



## Proposals for a Planning Process

The Village of North Hatley seeks proposals for a transformational planning project that promises to be a signature manifestation of North Hatley's emerging vision of A Green and Prosperous Massawippi Valley. Proposals must be submitted by January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 11:00 a. m.

We believe that this effort can set a standard for sustainable (minimal use of fossil fuels) development in Quebec and across North America. Driven by a vision that Environmental and Economic Development can and must be Interdependent Forces, our town has the opportunity to create beautiful green spaces and incorporate ambitious environmental goals while bringing the village a new prosperity from which citizens at all levels can benefit. Perhaps most significantly, the projects described in this proposal promise year-round benefits for current and prospective year-round citizens to enjoy.

The boundaries of the 130 000 square meter project lie in the very heart of the village: from the old Baptist Church to the Farmer's Market, from the bike trail and Capelton Road to the Massawippi river and Chemin de la Rivière (the federal wharf portion will also be included). Once the home of a thriving grist mill, a wooden boat factory and winter boat storage facility, a full-service gas station and mechanical shop, and even a town dump, the space is now an eyesore that detracts from an otherwise lovely town with ugly, impermeable surfaces that mar the health and beauty of the Massawippi River.



A thriving and attractive Farmer's Market attracts citizens from across the region, but these visitors must drive or walk through unpleasant parking lots, on one lane roads and abandoned buildings to get to the town's shops, school, parks and restaurants.



While the town has been approached by developers with grand ideas for profitable investments, these proposals have been unsightly, out of scale and not in keeping with the town's architectural or visual assets. They have also been created in the absence of the much-needed aesthetic and environmental goals that can and will emanate from this planning process.

We believe that a comprehensive planning effort can lead to multi-million investments in what promises to be a unique and appealing Town Center. North Hatley can, through this initiative, become the epicenter of the Massawippi Valley's position as a region defined by its commitment to a healthy environment.

### **A New Community Center**

While not directly related to the proposed planning process, the NHRS (Pleasant View) building has deteriorated, and its structure has unfortunately become unstable over the years. The town has been operating on borrowed time. This is disturbing on many levels, as the building has a storied history on both sides of Lake Massawippi and served as headquarters for The Glen Villa Golf Club in Ste Catherine de Hatley before being moved across the lake as the Boathouse for the Pleasant View Hotel and, for the past fifty-six years, as home to the town's water recreation programs

The good news is that the town is in the final stages of a \$2,500,000 grant application process that will enable us to build a new and improved building while preserving many of the physical and heritage features of the existing one. It promises a place where citizens and community groups can come together as one throughout the year.

The proposed center will be located on the existing property but will be set back from the lake for environmental reasons. The Quebec government PRACIM grant program criteria for the basic design and use of the building are strict and clear.

Although the overall space is predetermined and must meet the program's vocation criteria, it will be up to the citizens of North Hatley to define the final uses of the space, in accordance with the conditions set out in the agreement. We want these uses to reflect the wishes of all North Hatley residents. A committee made up of citizens and the municipality will be set up to survey the thoughts and opinions of the community, followed by a public presentation to announce the results. Further information will be released once the village has received the green light from the program.

Of course, this use will be subject to certain limitations. First and foremost, the use of the facility will be limited to the citizens of North Hatley and perhaps the Canton de Hatley. The basis of the grant clearly underlines a strong commitment to the community. The building will not be available for commercial use; the project is intended to provide the village with a year-round building for the benefit of the community, and special family events like weddings will be limited.

We hope that planning for the overall redevelopment of the northern end of North Hatley can in some way complement the design of this building.

The PRACIM grant will pay 95% of the \$2,500,000 projected cost. We hope that the Canton de Hatley and other neighbors will help us raise the \$125,000 North Hatley share.



### **Overall Momentum in North Hatley**

The new Community Center is but one example of significant momentum in our village and environs. We are witnessing an inspiring influx of young families from a variety of backgrounds who are already engaged in the town's civic life.

