER 2023





THE CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION COMMUNITY
VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

THINK-TANK REPORT

VERMONT, USA

NOVEMBER 2023

This report summarizes the outcomes of the City of Essex Junction Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank, held on November 2 and 4, 2023. Approximately 40 stakeholders participated in both days of the Think-Tank and developed the scenarios presented in this report. This report has been produced as part of the Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan process which aims to create a comprehensive and sustainable 5-year Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan for the City of Essex Junction.

This report and the associated data analysis are available at:

lab2.future-iq.com/essex-junction-visionstrategic-action-plan/

REPORT PREPARED BY:

future→iQ[®]
Create Future Intelligence[®]

THINK-TANK HOSTED BY:



Report Edited: December 20, 2023

»»»»» TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Overview of the Community Vision & Strategic Action Plan Process 1
- 1.0 | How to Read this Report 2
- 2.0 | Introduction 3
 - 2.1 | The City of Essex Junction 3
 - 2.2 | Community Vision and Strategic Action Planning Process 4
- 3.0 | Survey Results – Key Stakeholder Input 5
 - 3.1 | Living and Working in the City of Essex Junction 6
 - 3.2 | Current Direction and Ability to Adapt 7
- 4.0 | Scenario-Based Think-Tank Workshop 8
- 5.0 | Forces Shaping the Future – Macro Trends 9
- 6.0 | Key Drivers Identification 10
 - 6.1 | Driver Descriptions 10
 - 6.2 | Identifying Scenario Shaping Clusters of Drivers 15
 - 6.2.1 | Economic Approach 15
 - 6.2.2 | Community Evolution 16
 - 6.3 | Cluster Map Development and Scenario Axis 17
- 7.0 | Creating the Scenario Framework 18
 - 7.1 | Scenario A: Our Village, Our Voice 19
 - 7.2 | Scenario B: Community Representation Model 21
 - 7.3 | Scenario C: Zillow Junction Leads Economic Growth 23
 - 7.4 | Scenario D: Essex Junction – The New Shelburne 25
- 8.0 | Least Desired, Expected, and Preferred Futures 27
 - 8.1 | Least Desired Future 27
 - 8.2 | Expected Future 28
 - 8.3 | Preferred Future 29
 - 8.4 | Getting to the Preferred Future 30
- 10.0 | Next Steps in the Planning Process 31
- 11.0 | Acknowledgements 32
- 12.0 | For More Information 33



OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PROCESS

The City of Essex Junction Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan project is a robust, inclusive, and forward-looking community planning process. The project's objective is to create a comprehensive and sustainable 5-year Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan for the City of Essex Junction. Now that the city is independent, the City Council wants to provide an opportunity for the community to discuss the priorities and vision for the City of Essex Junction's future and five-year Strategic Action plan.

What are we doing?

- This initiative is focused on Strategic Foresight for the future of the city. It will explore where and how the City of Essex Junction can fit into a rapidly changing world.
- We are looking to the future – taking a 'future view' and building a vision out to 2035. We want to understand how the city needs to evolve as a community.
- We want to create a shared Strategic Action plan, that will consist of an implementation road- map with actions designed to move us toward the shared vision we create for the city.

What is our approach?

- We are designing a connected, collaborative approach and want to include voices from across the city. There will be various opportunities to participate, including surveys, an Open House session and focus groups.
- We are taking a bold and ambitious long-term view and thinking about how the City of Essex Junction can thrive in a changing world.

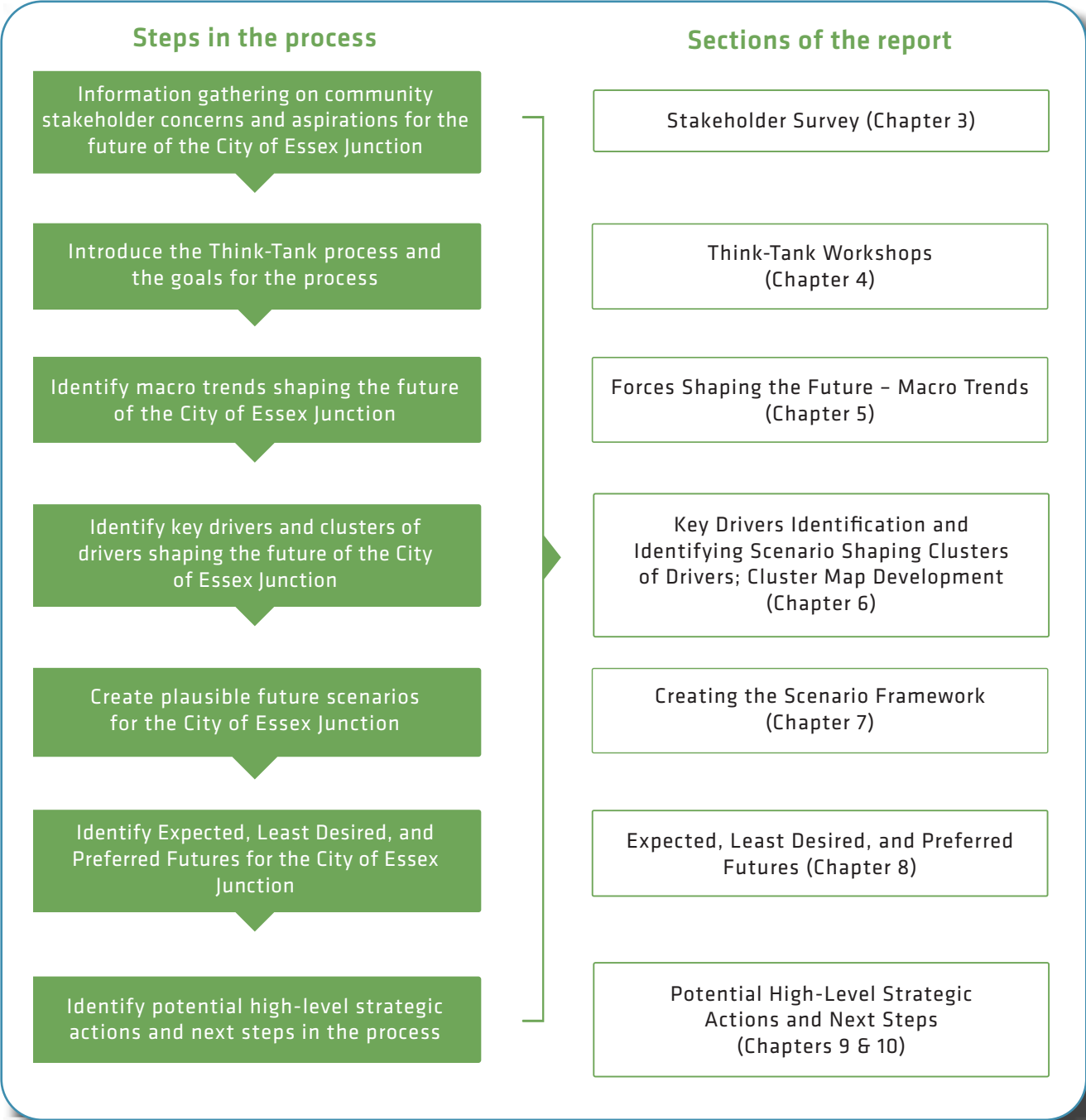


1.0 | HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The importance of community engagement and outreach, equity, inclusion, and planning for the future have been highlighted as important to the success of this process.

This report lays out the findings from the Think-Tank workshop, and each key step in the process. More details about the overall process can be viewed on the City of Essex Junction Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan project portal at lab2.future-iq.com/essex-junction-visionstrategic-action-plan/.

The City of Essex Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan process began with background exploration and analysis, through to building a range of future possible directions for the City of Essex Junction. This work represents robust 'future gazing' where community stakeholders considered possible directions and the impacts and consequences of those directions. The process, and the report, then drills down deeper into what people saw as the optimal or preferred future. This understanding helps lay the groundwork for ascertaining 'how we get there.' The final Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan for the City of Essex Junction will be delivered in February 2024, after an Open-House session, a second stakeholder survey and focus group workshops.





2.0 | INTRODUCTION

2.1 | THE CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION

In 2018, the Essex Junction Trustees and Essex Town Selectboard began working on a plan to merge the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction. In March 2021, voters rejected the merger plan. In November 2021, the Village of Essex Junction passed a City Charter to separate from the Town of Essex and is now established as the independent City of Essex Junction.

The newly independent City of Essex Junction is located southwest of Essex and is bordered on the south by the Winooski River. The city is 6 miles east of downtown Burlington.

Over the years, the City of Essex Junction has participated in numerous engagement efforts. Some of these efforts include Heart and Soul of Essex, Design Five Corners, and the Comprehensive Plan. In 2012 and 2014, the Town of Essex and the Village of Essex Junction engaged in an in-depth community conversation called Heart & Soul of Essex, which identified six core values – Education, Local Economy, Thoughtful Growth, Health and Recreation, Community Connections, and Safety. Thoughtful Growth emerged as the most pressing issue in the community and resulted in the Design Five Corners community discussion (2015), the Implementation Plan (2019), and the Village Comprehensive Plan (2019).

The City of Essex Junction Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan project aims to work with the community to discuss previous priorities and produce a new five-year Vision and Strategic Action Plan, now that Essex Junction is an independent City.





2.2 | COMMUNITY VISION AND STRATEGIC ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

The City of Essex Junction Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank workshops allowed community stakeholders to take a ‘deep-dive’ into strategic visioning and future-thinking through an in-depth scenario-planning process.

This scenario-based Think-Tank report summarizes the Think-Tank workshops that took place on November 2 & 4, 2023. The Think-Tank workshops were conducted as an initial step in the project to develop an executable Strategic Action plan that will guide the City of Essex Junction over the coming decade. The components of the planning work to date have been comprised of:



COMMUNITY SURVEY #1

An extensive survey has been completed by 415 stakeholders. The survey aimed to understand stakeholder perspectives on current conditions in the city, as well as their aspirations for the future.



THINK-TANK WORKSHOP - PART 1

The first part of the Think-Tank was held on November 2, 2023. At this workshop, participants learned about macro trends impacting the city, and assessed key drivers of the city.



THINK-TANK WORKSHOP - PART 2

The second part of the Think-Tank was held on November 4, 2023. At this scenario-planning workshop, participants produced four plausible potential futures for the city.



THINK-TANK PARTICIPANT HEATMAPS

Think-Tank participants completed heatmaps at the end of the second Think-Tank to express their Least Desired, Expected, and Preferred future scenarios for the city, looking out to 2035. The results are examined in this report.

