

## **Creating a New Town Common**

### **Town of Hinesburg**

*November 28, 2023*



#### **Context and Background**

The Town of Hinesburg (population ~ 4700) has a vibrant and growing village that lacks a central community gathering space. The Town owns a 2.6-acre, essentially flat, open lot behind our police and fire stations that is centrally located, has extensive frontage on Town roads, is in a highly visible location, and is within easy walking distance of residential neighborhoods, mixed use developments, and commercial services. Except for a small, seasonally erected ice rink, the space is simply a large and underutilized mowed lawn.

Two conceptual designs (2011 and 2013) were previously prepared, but they lacked community input and did not generate much interest. Since then, the village has grown around this green space and our thinking about how to improve the space and foster community use has evolved. Community engagement activities in 2019 and 2021 sparked a strong interest among community members for a functional common greenspace. An extremely successful pop-up park event (August 3, 2019) attracted over 200 community members to a range of activities, including a park amenity feedback station. A park design charrette (September 18, 2021) included about 50 community members working in teams to create seven designs for the space. At both events, we received thoughtful and creative input on desired improvements.

#### **Conceptual Design**

A new conceptual design was delivered in August 2022 by landscape architects at Dubois & King. The design was the result of work with a seven-person design committee, and input from community members at a July 6, 2022 Select Board meeting. The design was accompanied by photos showing examples of possible improvements, a cost estimate for various elements, and phasing recommendations. This conceptual design is just the beginning of creating a vibrant Town Common. Details will need to be worked out as we proceed with improvements.

#### **Implementation**

In 2023, a new Town Common Committee was appointed by the Hinesburg Select Board to spearhead implementation of the plan over the next 5-7 years. Members of the Committee include: AJ Driscoll, Lenore Budd, Rachel Kring, Maggie Gordon, Nathan Fry. The implementation schedule will be determined by the Town Common Committee and the Select Board, and by available funding. The first phase (2024) will be site engineering and permitting, followed by site work related to grading, drainage, and landscaping. The Town is utilizing American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the first phase, and is currently applying for a State grant to help cover tree-planting costs. The Town also has a small amount of capital budget funds set aside for this project - likely to serve as local match for grants to help pay for subsequent phases. We expect to use the conceptual design to inspire the additional fundraising that will be needed for detailed design work and installation of more involved elements (e.g., pavilion, play areas, walkways, parking, etc.).

*More information online*

<https://www.hinesburg.org/planning-zoning/pages/town-common-design>