



THE
PRESERVATION
TRUST OF
VERMONT

What Makes a Great Village?

by Paul Bruhn,
Executive Director of the Preservation Trust of Vermont

What makes a great village? That was the question we posed to the participants in the first annual Village Center Retreat at the Grand Isle Lake House in the summer of 2007. The event was co-sponsored by the Division for Historic Preservation and the Preservation Trust of Vermont. It provided participants the opportunity to share experiences and challenges as well as a chance to learn more about a variety of programs designed to help communities strengthen their village centers.

Part of the discussion focused on what elements are important to building and maintaining a strong and vibrant village. Not every village will have every single element, but the more the better according to the participants. It's also true that successful villages become less successful if critical elements are lost over time. If a once strong village center loses one critical element, and then others become more fragile and even lost, then a downward spiral can result. Over time, a strong commitment by local officials and residents is the key to good stewardship.

Here's the list of critical elements:

- General store
- Post Office
- Library
- School
- Town Offices
- Dinner/restaurant/cafe
- Bakery/Coffee Shop
- Bookstore
- Artist Guild
- Wireless Hotspots
- Hardware/Home Supply
- Clothing Shops
- Barber/Beauty Shop
- Video Rental
- Places of worship
- Community hall
- Traffic calming
- Septic/sewer capacity!
- Public restroom
- Businesses
- Bank
- Housing for all income groups
- Lodging for visitors
- Fire Department
- Auto Mechanic/Repair
- Monuments, outdoor sculpture
- Town green/ bandstand
- Arts and cultural activities, museum
- Places for kids and teens
- Recreation opportunities

What do you think? Do you have ideas to add? Let us know! paul@ptvermont.org