

## Visual Preference Survey Results

### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Several general conclusions can be made from the results of the visual preference survey at the public forum on May 18<sup>th</sup>:

#### **Building Type and Scale:**

- “Simpler” design is preferred. Avoiding “busy” designs with many architectural elements was a consistent message from attendees.
- Reactions to structures with flat roofs were mixed. Two structures were rated in the top 6 building types. Another flat roofed structure was the lowest rated.
- Porches were mentioned several times as a positive building element that should be encouraged. Five of the top 6 rated building types had a porch or covered entry.
- A maximum height of around 2 stories seemed preferable to most attendees. The highest rated building types were 2 or 2 ½ stories tall.
- The top 6 rated building types had predominately vertically-oriented rectangular windows symmetrical to a central axis.
- The top 3 rated building types had relatively small eaves and sills. Two of these structures did not have lintels. The flat roofed structures in the top 6 rated building types had ornate cornices.



This structure was scored the “highest” by attendees when asked about building type and scale.



This building type was rated fairly high despite many differences when compared to other highly rated building types.

### Highest Rated Building Types

|                     | Structure 2   | Structure 11   | Structure 14  |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
|                     |  |  |  |
| <b>Not at all</b>   | 6.67%   | 6.67%  | 0.00%   |
| <b>Somewhat</b>     | 40.00%  | 6.67%  | 7.69%   |
| <b>Very much so</b> | 53.33%  | 86.67%   | 92.31%  |

**Building Siting:**

- Pedestrian scale and orientation is essential to building siting per public forum attendees.
- Green space between the street and the building is important. However, the building shouldn't be set back too far from the road either.
- Parking is preferred in side and rear.

**Franchise Design:**

- Two-story Dollar General designs were preferable to attendees. Cornices, awnings, and false second story or parapet were features on the higher-rated designs.
- None of the McDonalds designs were well-liked by attendees. Attendees stated that there were more preferable designs in Essex Center and Stowe. McDonalds in these communities have dormers and use neutral exterior colors. The Essex Center McDonalds has large bay windows.

**Residential:**

- Keeping structure height in vicinity of two stories is preferred.
- Prefer some distinguishing details and differentiation from neighboring structures to avoid "cookie cutter" look.
- Would like some "senior housing" in the village, but large scale multi-family housing may not fit the village character (>6 or more units).
- Structures should be setback, but not too far (est. 20 ft. to 35 ft. from edge of road is OK).
- Structures should be oriented to the street and sidewalks should connect new residential structures to the village.
- Density of up to 1 unit per ¼ acre may be OK for village.
- Four of the 6 residential structures shown received a majority of "not at all" votes when asked if the fit the vision of South Here's future. The 2 that received some favorable votes are shown below.

**Highest Rated Residential Types**

|                     | <b>Structure 29</b>   | <b>Structure 33</b>  |
|---------------------|---|--|
|                     |  |  |
| <b>Not at all</b>   | 16.67%  | 18.18%   |
| <b>Somewhat</b>     | 50.00%  | 72.73%   |
| <b>Very much so</b> | 33.33%  | 9.09%  |

## INCONGRUENCES/INCONSISTENCIES

Attendees' responses to the visual preference survey were sometimes incongruent and



Both of these structures were highly rated when attendees rated building scale. The top structure has around a 2,000 sq. ft. footprint. The bottom structure has a footprint over 4000 sq. ft.

inconsistent. Here are some examples:

- Scale – Results varied in building scale preference, both in terms of building footprint size and height/massing. A footprint of 2500 sq. ft. was appropriate for one structure, but a structure with the same footprint was then called “the high end of what is acceptable.” This is despite structures of larger footprints (up to 4000 sq. ft.) being considered “somewhat” or “very much” a part of the villages’ vision.

Attendees had varied responses regarding structure height preferences. The top 6 rated building types were all two stories or greater in height. However, when asked about building scale, several one story structures were rated highly by attendees.

- The Public House – The Public House, a structure located in Hinesburg, was well received by about 2/3 of attendees that voted on building type and scale (“interesting,” “catches your eye”). However, the building lacks windows and is one story tall - two characteristics that are uncommon amongst other highly rated structures.

- Building Siting – The two highest rated building sites are sited substantially different from each other. The first building site is well-landscaped and setback relatively far from the road. The second building site is situated closer to the road with pedestrian infrastructure.
- Shop-Front Windows – Attendees responded differently to shop-front windows with some attendees finding them “inviting” and others finding them not characteristic of South Hero.

## REMAINING QUESTIONS

- Roof Types – There does not seem to be a clear community preference regarding roof types. Let's review roof type preferences, potential impacts on village character and conformance with the vision, and consider how best to address them in your regulations.
- Windows – Windows size and placement were referenced by attendees several times; therefore, should windows be regulated? Windows can be regulated in terms of placement, type, details, coverage or any or all of the above.

The results of the visual preference survey show that rectangular, vertically-oriented windows are preferred. There was mixed opinion about shop-front windows. Let's discuss these different considerations about windows and how best to address them in your regulations.

- Height/Stories – Let's carefully consider whether new single story structures are appropriate for the village. As part of this discussion, let's take into consideration design options such as building height, false facades/parapets and windows that create the appearance of a second story.

Conversely, how many stories is too tall?

- Setbacks – There is not a clear community preference on setbacks. Let's discuss how setbacks should be regulated in the village, where varied setbacks already exist.
- Landscaping – Well landscaped building sites were mentioned several times. Let's discuss how landscaping should be regulated and/or required in the villages.
- Parking – Attendees strongly preferred parking on the rear or side of structures. Let's discuss options for requiring this type of parking in your regulations. What considerations are there, such as access and shared parking?



### Building Siting

These two building sites were the most preferred by the attendees despite several dissimilar characteristics.

- Density – Attendees indicated that they were OK with development patterns that are denser than what currently exist. What is the appropriate density for the villages?
- Residential Design – Only two residential photos were well received by attendees and neither received more than a few “very much so” votes. What type of residential design fits the villages? How much should residential structure design/siting be regulated (especially given state restrictions)?