“A lot of young families have moved here, who want a good life for their kids and are willing to engage. This is a family centric city that places value on building towards the future..”
- Community Survey Respondent

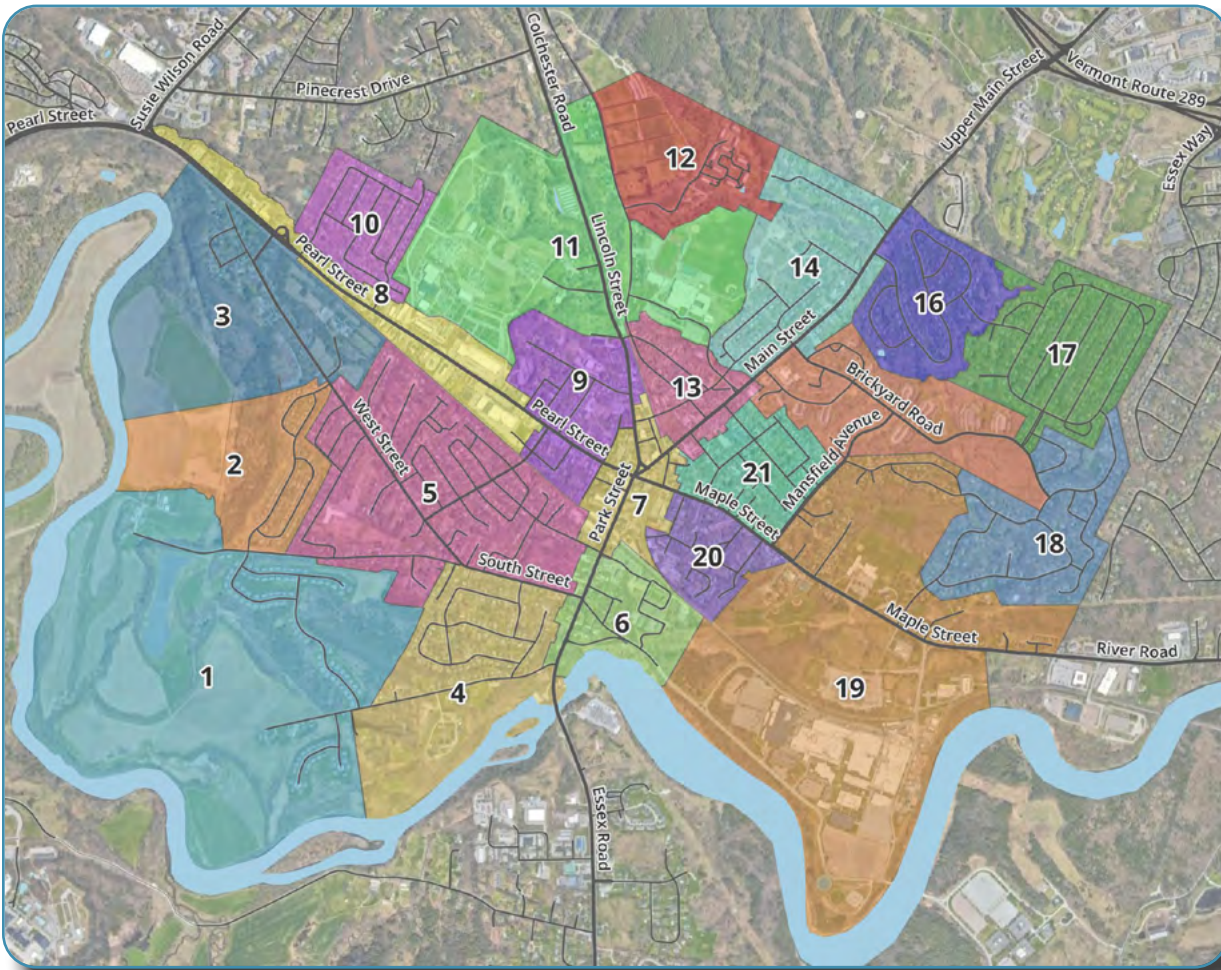


3.0 | SURVEY RESULTS - KEY STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Prior to the Think-Tank workshop, an extensive community survey was conducted to gather insight into the community’s perceptions of trends influencing the community’s future, including the most significant opportunities and challenges facing the city. At the time of the Think-Tank, approximately 415 had responded to the survey, which was promoted on the portal, the social media platforms and in the local press.

Respondent profile information is available on the project portal, and includes information such as age, race, relationship to City of Essex Junction and participation in previous planning processes. The following are the compiled results of the survey as of the November Think-Tank. The community survey results are also posted on the project portal at: lab2.future-iq.com/essex-junction-visionstrategic-action-plan/stakeholder-survey/city-of-essex-junction-stakeholder-survey-1/.

For the purposes of this report, a selection of results will be presented. However, all interactive survey results can be viewed on the project portal: lab2.future-iq.com/essex-junction-visionstrategic-action-plan/.



DataInsight

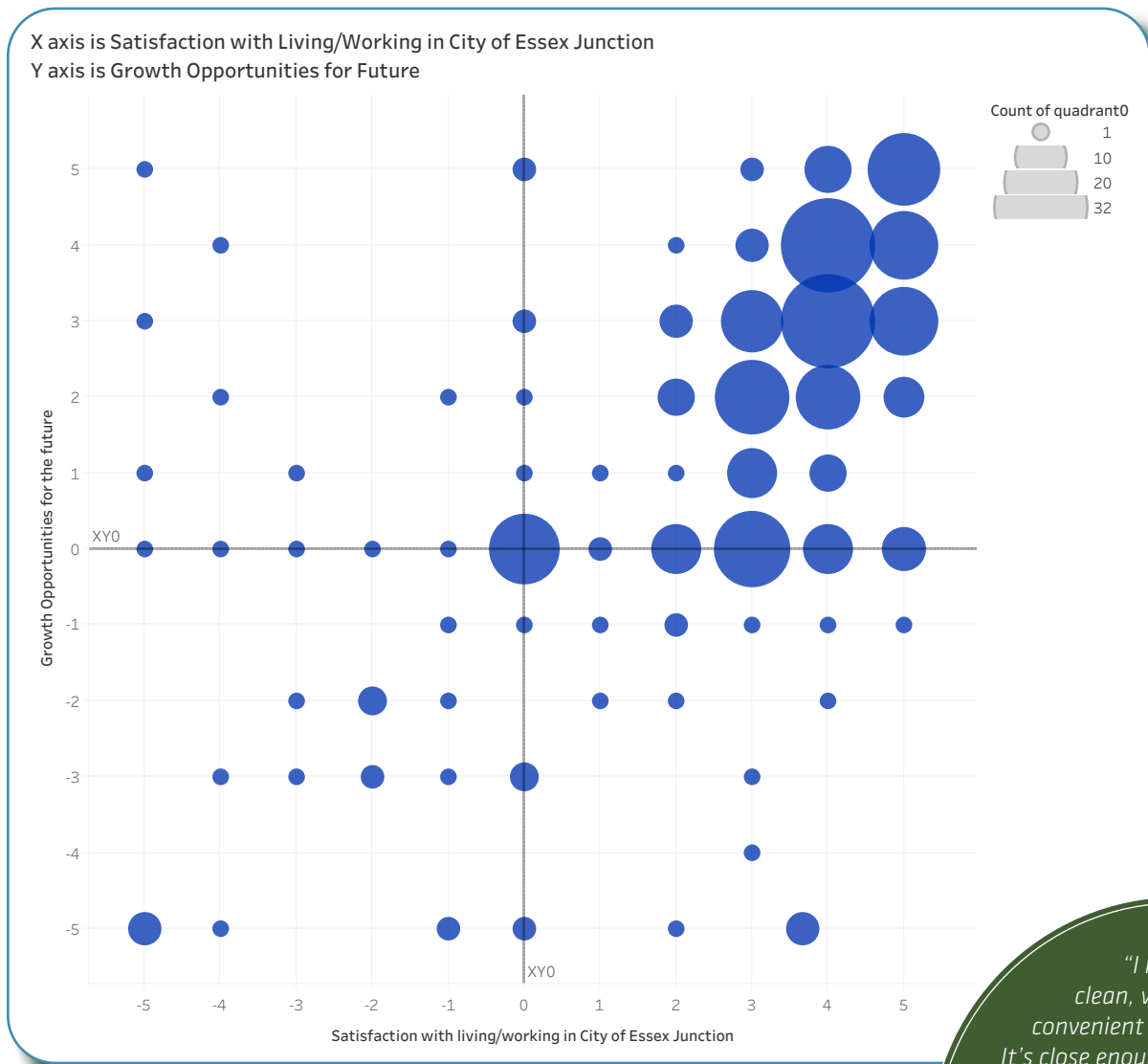
- The majority of respondents didn’t live in the City of Essex Junction but worked in the city.
- The majority of survey respondents who live in the City of Essex Junction live in Zone 12 (10%) which is on the outskirts of the area between Lincoln Street and Main Street.

3.1 | LIVING AND WORKING IN THE CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION

Survey respondents were asked how satisfied they are living and/or working in the City of Essex Junction and if they thought the city offers them future opportunities to grow and thrive in their life and interests. Respondents were asked the questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

How satisfied are you about living and/or working in the City of Essex Junction? Scale: -5 = Very unsatisfied; 0 = Neutral; +5 = Very satisfied

Do you think the city offers you future opportunities to grow and thrive, in your life and interests? Scale -5 = Very little future opportunity; 0 = Neutral; +5 = Fantastic future opportunity



"I love how clean, walkable, and convenient Essex Junction is. It's close enough to Burlington but still feels part of the countryside. I know a lot of people here and the pace is slower than in most cities. Everything I need is here: doctors, grocery stores, the library, entertainment, exercise facilities and places to walk."

- Community Survey Respondent



DataInsight

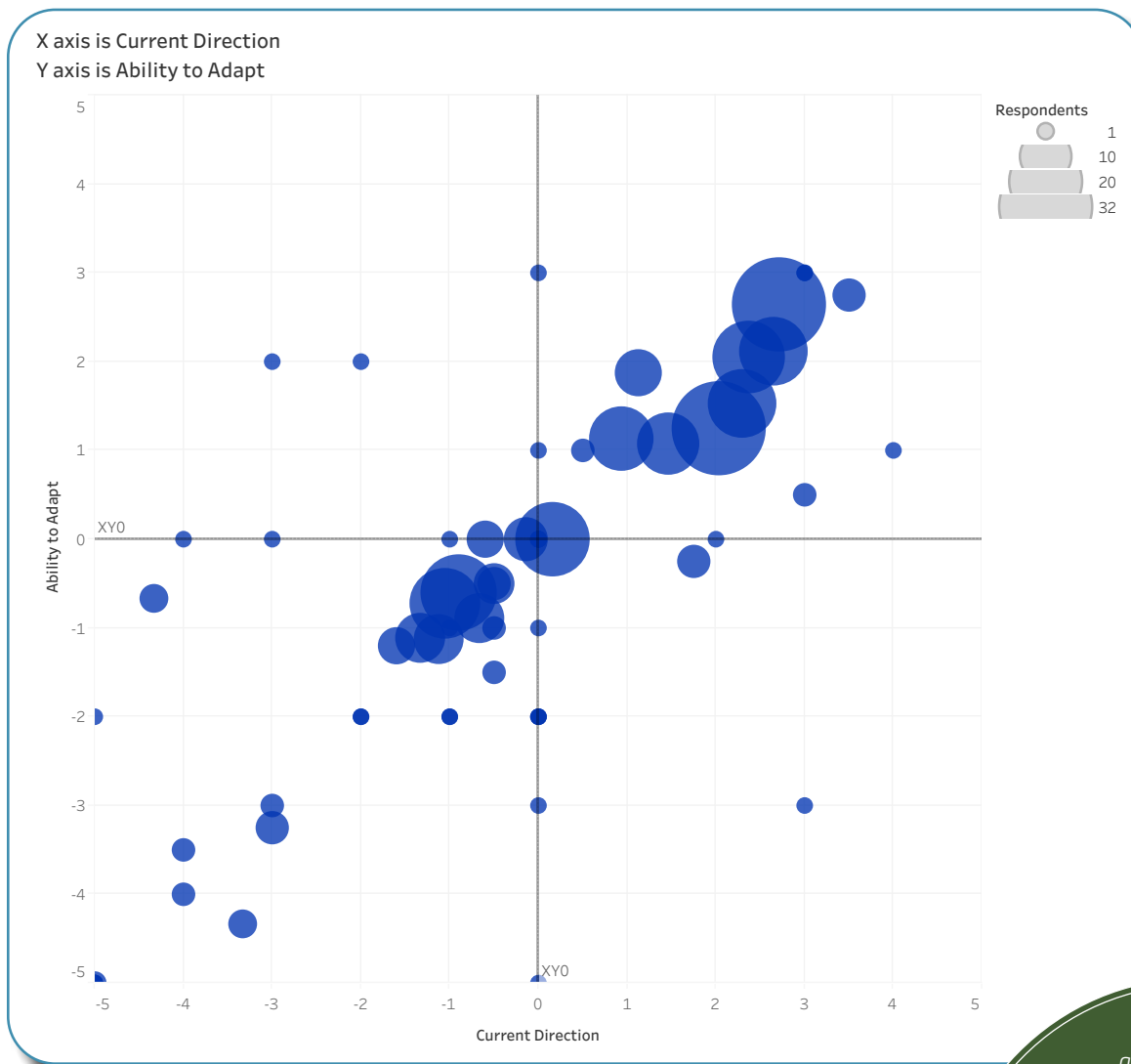
- This chart shows that respondents felt mostly satisfied about living in the City of Essex Junction, and that the region offers future opportunities to grow and thrive.
- This is encouraging data for the value proposition and appeal of the city.