The Library continues to distinguish itself as a treasured town resource. Lebaron's Grocery Store has stepped up to meet many of the lost services from the recently closed Dépanneur. Hovey Manor has added both a world class spa and a new luxury annex. The Scowen and associated Massawippi Trails have become major attractions for the town, both attracting visitors and serving as an outdoor classroom for students from schools around the valley. There are new and elaborate headquarters for dentists and physiotherapists. Houses no longer sit on the market for long periods of time. Summertime concerts in the park are abundant and appreciated.

A transformed Connaught is celebrated as a wonderful place to live. The Mercantile, Casa Wippi and Chocolatier Restaurants are attracting many to the town's core. A diverse set of shops make North Hatley a fun place to visit. The Restaurant Villandre is a welcome addition, as is the prospect of their completing a brewery in the old gas station. The Pilsen continues to expand. The town's tennis courts are in superb order and are heavily used.



Children and families love their daycare and elementary school. The beautiful River Park and playground are much appreciated and heavily used.

Magog has reinvented itself to great acclaim, and Sherbrooke continues to grow. North Hatley is poised to eclipse that growth with environmentally and socially sound development that will reflect the town's history as a naturally beautiful rural center where people from a variety of backgrounds enjoy fruitful lives.

### **Programmatic Elements**

There are a variety of worthwhile and well-funded entities and programs looking to use this space. The Pollock family has reached out with an extraordinarily generous offer of a refrigerated and covered ice rink. We as a town are filing a \$2,500,000 grant application to the Ministry of Tourism to rebuild the marina.

There are exciting plans to make the popular bicycle trail a safer and more pleasant way to enter North Hatley than the congested, dangerous and space-limited Capelton Road.

We are engaged in conversations with developers who want to engage in large scale projects valued at upwards of \$50,000,000 that, while worthy, do not yet reflect ambitious goals for the future of the village. We believe that potential developers should start their planning with a firm understanding of what North Hatley residents will accept and support. Fundamental assumptions about the basis for the project should be ours, not theirs.

### **Environmental Factors**

The Environment is the heart and soul of this proposal. From the significant environmental benefits of cluster housing, to flood storage expansion, to thermal heating, cooling and lighting for the ice rink and residences, to significant solar opportunities for all of the facilities, to an analysis of the current subsoil to identify need for mitigation, to an analysis of the cost benefit of LEED certification, this effort is replete with opportunities for responsible, sustainable activities.

### **Cluster Housing**

There are three primary benefits of cluster housing.

- 1.) Reducing the amount of acreage necessary to a residence increases the amount of nearby open spaces necessary to agriculture, conservation, wildlife habitat, or outdoor recreation, or walking in the woods.
- 2.) Grouping homes together reduces the initial investment in roads, streets, and utility lines, as well as the public sector's maintenance and infrastructure replacement costs.
- 3.) Relatively close proximity to neighbors means that one is more likely to get acquainted with neighbors and develop a sense of a caring community.

Any potential master plan should include this kind of analysis. This approach applies in serious ways to advocates of land conservation as critics of massive land conservation fear that it can reduce the amount of acreage available for housing and associated tax opportunities. This project can, through cluster housing, help increase the tax base while allowing partners to conserve land.

### **Solar and Thermal Lighting, Heating and Cooling**



A thorough analysis of alternative energy sources could have an outsized effect on the efficiency of a project of this size. With more than 100 living units and retail spaces and recreational facilities the energy demands for this kind of development could be significant, but with the proper use of renewable energy this significant residential, commercial and recreational development could be operated for a reasonable amount of money, setting an example for all of Canada.

### **LEED Construction**

Sponsored by the Canada Green Building Council, LEED Certification for Cities and Communities helps local leaders create sustainable plans for a community's natural systems, energy, water, waste, and transportation as well as other factors contributing to residents' quality of life. The LEED framework encompasses environmental, social and economic performance indicators with a clear, data-driven way to benchmark and communicate progress that is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Issues around LEED certification are complicated and require a sophisticated analysis of the costs and benefits. It is unlikely that this would be pursued in a traditional construction project. A foundation-sponsored query could lead to positive results, further enhancing the positive environmental impact of this initiative.

### **Landscaping, Flood Storage and Iconic Blue and Green Spaces**

These are perhaps the most promising environmental elements in this project. A thorough analysis of the potential of ecological opportunities could lead to profound environmental returns. Sophisticated use of space could create an environment as beautiful as the northern edge of River Park throughout the project while increasing the flood plain and storage capacity. Again, this is not the kind of work that is likely to come directly from a developer, but such a developer could be enticed to include this if they receive support for the rest of the project.

