



**Community Relations Plan
St. Johnsbury Armory Redevelopment Project
1249 Main Street
St. Johnsbury, Vermont
April 2022**

Overview

The purpose of this Community Relations Plan (CRP) is to establish the Town of St. Johnsbury's strategy to address the needs and concerns of its residents potentially affected by the proposed abatement of regulated building materials (RBMs) present at the Armory building located at 1249 Main Street, St. Johnsbury, Vermont ("the Site"). The abatement work is partially funded by a \$500,000 Brownfield Cleanup Grant awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the Town as part of the Fiscal Year 2021 EPA Brownfield Grant competition. The CRP outlines how the Town will continue to involve and inform potentially affected residents and local stakeholders in the decision-making process regarding the environmental cleanup activities.

The proposed cleanup and design plans provide the Town with an upgraded, fully functional office building while simultaneously preserving the historical qualities that the Armory provides for the community and, more specifically, the Main Street Historic District. The overall reuse strategy for the Armory is to create a new location for the St. Johnsbury Police Department and Regional Dispatch Center, which have outgrown their current space in a building that no longer suits their operational needs. Reuse of the Armory as a police headquarters and regional dispatch center was identified in the Town's Main Street Brownfield Planning Study (completed August 28, 2020) as a cost-effective, practical, and highly beneficial option for the community. The Planning Study was developed through an extensive public and stakeholder outreach process facilitated by the Town and its consultants. The cost-benefit analysis from the Planning Study identifies this option as the least difficult and most fiscally responsible strategy to execute. It is also the fastest and most effective way to support existing businesses and add vitality to this struggling commercial district. The identified reuse strategy has been presented at many Town Select Board meetings where the public had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed project. Through this public outreach process, the Armory project garnered widespread community support.

Spokesperson and Information Repository

The Spokesperson for the project is Joe Kasprzak. Contact information is presented below:

Joe Kasprzak, Assistant Town Manager
Town of St. Johnsbury
51 Depot Square, Suite 103
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819
802-748-3926
jkasprzak@stjvt.com

Copies of environmental reports are available on the project webpage:
www.stjvt.com/armory-redevelopment-project.

Site Description

Constructed in 1916, the Armory (located at 1249 Main Street) is a historic building owned by the Town of St. Johnsbury. The Site is the focal point of the Main Street Historic District and the most significant opportunity for the Town as a driver of revitalization along this blighted Corridor. The Armory Site consists of a two-story brick and block structure located on 0.44 acres in the downtown core and center of the Town's opportunity zone. The building envelope covers 16,700 square feet including the ground floor, second floor and a basement. The building is contaminated and structurally compromised, which has caused developers to deem the project unfeasible in the past. The vacant building has no utility until properly remediated. The Town has continued to fund the basic maintenance but there is a need for capital investment just to prevent complete collapse of the structure. The Town's Select Board is committed to remediating the property and playing an active role in the property's redevelopment as a revitalization catalyst in this area.

The Town's current police station, fire station and dispatch center located at 1187 Main Street (just down the street from the Armory) is too small to meet the operational needs of all three departments and requires significant investment to address building code upgrades and deferred maintenance issues. The Town considered possibly renovating the building to house only a fire station or police/dispatch station but determined the building was not ideal for either operation. The cost of addressing structural and deferred maintenance issues and making the second floor ADA accessible would be extensive. Town officials ultimately concluded it would be most prudent to relocate the police department/dispatch center and fire station to new facilities and sell the 1187 Main Street property to a private developer.

Site History

The Armory was sold to the Town in 1975 by the State of Vermont Board of Armory Commissioners who operated the facility as an Armory for the First Vermont Infantry after its construction 1916. After the Armory was acquired by the Town in 1975, it was home to several municipal departments, including the St. Johnsbury Police Department until the 1990s, followed by the Town's Recreation Department until 2009 when it was determined that existing RBMs would make it too costly for the Town to provide upgrades to meet current building codes. The building has been vacant since 2009 due to the presence of RBMs and structural concerns.

Description of Environmental Issues at the Site

Several environmental investigations have been performed at the Site since 2009 including two Phase I Environmental Site Assessments and multiple RBM Surveys to confirm the presence and extent of asbestos containing materials (ACM), lead-based paint (LBP), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and other hazardous/regulated materials as well as mold. A full description of the Site and the extent of contamination are contained in the March 2022 Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) developed by Stantec Consulting Services Inc. (Stantec) and Atlas Technical Consultants LLC (Atlas).