3.2 | CURRENT DIRECTION AND ABILITY TO ADAPT

Survey respondents were asked about the current direction and ability to adapt of the City of Essex Junction. Respondents were asked the questions below, which were then combined to produce the following chart.

How satisfied or concerned are you about the way the City of Essex Junction is changing and the overall current direction of the City of Essex Junction? Scale: -5 = Very concerned; 0 = Neutral; +5 = Very satisfied

How satisfied or concerned are you about the ability of the City of Essex Junction to adapt to changes? Scale: -5 = Very concerned; 0 = Neutral; +5 = Very satisfied



DataInsight

- Overall, a good number of responses showed people were satisfied with the direction and ability to adapt of the city.
- However, the larger circles in the middle of the graph indicates there is some concern about the direction and ability to adapt of the city. This highlights the need for this strategic action planning work, to help refine the city's direction and ability to adapt to changes in the future. In the driver identification section of the Think-Tank two of the drivers were ability to adapt and fear of change.

"This is a fast-growing community, and any growth comes with many unknowns. The city is lacking friendly and practical pedestrian/cycling infrastructures (safe intersection crossings, bike lanes, public restrooms, etc.) The lack of affordable housing needs addressing as well as the traffic congestion."

- Community Survey Respondent



4.0 | SCENARIO-BASED THINK-TANK WORKSHOP

The City of Essex Junction Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan Think-Tank workshops were conducted on November 2 and 4, 2023, at the Blue Ribbon Pavilion, Champlain Valley Exposition in the City of Essex Junction. The workshops explored how the City of Essex Junction could evolve by 2035 and consisted of:

- A review of global trends and the impact of these trends on the City of Essex Junction
- Assessment of the city's strengths and weaknesses
- Formulation of the different plausible scenario 'spaces' and development of detailed narratives and descriptions of each scenario
- Examination of the impact and consequences of each scenario on various aspects of community and economic development in the City of Essex Junction
- Identification of the preferred future and critical action steps to achieve the preferred future

Scenario planning provides a way to explore various plausible futures and consider the implications and consequences of different future pathways. This adds a richness and depth to the discussions about the preferred future, and a consideration of the intended and unintended consequences.

The Think-Tank began with an in-depth presentation on future trends and global conditions before moving on to conduct scenario planning for the City of Essex Junction. Future iQ's scenario planning process provides a methodology from which to explore plausible futures and takes into consideration the implications of various future scenarios. The process aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making.
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape the City of Essex Junction looking out to 2035.
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for the city.
- Begin exploring alignment around a shared future vision for the city.



The scenarios developed during the Think-Tank workshop and outlined in this report are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for the City of Essex Junction. Workshop deliberations can assist in identifying key actions for the city and how various groups might best contribute to future developments.



5.0 | FORCES SHAPING THE FUTURE – MACRO TRENDS

Think-Tank participants explored the forces of change shaping the future of the City of Essex Junction, including three key areas of emerging macro trends and forces of change. Perceptions around the nature of impact of these trends, both in terms of size and timing of impact, were explored to gauge how important participants consider the trends. Participants discussed the emerging trends on global, regional, and local scales, and related them directly to the City of Essex Junction in terms of how well prepared they considered the city.

Specifically, the key trend areas included:

- Demographics, population and mass urbanization
- Energy, food, water and climate change
- Technology and the speed of change

In the face of accelerating speed of change, the key to long-term resiliency for the City of Essex Junction is the ability to anticipate change, adapt, and remain agile in response to emerging trends.

Of relevance to the discussion on trends is the speed and scale of change occurring. Newly developed innovations are being implemented globally and locally at all scales, thereby changing the face of industries and society in a rapid and profound way. Velocity and trajectory are key elements that often create resistance to change and require clear communication and outreach to promote trust around the purpose of change. Think-Tank participants emphasized the need for continued collaboration and consistent communication and messaging as the city pursues its preferred future.





Drivers are events, trends, developments, catalysts, or forces that actively influence or cause change. The top 20 drivers for the City of Essex Junction are seen to shape the city's future.

6.0 | KEY DRIVERS IDENTIFICATION

6.1 | DRIVER DESCRIPTIONS

With the background of external trends, Think-Tank participants produced drivers that they considered most likely to shape the future of the City of Essex Junction. The drivers had been discussed at a group level and then at the wider workshop level. The scope of each driver was clarified, and any similar drivers were grouped, and new drivers added, until a list of twenty unique key drivers were identified.

KEY DRIVERS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE CITY, AS IDENTIFIED AND DEVELOPED IN SMALL WORKING GROUPS BY THE THINK-TANK PARTICIPANTS:

(Please note that these drivers are not in any particular order.)

FUTURE-SPLITTING QUESTIONS™

How willing is the community to get involved in partnerships to assist with the housing constraints and development in the City of Essex Junction?

1. Housing Constraints and Development

This driver is about how housing constraints and development impact the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver are supply/cost of housing and geography and space constraints. Think-Tank participants also noted a 'lack of imagination' regarding development in the city which would assist the geographical and space constraints. The impacts of this driver over the next decade could mean a less diverse community due to affordability and an increased impact on the city infrastructure.

FUTURE-SPLITTING QUESTIONS™

How can the City of Essex Junction bring about a sense of community with the insular bubbles that come from a reliance on social media and less on face to face community engagement?

2. Lack of Interpersonal Engagement

This driver is about the lack of interpersonal engagement within the City of Essex Junction and a potential lack of community spirit. Key trends associated with this driver are how people are living in insular bubbles (inward looking and focused on social media and online communications) and the lack of face to face interactions and community engagement. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be a decline in community engagement and participation and an overall decline in the sense of community for the City of Essex Junction.

FUTURE-SPLITTING QUESTIONS™

How do you build community when we are being driven into social isolation?

3. Technology Driving Social Isolation

This driver is about the impact of technology on social isolation and the associated issues relating to social isolation. With an increase of remote working/working from home there is a reduced need for individuals to leave their house and socialize. Working from home lessens the sociability of working with colleagues in an office. Key trends associated with this driver include less overall community engagement and a potential increase of mental health challenges including loneliness, isolation, anxiety and/or depression. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be less community engagement and poor mental health for some residents.



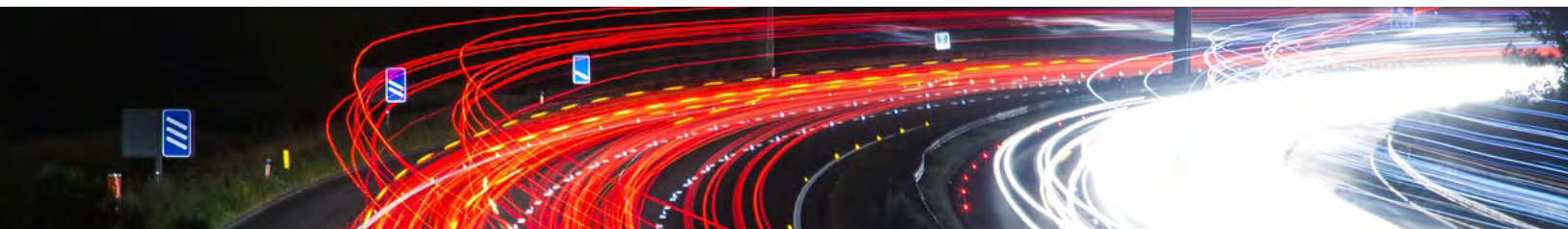
4. Climate Driven Migration

This driver is about the impact of climate and intense weather events on the City of Essex Junction and potential migration to the city. With the exception of the flooding in 2023, Vermont offers a climate haven for individuals migrating from places prone to severe weather events. Key trends associated with this driver include more intense weather events and floods and a potential climate refugee influx. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction over the next decades could include increased risk of road accidents, respiratory issues for smoke retention and air quality and altered agricultural seasons and periods. Impacts that may play out over the next decade for the City of Essex Junction could be a greater use of heat pumps and A/C systems and a move away from gas and an increase of renewables including solar.



5. Technology Shift and Industry

This driver is about the technological and industrial shift that is occurring. A key trend associated with this driver is the 'death of the office' as more people work from home or remotely. Those who live in the City of Essex Junction probably work elsewhere. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction in relation to this shift would be a lack of community engagement and sense of community in the City of Essex Junction. It would become a bedroom community.



6. Demographic Shifts - Younger and More Diverse

This driver is about the change in demography in the City of Essex Junction with the resettlement of climate and economic refugees and people moving from the city due to cost of living and housing availability and cost. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction would be the height of development and a larger tax base and higher consumerism. There would also be a significant increase in the diversity of the city population.



7 & 10*. Traffic Congestion and Transportation

This driver is about transportation and traffic congestion within the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver is trains adding to traffic stops and increased travel demand through the city. There will be the development of towns around the City of Essex Junction, a dependence on cars, more development in the City of Essex Junction and more people moving in. Potential impacts would be air pollution from idling cars, noise pollution from train whistles and cars, grid lock due to too many cars and the number of cars negatively impacting the quality of life for residents.

*These two drivers were combined.





8. Federal Investment Priorities

This driver is about the impact of Federal investment priorities on the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver are the impact of federal priorities across the US and the impact on the City of Essex Junction. Potential impacts could be a sense of powerlessness for the City of Essex Junction in the face of Federal investment priorities.



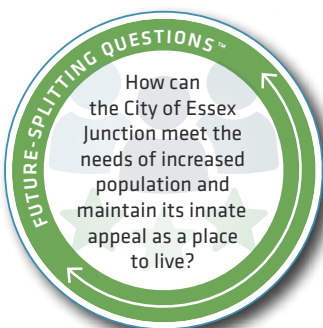
9. Future Resource Extraction

This driver is about resource extraction and its impact on the climate and climate change. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could mean that the City of Essex Junction becomes a R & D source for other resource extraction communities.



11. Brain Drain

This driver is about educated young people leaving the City of Essex Junction and the impact on the workforce in the City of Essex Junction as a result. Key trends associated with this driver include lower salaries and young people leaving to seek diverse experiences. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be a loss of potential community members and talent.



12. Innate Appeal

This driver is about the innate appeal of the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver are how the innate appeal of the City of Essex Junction as a small independent city could attract new community members who wish to enjoy the quality of life that the City of Essex Junction offers. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be an increased population who live in the City of Essex Junction but work elsewhere and a higher percentage of the population renting rather than owning their own homes due to the cost of housing.



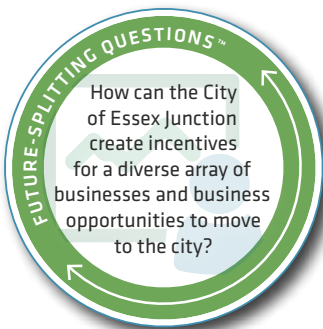
13. Political Refugees

This driver is about people moving to the City of Essex Junction for political reasons from other states. This could include moving from more nontolerant states with regard to reproductive rights, race, LGBTQ and other issues. Key trends associated with this driver are how many places in the US and other countries no longer feel safe in their communities and feel that their communities are not welcoming to people for a myriad of reasons. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction include the impact on housing needs and municipal services and different perspectives and cultures.



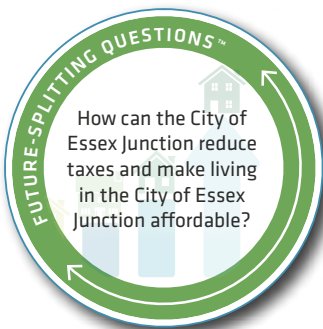
14. Ability to Adapt

This driver is about the ability of the City of Essex Junction to adapt as a city and community. Key trends associated with this driver include a potential resistance to change as well as the fact that change will happen. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be an increase in mixed use/building functions and a community who could be in part resentful of changes to the city and community.



15. Lack of Economic Opportunity

This driver is about a potential lack of economic ability in the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver include high commercial rents, no incentives for a diversity of businesses to move to the City of Essex Junction and a regulatory environment. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be empty store fronts and commercial real estate, a lack of economic diversity and an increased exposure to economic shifts.