### **Permeable Parking**

Increasingly sophisticated attractive alternatives to asphalt offer the kind of surfaces necessary to supporting cars and heavy trucks while absorbing water and keeping it from flooding into lakes and rivers. This project needs to consider the potential of such ventures within the planning process.

### **Traffic and Circulation**

It goes without saying that it is difficult to get in and out of the project area. One lane, two-way roads on either side of the Dépanneur building lead to snarls there and on Main Street. Current roads do not offer easy access from the parking lot on Capelton Road. A comprehensive traffic and parking analysis could reveal new possibilities.

### **Aesthetic Appeal**

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this project, and all of its elements, must reflect an architectural vision that matches the beauty of its surroundings. A successful planning process would suggest what the architectural theme might be. It could mimic a much-loved building in town or perhaps a new look!



## **Population Goal and Fiscal Responsibility**

This project will be for naught if it doesn't fully address all of the town's fiscal challenges. Potential firms must have experience in showing towns how to take full advantage of this kind of venture without unnecessarily adding to its infrastructural demands. A worthy planning process will demonstrate how the village can increase its tax base and revenue without increasing its tax rate or adding positions to accommodate a larger population. This can be done, but it requires a sophisticated approach to financial planning, again demanding just the right firm(s) to do this work.

The town should, as it implements some version of this project, put together commissions on how to retain and attract businesses and citizens. It goes without saying that this could be the biggest opportunity the town has ever had. It mustn't be wasted.

## **The Planning Process**

The aforementioned issues explain why the Mayor and Council want to stop and engage in a planning process that will set the stage and context for ongoing development. Unlike earlier planning exercises, which largely sat on shelves for want of activity, a finished plan could be immediately implemented within the plan's context. The Mayor has presented past plans as prime examples of what could be done. Utilizing those plans will mean that the town does not have to "reinvent the wheel."

## **Community Engagement**

This planning project must be of the people, by the people and for the people of North Hatley if it is going to succeed. Potential planning firms must be able to demonstrate specific experience with the kind of community engagement the Mayor and Town Council will seek in a successful candidate.

### **All candidates for this planning exercise must respond to the following:**

- 1.) Please describe, with specific examples, projects like this that you have completed in the last five years
- 2.) Please provide bios of all members of the project team, with an emphasis on their experience with this kind of work
- 3.) Tell us about the project manager, with specifics about her/his leadership experience
- 4.) Please provide an expected timeline for the project, from the time you are awarded the contract to when you can deliver a finished product
- 5.) Please provide an anticipated budget, including hours and rates for professional and support roles
- 6.) Please outline the availability of key players
- 7.) Please provide specifics for community engagement as the process unfolds
- 8.) Please provide rough anticipated budgets for the ultimate construction of the key elements of the project



- 9.) Please describe how you would anticipate working with the public, private and nonprofit sector as the project evolves
- 10.) Please outline anticipated governmental guidelines and restrictions and how the plan could address them
- 11.) Please provide a list of references
- 12.) Please tell us about your knowledge of, and connections with, Quebec's Eastern Townships
- 13.) Recognizing that the Town will be working with a developer seeking to maximize his return on investment, how would you maximize the number of residential units without marring the scale and beauty of the space. Balancing scale with environmental and aesthetic standards is a key factor. We do not want preclude developers from getting the ultimate profit they need to invest in our town, but we want all planning to fit within the environmental and community-oriented vision of a great plan.
- 14.) Tell us about your experience with set-asides. We would like to include subsidized housing for doctors, nurses and first responders as part of the overall plan. Please outline the feasibility of such an approach and what steps you might take to incorporate these goals into a plan
- 15.) How have your efforts helped municipalities retain their post office and attract important services like health care, a pharmacy, a depanneur, permanent day facilities, dry cleaners, and beauty salons?
- 16.) How can you assure us that potential developers will focus on residential units of all sizes for permanent citizens versus weekend and vacation visitors?
- 17.) Why are you interested and why do you feel that you are uniquely qualified to respond to this RFP?