16. Escalating Cost of Living

This driver is about the escalating cost of living in the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver include increased taxes and escalating cost of housing, fuel and food. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be the loss of the aging population and an inequity of the population (those who can afford to live in the City of Essex Junction and those who struggle).



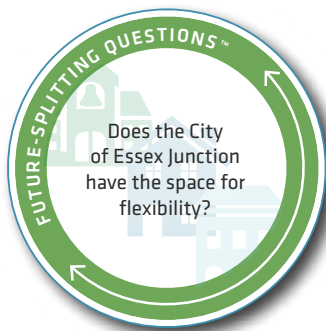
17. Impact of Remote Workers

This driver is about the increase of remote workers since the pandemic and the impact of remote workers living in the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver include the high cost of living for residents and competition for employees in the City of Essex Junction businesses. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could include the need to improve the telecom/broadband infrastructure for remote workers and accessibility to better technology.



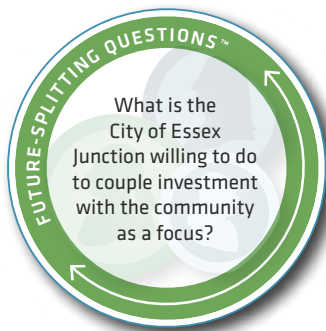
18. Fear of Change

This driver is about the fear of change within the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver include climate change, the rate and speed of change, global conflict and political polarization. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be increased anxiety and mental health issues, resistance to change and an increased atmosphere of mistrust.



19. Flexibility of Infrastructure

This driver is about the flexibility of the infrastructure in the City of Essex Junction. Key trends associated with this driver include stakeholder influence and the influence of investors and developers. Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could include the non-alignment of developers with the community vision for the City of Essex Junction.



20. Community Incentivized Investment

This driver is about investment in the City of Essex Junction that has the community in mind. Key trends associated with this driver are a lack of diverse businesses and commercial enterprises and a lack of open space for new investments (which would limit commercial opportunities and creativity). Potential impacts on the City of Essex Junction could be that the City of Essex Junction is no longer a unique and attractive destination with not many options regarding livability for the community.

6.2 | IDENTIFYING SCENARIO SHAPING CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

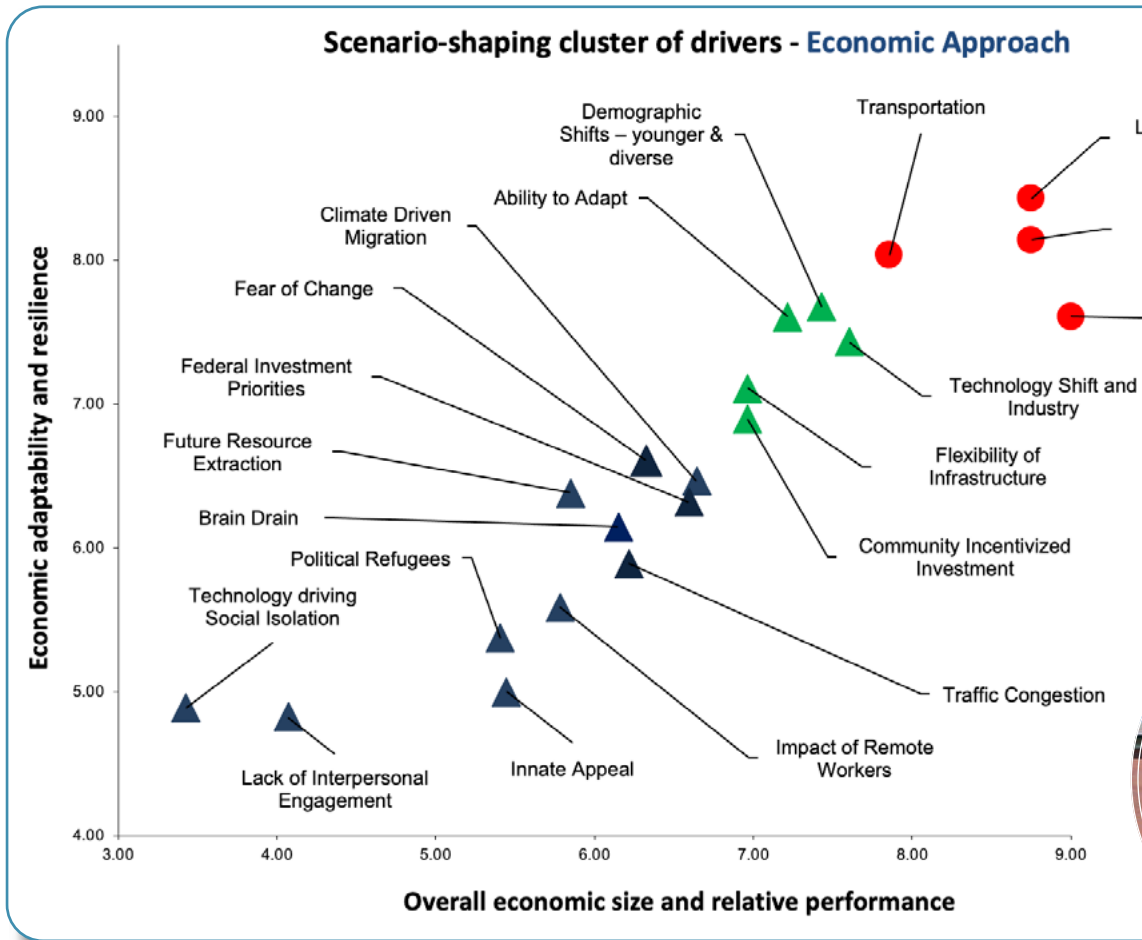
After agreement on the drivers, Think-Tank participants rated each of the twenty key drivers in terms of the size of impact on the future of the City of Essex Junction. The scale used was 1 - 10 (1 = low relative future impact; 10 = very high relative future impact). The size of impact refers to how significant the participant considers the driver will be in shaping the future of the City of Essex Junction. The individual ratings by each participant were pooled and averaged, providing an overall rating for each driver by the entire group of participants. Then, two scatter diagrams of the drivers, based on size of impact were developed. The two diagrams represent the driver assessment in terms of **economic approach** and **community evolution**.

6.2.1 | ECONOMIC APPROACH

The scatter diagram allows the identification of clusters which are relatively high in impact.

The process illustrated below show the clusters of drivers that were seen as most critical in shaping the future from an **economic approach** – these clusters are termed ‘Scenario-Shaping Clusters of Drivers.’

This scatter diagram identifies the clusters of drivers considered most critical in shaping the economic development future of the City of Essex Junction looking out to 2035.



- The identified drivers for the economic approach analysis were clustered around the dimensions of economic adaptability and resilience, and overall economic size and relative performance of the city.
- The drivers identified as having the greatest impact on both economic adaptability and resilience and overall economic size and relative performance were Lack of Economic Opportunity, Escalating Cost of Living, Housing Constraints and Development, and Transportation.

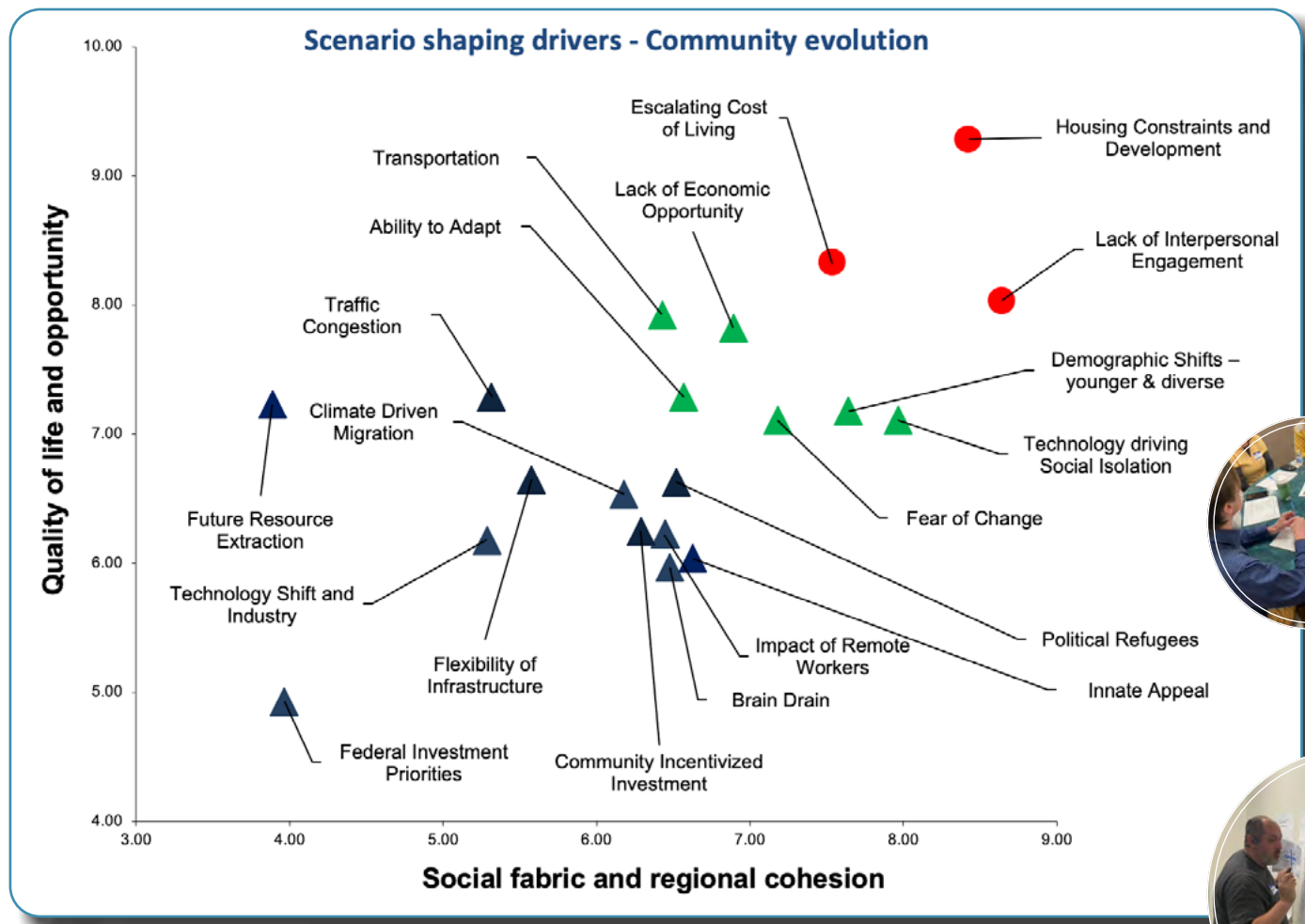



This scatter diagram identifies the clusters of drivers considered most critical in shaping the future community evolution of the City of Essex Junction looking out to 2035.

6.2.2 | COMMUNITY EVOLUTION

The scatter diagram allows the identification of clusters which are relatively high in impact.

The process illustrated below show the clusters of drivers that were seen as most critical in shaping the future for community evolution- these clusters are termed 'Scenario-Shaping Clusters of Drivers.'





- The identified drivers for community evolution were clustered around the dimensions of quality of life and opportunity and social fabric and regional cohesion.
- The drivers identified as having the greatest impact on both quality of life and opportunity and social fabric and regional cohesion were Housing Constraints and Development, Lack of Interpersonal Engagement, and Escalating Cost of Living.

DataInsight



6.3 | CLUSTER MAP DEVELOPMENT AND SCENARIO AXIS

Grouping similar drivers into two categories, clusters of drivers were identified by adding a thematic name linking the drivers in the clusters. These themes became the basis for the two axes on the scenario matrix that define the four scenario 'spaces', with quadrants either towards or away for each driver cluster. These quadrants were used to formulate four plausible scenarios. The two axes were defined as 'Economic Approach' and 'Community Evolution'.

FUTURE-SPLITTING THEMES BASED ON CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS:

Economic Approach

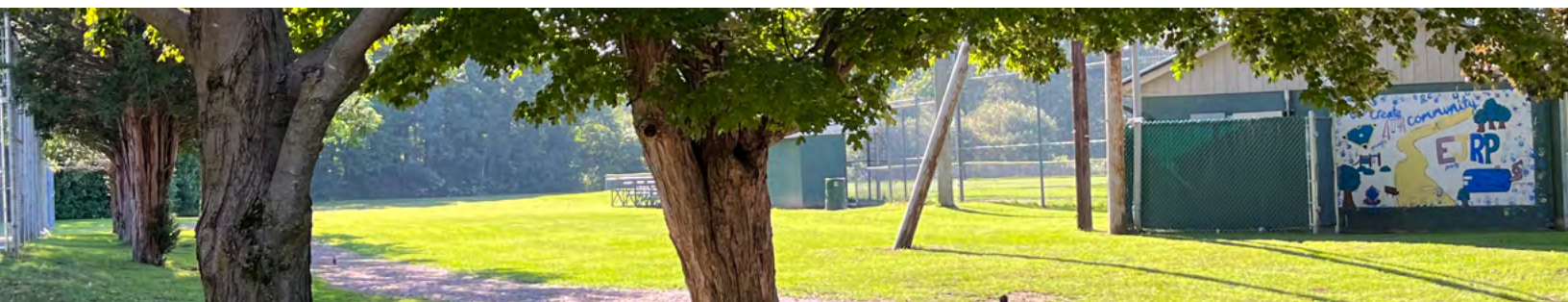
- Lack of economic opportunity
- Escalating 'cost of living'
- Housing constraints and development
- Transportation

Community Evolution

- Housing constraints and development
- Lack of interpersonal engagement
- Escalating 'cost of living'



The two axes of the scenario matrix were developed through the thematic clustering of the key drivers identified by Think-Tank participants.



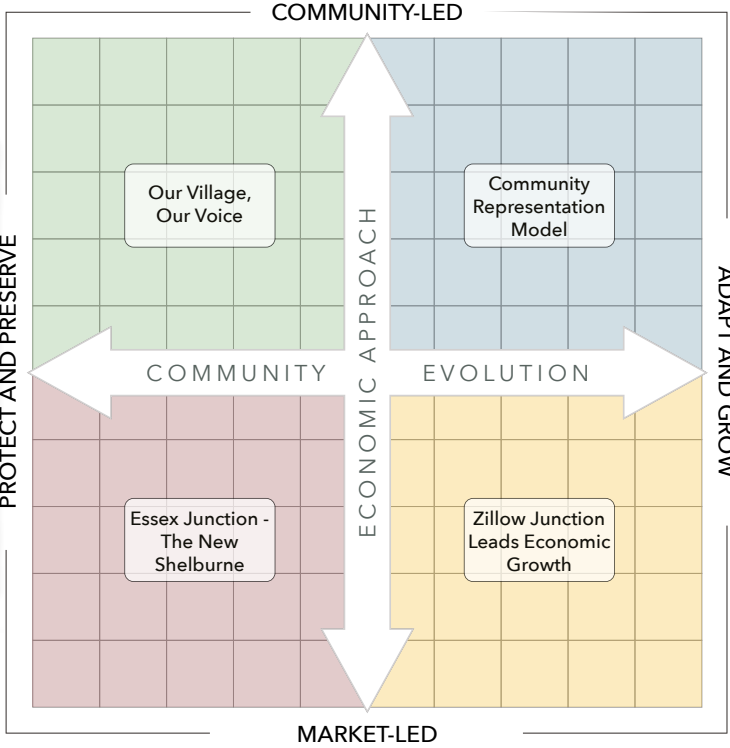
7.0 | CREATING THE SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

Think-Tank workshop participants were presented with the scenario matrix, defined by the two major axes, 'Economic Approach' and 'Community Evolution'. Brief descriptions were also attached to the end points of each driver axes. Participants were divided into four groups to develop a narrative for each scenario. Each group was asked to describe the characteristics of the City of Essex Junction in 2035 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given.

After the characteristics were established, Think-Tank participants were asked to devise major events or headlines of how the scenario occurred using the years 2025, 2030 and 2035, and to give their scenario a descriptive name. The name is intended to represent the description of the scenario in the form of a short title. Narratives, descriptions, and names of each scenario as developed by the workshop participants are included in the following sections.

The community and City led economic initiatives, which specifically help shape outcomes to ensure broad community outcomes are prioritized. Community-based tools are maximized, such as zoning, economic districts and public private partnerships .

There is a strong focus on preserving the traditional feel and scale of the community. Open space is maximized, and new residential and commercial development are resisted. There is a deliberate focus on slowing growth and limiting density.



There is a strong focus on strengthening community connectivity and embracing emerging trends and shifting social values. The community pursues efforts to boost attractiveness, relevance and affordability to a wider cross section of current and future residents.

Developers and investors drive initiatives and new investment priorities, with the City largely reacting and responding to development proposals. City investment is minimal and focused on cost-efficient outcomes, and user-pay models.





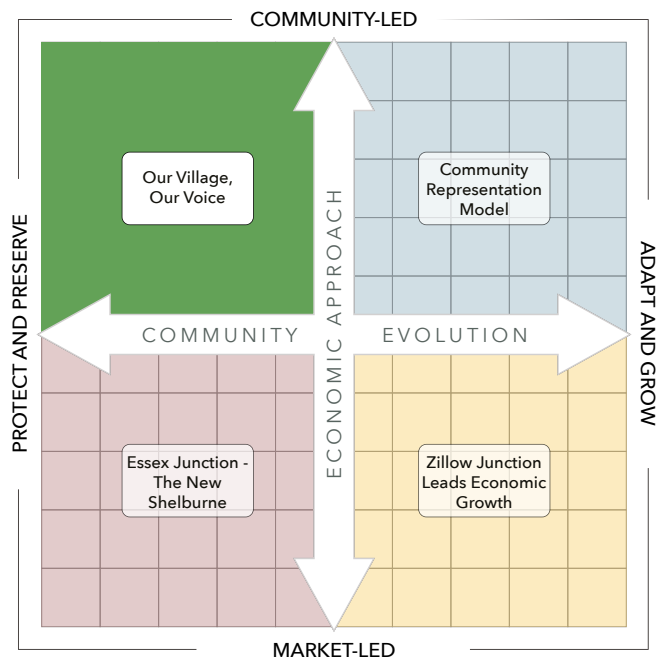
The 'Our Village, Our Voice' scenario conveys a future where the city consciously focuses on redevelopment and economic development which will produce broad community outcomes.

7.1 | SCENARIO A: OUR VILLAGE, OUR VOICE

This scenario forecasts a future where the City of Essex Junction maintains and preserves its traditional feel and scale, yet has a community led economic approach.

There is an ethos to maintain the character of the city through retention of historic buildings and the city infrastructure and roads. There is a promotion of the use of open green spaces and new public/private walks and trails are developed. As the city grows and the cost-of-living increases, the preservation of GlobalFoundries is seen as critical as well as a deliberate focus on slowing down growth and limiting density. Traditional industries and businesses are incentivized, and small businesses are encouraged to set up in the city. The city focuses on community led conscious redevelopment and economic development to ensure broad community outcomes are prioritized. Community based tools are maximized such as zoning, economic districts, and partnerships. Overall, the community is less diverse in 2035 and is made up of a remote and commuting workforce, with an emphasis on public transportation modes. The community is engaged but somewhat disparate due to many of the workforce working from home or commuting to Burlington.

- ### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT
- A less diverse population
 - Remote and commuting workforce
 - Emphasis on retention of traditional feel
 - Focus on slowing down growth and limiting density
 - Engaged but somewhat disparate community



SCENARIO A CHARACTERISTICS: 'OUR VILLAGE, OUR VOICE' - 2035

In the 'Our Village, Our Voice' scenario, the city is made up of either remote workers or commuters. This emphasizes the need for public modes of transportation.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future that deliberately focuses on community and City led economic initiatives to produce broad community outcomes while protecting and preserving all that makes the city appealing. Tradition is upheld via the preservation of characteristics such as historic buildings, and traditional and small-scale businesses. With a commuting and remote workforce, public transportation modes are encouraged. Due to the high cost of living and accommodation costs, the population is less ethnically and economically diverse.



ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

The city focuses on community led conscious redevelopment.

- Traditional buildings and roads are preserved to maintain the city character.
- The cost of living increases significantly and the preservation of GlobalFoundries is seen as critical.
- Traditional businesses are incentivized, and small businesses are encouraged to set up in the city.
- The train station and other modes of transportation are important to a commuting workforce.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

There is a less diverse population (both economically and ethnicity).

- The workforce becomes more flexible with a mix of remote and in office workers.
- The school system is excellent and maintains its current reputation.
- The community is very active and involved. Participation from across the community is encouraged.
- The Exposition brings in more visitors and year-round events to the City of Essex Junction.



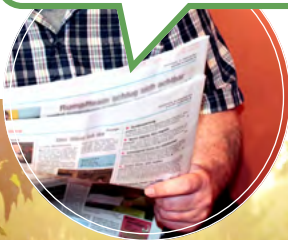
BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

There is an ethos to not lose what the City of Essex Junction currently has regarding buildings/roads.

- There is a promotion of the city open/green spaces with more access for everybody.
- Private and public river walks are developed.

2025 Headline News

"THE CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION PARKS ATTENDANCE INCREASES"



2030 Headline News

"RECORD ATTENDANCE AT EXPO EVENTS GENERATES WINDFALL FOR CITY"



2035 Headline News

"DESPITE WIDESPREAD ELECTRIC CAR USE, GAS STATIONS REMAIN IN THE CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION"





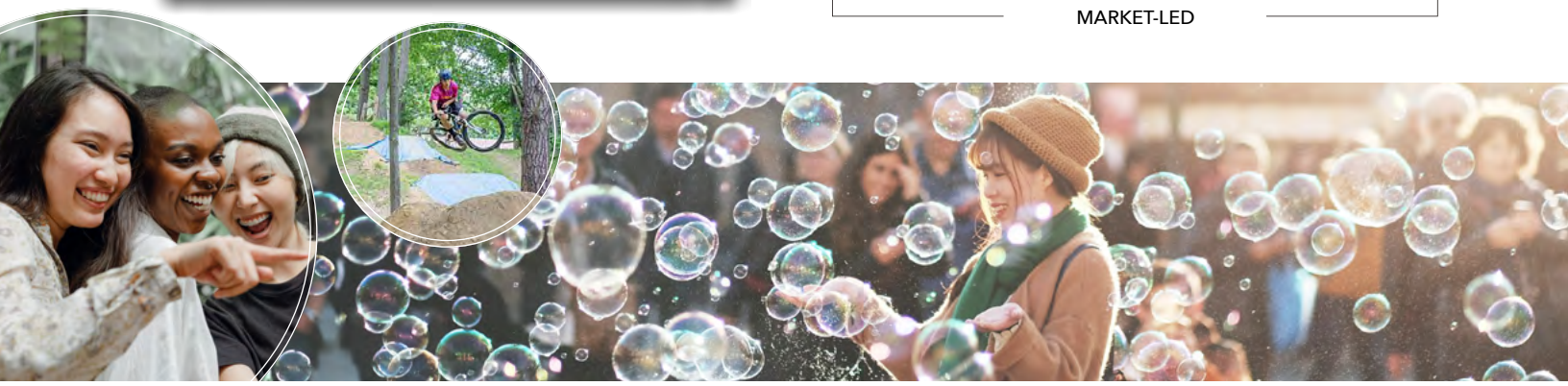
The 'Community Representation Model' scenario conveys a future where the City of Essex Junction is known as a vibrant and inclusive city with an enviable standard of living.

7.2 | SCENARIO B: COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION MODEL

This scenario forecasts a future where the City of Essex Junction becomes known for its inclusive and welcoming ethos.

As a result, the population is both economically and ethnically diverse. The economic approach is community led while having a strong focus on adapting and growing as a community. Community connectivity is significant in relation to amenities, activities, and engagement as well as practically via cycle lanes, trails, and public transportation. Walkability and cycling are encouraged and there are passive and active greenspaces within the city. Inclusivity and equity are demonstrated via subsidized housing, vertical development and incentives and grants for new businesses. There is investment in the public good and shared amenities and resources that create desirable living conditions. There is a focus on community vitality across the city with vibrant amenities and activities. The enviable location is attractive to people wishing to move to the city due to its amenities, character, sense of community and proximity to the airport, Burlington, and the landscape of Vermont.

- ### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT
- Diversity and inclusivity both ethnically and economically
 - Vibrant city amenities and activities and desirable location with the airport, Burlington and wider Vermont.
 - Community led economic approach and adapting and growing as a community is encouraged and delivered
 - Community engagement is strong with a focus on the appeal of the city to outsiders (to move to or visit the city)



SCENARIO B CHARACTERISTICS: 'COMMUNITY REPRESENTATION MODEL' - 2035

In the 'Community Representation Model' scenario, the welcoming ethos of the city, proximity to the airport, Burlington and the landscape of Vermont is appealing to visitors, young families, and new residents.

The characteristics of this scenario convey a future where the City of Essex Junction becomes known for its inclusive and welcoming ethos. The population is both economically and ethnically diverse and the city is a desirable place for young families to move to and professionals to relocate. The economic approach is community led while having a strong focus on adapting and growing as a community. Community connectivity is significant in relation to amenities, activities, and engagement as well as practically via cycle lanes, trails, and public transportation. Walkability and Cycling is encouraged and there are passive and active greenspaces within the city. Inclusivity and equity are demonstrated via subsidized housing, incentives and grants for new businesses.



ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

Housing is subsidized with a focus on equity and inclusion.

- New businesses receive grants and incentives to set up in the city.
- A business hub is set up to attract new businesses and workforce.
- There is a focus on equitable public transportation.
- There is affordable home ownership with small/large units in multi-story housing, condominiums and co-ops.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

There is an ethnically and economically diverse population.

- There is increased community connectivity and engagement.
- The city is known for its fair, forward thinking ethos and inclusion of wider trends and social values.
- The community works with leadership to enhance the livability and appeal of the city.
- The city is known for its inclusive and welcoming feel and vibrant amenities and entertainment.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

There are both passive and active greenspaces.

- There are more condominiums than apartments which leads to ownership, investment and a greater community feel.
- Vertical development is encouraged to provide new residents with ownership opportunities that give a sense of investment in the community and a greater sense of liveability.
- Neighborhoods within the city are connected via cycle lanes and trails.
- The proximity to the airport, Burlington and wider Vermont is appealing to visitors and new residents.

2025 Headline News
 "FIRST IN VERMONT!
 CITY VOTERS
 APPROVE COLLECTIVE
 REPRESENTATION MODEL"



2030 Headline News
 "ESSEX JUNCTION UNVEILS
 NEW RIVERWALK AND
 BOAT LAUNCH!"



2035 Headline News
 "CELEBRATING 12 YEARS
 OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY
 DEVELOPMENT"





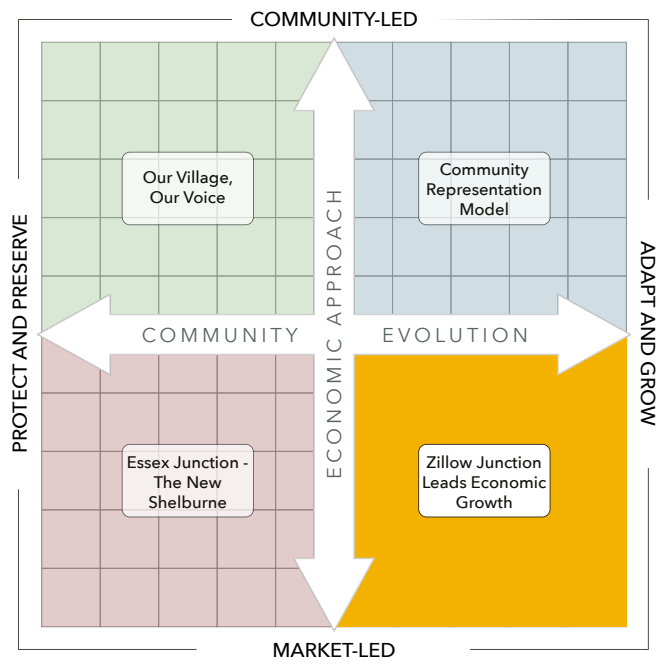
The 'Zillow Junction Leads Economic Growth' scenario conveys a future where there is a growing tension between the impact and influence of developers and investors and the livability options and housing for the community.

7.3 | SCENARIO C: ZILLOW JUNCTION LEADS ECONOMIC GROWTH

This scenario forecasts a future where the City of Essex Junction focuses on adapting and growing with strong community connectivity, while being directly market led economically.

Rather than community led initiatives in relation to zoning, economic districts and partnerships, the economic approach is influenced by developers and investors. The City reacts and responds to development proposals to the detriment of the community. As City investment is minimal and focused on cost efficiency, the broader outcomes for the community are not paramount. There is a tension between what the community wants for the future of the city and the over-riding priorities given to developers. This impacts both housing style and development as well as affordability. This results in a less economically and ethnically diverse community and less community connectivity and engagement. Those who work in the city cannot afford to live in the city due to escalating housing and rental prices and so the population is made up of retirees and wealthy empty-nesters. The lack of economic diversity leads to a lack of social cohesion, social identity and community connectivity as a new city.

- ### SCENARIO SNAPSHOT
- Developer and investor driven priorities contribute to the detriment of the community
 - Lack of social cohesion and community connectivity
 - Housing is no longer affordable leading to a lack of an ethnically and economically diverse population
 - Those who live in the city have to work in Burlington and elsewhere or work from home



SCENARIO C CHARACTERISTICS: 'ZILLOW JUNCTION LEADS ECONOMIC GROWTH' - 2035

In the "Zillow Junction Leads Economic Growth" scenario, the city is made up of wealthy empty nesters and retirees due to the lack of affordability and appeal in terms of housing and livability.

The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where the City prioritizes developers and investors over the community. The economic approach is market led rather than community led. Housing prices increase and people work elsewhere to afford the housing prices and rents. The population is made up of dual income workers who work elsewhere and retirees. The school system is impacted due to the lack of new families moving into the city. Remote workers move to the city, due to its reputation of equity and inclusion, and this contributes to a lack of social connectivity and cohesion. Community engagement is low and unengaged due to the pressures of work and lack of an active community ethos.



ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

The value of housing continues to grow so people who work in the city cannot afford to live there.

- Most residents do not work in the City of Essex Junction or Vermont as a whole.
- Entrepreneurship increases as well as local businesses to serve local needs.
- Lots of service driven industry and more wealthy residents who have less free time.
- More people renting due to unaffordable housing. More stress due to high rents.



COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

The population makeup consists of dual income no children and retirees.

- Lots of apartments and empty nesters and retirees aging in place. Retirees driven out eventually due to cost.
- Lack of social cohesion and dual income no children families impact school system.
- Out of State residents/non-Vermonters/political refugees make up a large segment of the population.
- Less engagement – more siloed.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

There is dense homogenous housing and small lots. Housing looks the same.

- Vertical development and taller buildings, which are mainly owned by developers.
- Unaffordable housing.
- Lack of green space but the green space will be protected from development. People can pay to use private green space.
- Better environmental practices and public sewer usage.

2025 Headline News

"SENIOR CENTER (RE)OPENS IN RENOVATED SPACE"



2030 Headline News

"TECH INDUSTRIES HIRING IN ESSEX JUNCTION"



2035 Headline News

"SCHOOLS CLOSES TO BECOME DOGGY DAY CARE AND RECREATION CENTRE"





The 'Essex Junction - The New Shelburne' scenario conveys a future where wealthy new residents clash with the remaining long-term residents about the future direction of the city.

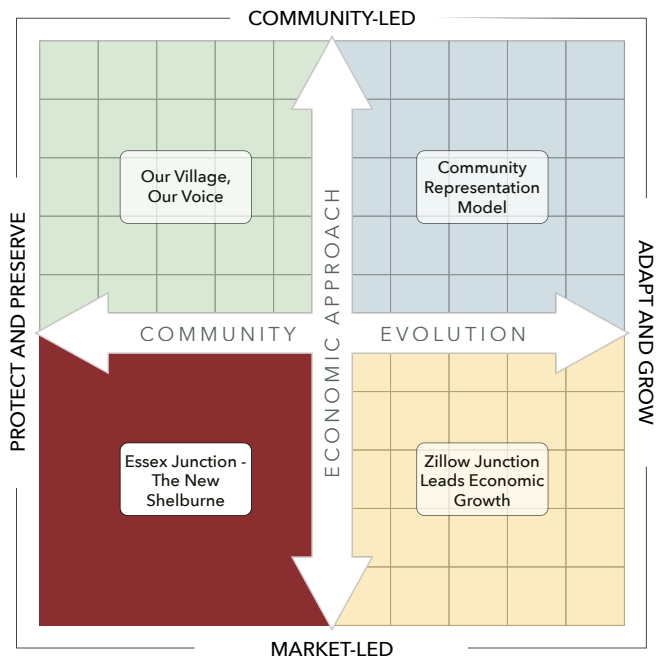
7.4 | SCENARIO D: ESSEX JUNCTION - THE NEW SHELBURNE

This scenario forecasts a future where the City of Essex Junction is economically market led and chooses not to evolve and adapt over time.

Instead, the community evolution is of protecting and preserving the traditional feel and scale of the city. While initially appealing to protect and preserve the traditional feel and scale, the city does not evolve and loses community interest, engagement, and connection as a result. Growth is slowed down with limited density and the city is unaffordable for new and current residents. The population is made up of affluent newcomers, second homeowners and those who can still afford to live in the city. The experience of living in the city has been lost for those who grew up in the city. The businesses change to reflect the needs of the new population and the variety of businesses which made up the city move to other locations. Families also move to places which can offer better schools and family orientated livability needs. The city has become gentrified which is appealing to the new population, but there is no longer any community feeling or connection. There is a dichotomy of long-term residents and the new residents regarding how the city should evolve and change in the future.

SCENARIO SNAPSHOT

- Market led economic approach and traditional community evolution
- Affluent newcomers, second home owners and those who can still afford to live in the City of Essex Junction
- No ethnic or economic diversity
- An attractive city with traditional and historic buildings
- Loss of community and any form of community feeling or engagement unless via tension between long term residents and newcomers



SCENARIO D CHARACTERISTICS: 'ESSEX JUNCTION - THE NEW SHELBURNE' - 2035

In the 'Essex Junction - The New Shelburne' scenario, the city changes to welcome affluent newcomers and is no longer affordable for anyone else.

The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where this future looks appealing to those who do not live in the City of Essex Junction or those who may wish to move to the city. The city is tasteful and attractive with many historic buildings and high end retail outlets. However, there is a palpable lack of sense of community due to the lack of long-term residents, new families and the energy of a diverse community.

ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

Businesses evolve with less diversity. There are more boutique and high-end retail.

- Demographic shifts with more affluence.
- Congestion issues are no longer a problem due to less families and workers/commuters.
- Housing costs increase and rental cost increases.
- Increase in diverse businesses lost due to a more affluent community.

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL FABRIC CHARACTERISTICS

This is a less diverse and equitable community.

- Dichotomy between longtime residents and new affluent residents. Tension between two groups as new residents may have differing ideas about the development of the City of Essex Junction.
- There is a lack of connection in the city but more connection in individual neighborhoods.
- Aging population with less young families and children. As the aging population pass away no young people move in so the community stagnates.
- Diverse populations are not attracted to the region due to the cost and lack of young people.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

There are more preserved and valued green spaces due to more interest and investment.

- What is preserved or not preserved will depend on the neighborhood.
- Property taxes go up, diversity decreases, and the city is more homogenous and white.
- There is predominantly low density building.
- Money is invested in historic buildings.

2025 Headline News
 "ESSEX JUNCTION ETHNIC BUSINESSES RELOCATE TO NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES"



2030 Headline News
 "NEW EJRP SENIOR PROGRAMS AMIDST CUTS TO YOUTH PROGRAMS"



2035 Headline News
 "WHOLE FOODS OPENS FLAGSHIP STORE IN ESSEX JUNCTION"



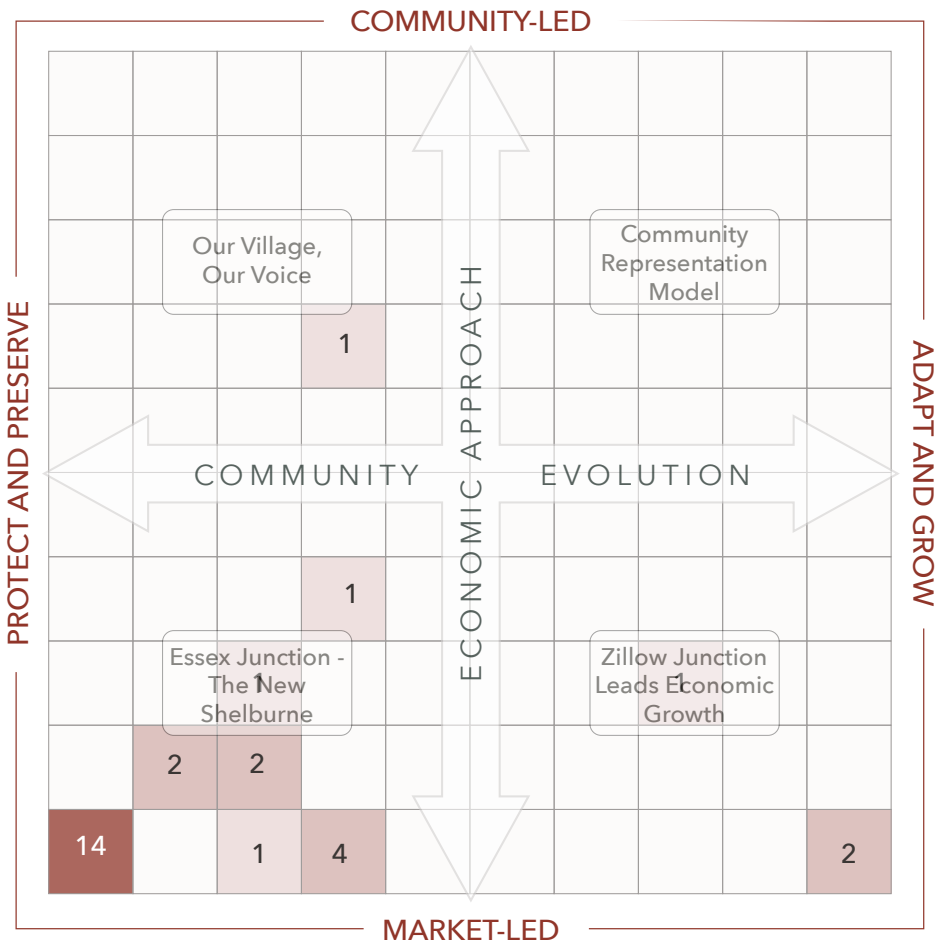
8.0 | LEAST DESIRED, EXPECTED, AND PREFERRED FUTURES

The least desired future is one where community stakeholders have said, 'We don't want that.' This provides leadership a mandate to change the trajectory of the community or city to avoid this scenario.

8.1 | LEAST DESIRED FUTURE

The Least Desired Future is defined as 'the future that you think will be the most undesirable (or least optimal or least desired) for the future of the City of Essex Junction. Think-Tank participants most definitely considered Scenario D, 'Essex Junction - The New Shelburne to be the Least Desired scenario for the City of Essex Junction.

CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN LEAST DESIRED FUTURE 2035



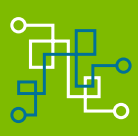
LEAST DESIRED FUTURE PLAUSIBILITY MATRIX

This grid displays the plausibility level assigned by the workshop participants. The darker the color, the greater the aggregate weighted plausibility score.



future*iq*
Create Future Intelligence
www.future-iq.com





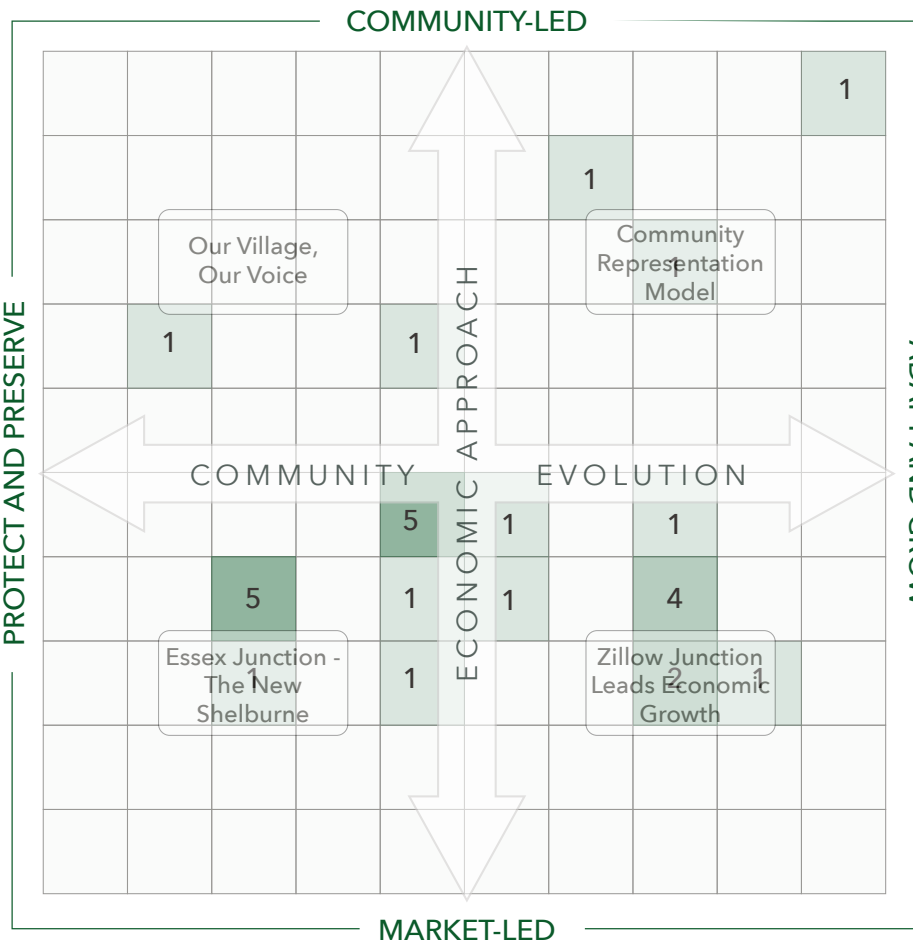
- The intensity of color along the extreme left of the scenario matrix indicates that Think-Tank participants have a shared view of the least desirable future.
- The corners of the scenario matrix quadrants indicate the extreme versions of the scenarios.

8.2 | EXPECTED FUTURE

The Expected Future represents the future that is most likely to happen if the community does nothing to change direction or trajectory.

The expected future is one deemed most likely to happen if there is no change in the current trajectory of the City of Essex Junction. Most Think-Tank participants indicated that the expected future is somewhat split between Scenario C and Scenario D, with Scenario D stronger in terms of the expected future. A number believed that scenario D, "Essex Junction - The New Shelburne", is the scenario that represented the expected future of the City of Essex Junction. A number of participants also thought scenario C, "Zillow Junction Leads Economic Growth could also be possible expected futures.

CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN EXPECTED FUTURE 2035



EXPECTED FUTURE PLAUIBILITY MATRIX

This grid displays the plausibility level assigned by the workshop participants.

The darker the color, the greater the aggregate weighted plausibility score.





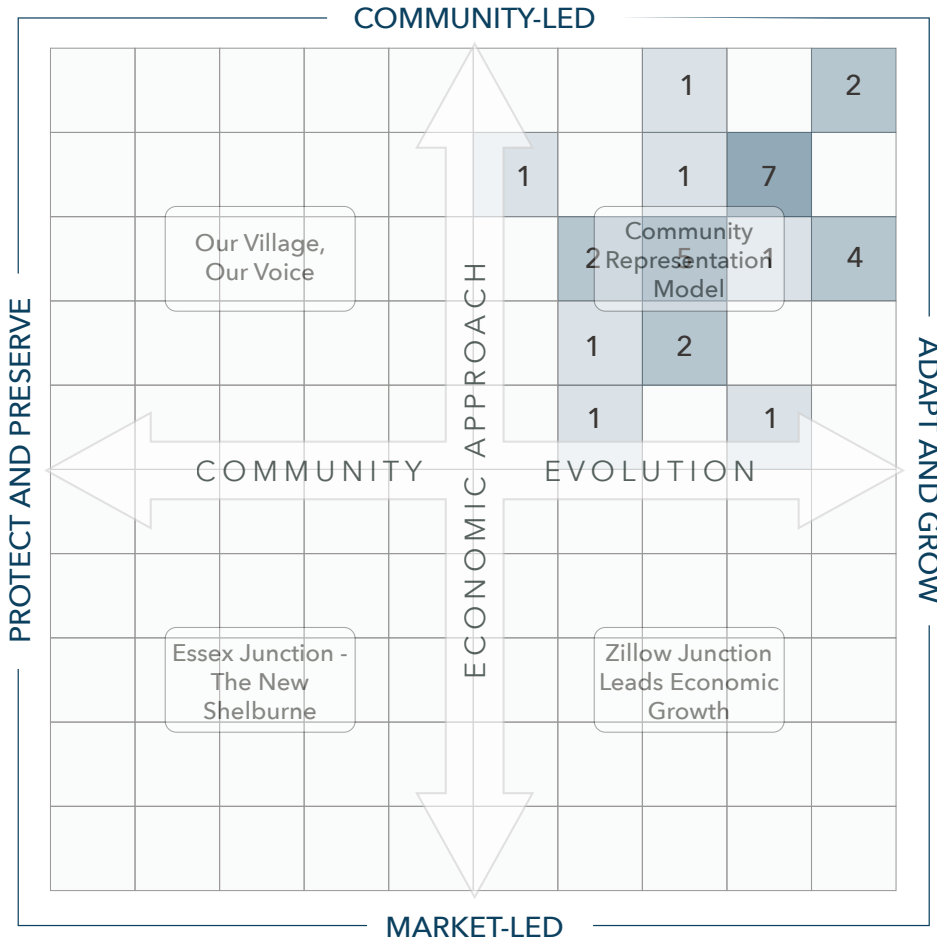
- The responses are clustered around the bottom left and right off the center point.
- The expected future represents a future that is market-led with community evolution split between protecting and preserving and adapting and growing.

8.3 | PREFERRED FUTURE

Think-Tank participants expressed an overwhelming preference for Scenario B, 'Community Representation Model' as the Preferred Future for the City of Essex Junction in 2035. Think-Tank participants discussed the consequences of inaction and the need to take decisive action NOW to redirect the city's trajectory over the next 10 years.

The concentration of color in Scenario B, "Community Representation Model" indicates a significant appetite for change in the region.

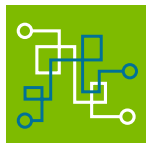
CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PREFERRED FUTURE 2035



PREFERRED FUTURE PLAUSIBILITY MATRIX

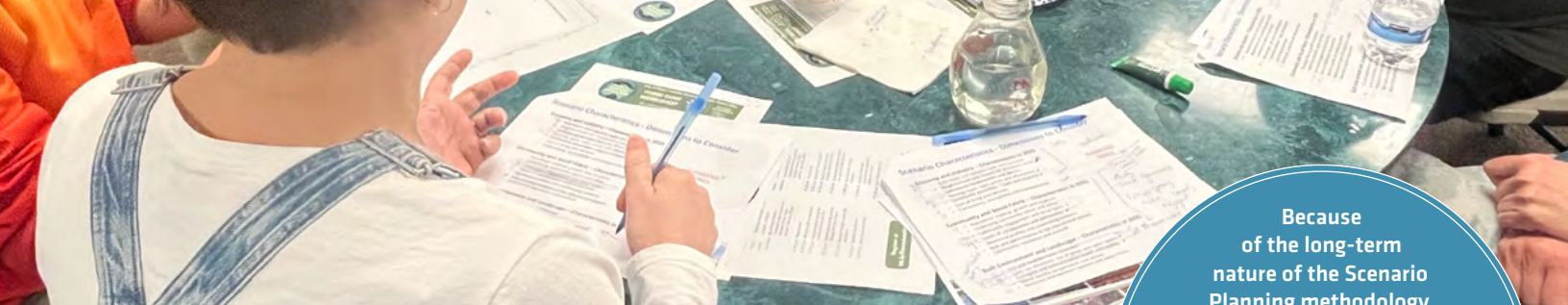
This grid displays the plausibility level assigned by the workshop participants.

The darker the color, the greater the aggregate weighted plausibility score



FutureInsight

- The concentration of color in Scenario B, 'Community Representation Model, indicates a close alignment of thinking among Think-Tank participants, and a significant appetite for community-led and adaptable change.
- Arriving at a point of consensus among stakeholders about the preferred future is very important to the visioning process as it provides a sense of cohesion, agreement, and balanced solutions going forward.

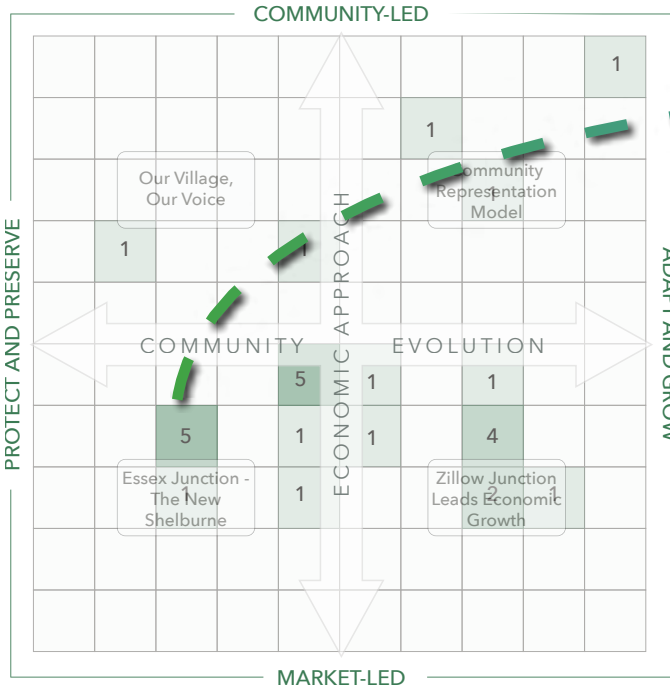


Because of the long-term nature of the Scenario Planning methodology, stakeholders often see the 'distant future vision (2035)' as unattainable and unrealistic. However, this underestimates the progress that can be made during the intervening years, and the cumulative positive impacts of change.

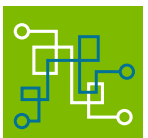
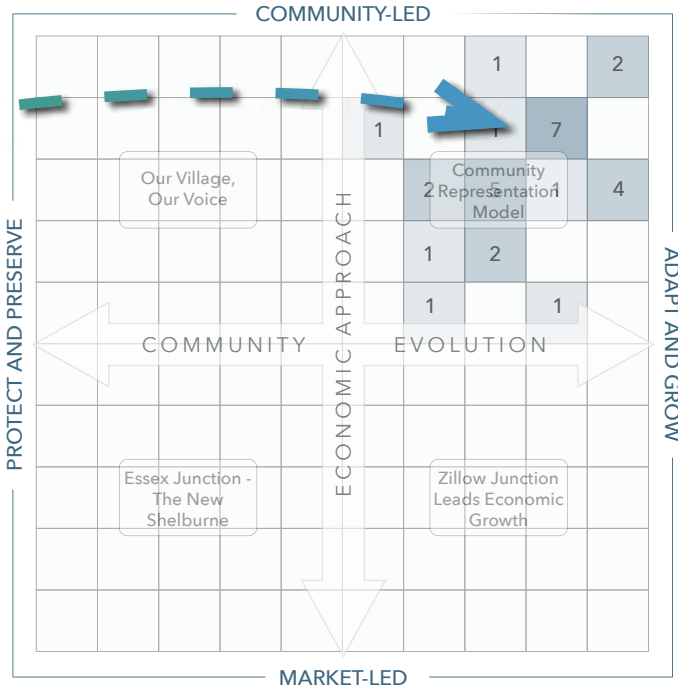
8.4 | GETTING TO THE PREFERRED FUTURE

Think-Tank participants discussed the ramifications and implications of failing to achieve the preferred future. While there was strong alignment among Think-Tank participants that Scenario B, 'Community Representation Model,' represented the preferred scenario, it was also recognized that reorienting the current trajectory will require significant community engagement, communication, and leadership in the city.

CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
EXPECTED FUTURE 2035



CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
PREFERRED FUTURE 2035



FutureInsight

- The Think-Tank scenario planning is a significant step in the city's planning process to define collectively how the City of Essex Junction will strategically plan to achieve its preferred future.
- There will need to be a significant emphasis in engaging the community and a more intentional re-invention of the community fabric and adaptation.
- Telling the story of why the City of Essex Junction needs to pivot in its trajectory will be an important part of how change will be made.





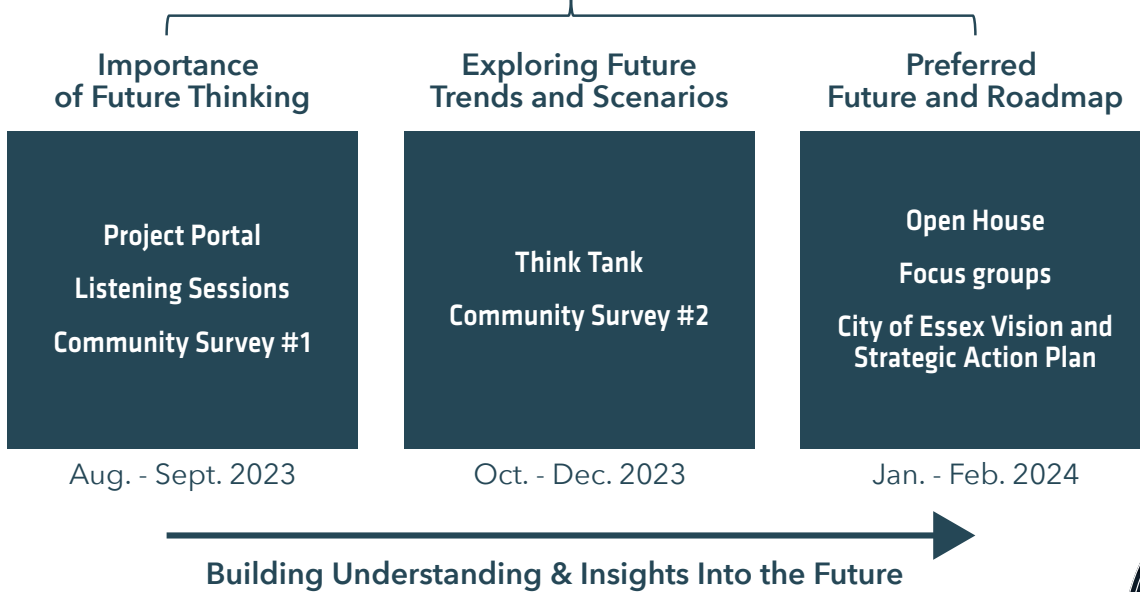
10.0 | NEXT STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Following the Think-Tank, this Think-Tank Report was written and published for distribution. The project will then move into the 'Strategic Positioning and Validating' phase of the regional planning process.

- January 27, 2024 - City of Essex Junction Open-House
- January 28-29, 2024 - Focus Group sessions
- February 2024 - Presentation of City of Essex Junction Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan to Council and to community at Future Summit

Please stay connected to the planning project at lab2.future-iq.com/essex-junction-visionstrategic-action-plan/.

Project Stages & Opportunities to Engage





11.0 | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A Steering Committee was formed to help guide this project. We would like to acknowledge the Steering Committee members.

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Andrew Brown

Emily Hagan-Howe

Marcus Certa

Brad Luck

Cristin Gildea

Chris Yuen

Tacy Lincoln

Regina Mahony

Scott McCormick

Community members and stakeholders have engaged in this community visioning and strategic action planning process with great enthusiasm. Their passion and interest have ensured discussions are open, thoughtful, and reflective of the myriad of perspectives that exist within the City of Essex Junction. This dedication is also reflective of the deep commitment participants have to the future of the city.

Additionally, appreciation is whole-heartedly extended to Ashley Snellenberger (Project Lead) and the team at the City of Essex Junction who provide the local expertise that helps guide this project. Their time and dedication are greatly appreciated.





»»»» 12.0 | FOR MORE INFORMATION

This initiative is focused on planning for the future of the City of Essex Junction. It is exploring where and how the city can fit into a rapidly changing world, looking out to 2035. The result will be a shared Community Vision and Strategic Action plan, that will contain an initial implementation roadmap looking out to 2035 – with actions – to move toward the shared vision for the city.

For more information on the City of Essex Junction Community Vision and Strategic Action Plan project please contact:

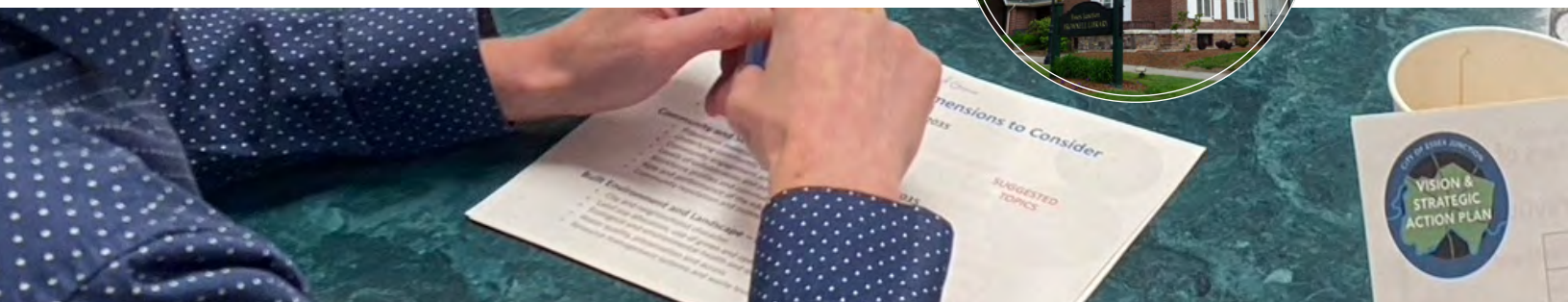
ASHLEY SNELLENBERGER

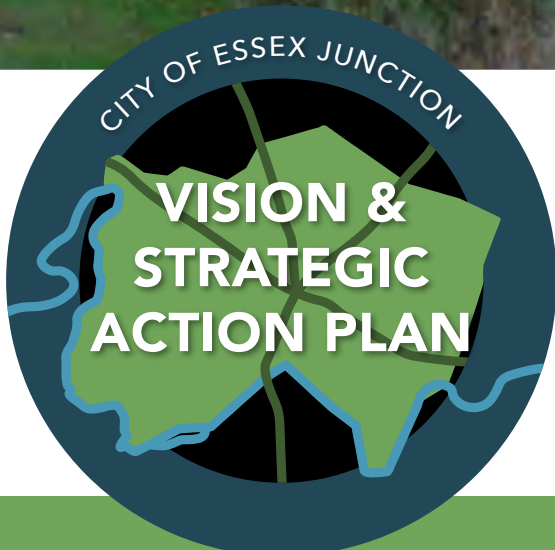
Communications & Strategic Initiatives Director
City of Essex Junction
802.878.6944 EXT: 1601
ASnellenberger@essexjunction.org

DAVID BEURLE

Chief Executive Officer
Future iQ
612-757-9190 | david@future-iq.com

Please stay connected to the collaborative regional planning initiative at:
lab2.future-iq.com/essex-junction-visionstrategic-action-plan/





THE CITY OF ESSEX JUNCTION COMMUNITY
VISION & STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

THINK-TANK REPORT

VERMONT, USA

NOVEMBER 2023