Cleanup-Up Activities

Environmental reports prepared for the Site recommend the confirmed RBMs be appropriately abated prior to any redevelopment activities. Under contract with the Town,

Atlas will prepare specifications for appropriate abatement of all identified asbestos, LBP, and PCB containing material prior to redevelopment activities. Any additional hazardous materials identified in the building will also be appropriately abated and disposed of in accordance with all State and Federal laws prior to or during demolition. The EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant will be used to fund cleanup/abatement activities in a manner compliant with all applicable regulations of the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation as well as those of the Vermont Department of Health.

Community Background

Revitalization of Main Street has been and continues to be a priority for the Town of St. Johnsbury. Reuse of the Armory as a police headquarters and regional dispatch center was identified in the Town's Main Street Brownfield Planning Study (completed August 28, 2020) as a cost-effective, practical, and highly beneficial option for the community. The Planning Study was developed through an extensive public and stakeholder outreach process facilitated by the Town and its consultants. The cost-benefit analysis from the Planning Study identifies this option as the least difficult and most fiscally responsible strategy to execute. It is also the fastest and most effective way to support existing businesses and add vitality to this struggling commercial district. The identified reuse strategy has been presented at many Town Select Board meetings where the public had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposed project. Through this public outreach process, the Armory project garnered widespread community support.

Key Stakeholders

The Town has formed a stakeholder group that meets regularly to discuss project progress, inform redevelopment plans, and support outreach to the larger community. Below is a list of key individuals involved in the project.

Name	Agency/Organization	Project Role
Chad Whitehead (Town Manager) Joe Kasprzak (Asst. Town Manager)	Town of St. Johnsbury	Property Owner & Grantee
Tim Page (Police Chief) Anthony Skelton (Head of Dispatch)	St. Johnsbury Police Department	Future Building Tenants
David Snedeker Irene Nagle	Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA)	Planning & Funding Support
Christine Beling	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Regulatory Oversight & Funding Support
Kassandra Kimmey Sarah Bartlett	Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)	Regulatory Oversight
Christopher Kinnick	Vermont Department of Public Health (DOH)	Regulatory Oversight
Elizabeth Peebles	Vermont State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)	Historic Preservation
Kristi Farnham Sofia Benito Alston Grace Vinson	Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD)	Funding Support
Nathan Cleveland	Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP)	Funding Support
Katelyn Robinson	Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC)	Funding Specialist
Joe Weith	White+Burke	Real Estate Advisor

Name	Agency/Organization	Project Role
David Roy Bob Hoppe	Wiemann Lamphere	Architect & Construction Management
Elizabeth Emmons	Dufrense Group	Civil Engineer
George Martin	Allen Consulting	Electrical & Plumbing Design
Andrea Pedersen Dave Allwine	Stantec Consulting Services Inc.	Environmental Consultant
Jesse Stratton	Atlas Technical Consultants LLC	Environmental Consultant
Scott Newman	106 Associates	Historic Preservation Consultant
Elise Manning-Sterling	Hartgen Archeological Associates, Inc.	Archeological Consultant
Susan Ohlidal	St. Andrews Episcopal Church	Adjacent Property Owner
Richard & Colleen Kozlowski	--	Adjacent Property Owner

Chronology of Community Engagement

Several press releases have been published throughout the planning and predevelopment phases of the project to keep the community informed of cleanup and redevelopment plans. Multiple public presentations about the project have been included as part of the Town's Select Board meetings. As part of the EPA Brownfield Cleanup Grant application process, the Town posted the draft ABCA for cleanup of RBMs for public review/comment during October 2020. Following grant award, the ABCA was updated and posted on the Town's website for a second public review period during April 2022. Both times the ABCA has been advertised via public notices posted on the Town's website and in the local newspaper (*Caledonian Record*). Both times the ABCA was posted for public comment, the Town hosted public meetings to discuss the cleanup plans and to answer any questions the community may have. The meetings were hosted in person and virtually (via Zoom).

Key Community Concerns

The community has been supportive of the Town's proposed reuse for the Armory. In September 2021, the citizens of St. Johnsbury were asked to vote on a \$5.4M general obligation bond to fund the remediation of contaminants and redevelopment of the Armory into a new police and dispatch facility. The bond vote confirmed community support with the majority of votes in favor of the project. Based on the turn out and overall atmosphere at public presentations and meetings, the community's interest in the project is moderate.

Continued Community Engagement

The Town has created a project webpage at www.stjvt.com/armory-redevelopment-project that provides contact information, key project information, and is regularly updated with new materials related to the project status and timeline. The Town also provides periodic updates on the project via its Facebook® page. On a routine basis, information and updates related to cleanup and construction activities to be conducted in 2022 will be posted to the project webpage.

Proposed Timeline for Community Engagement and Comment

- Biweekly meetings with design/consulting team and other stakeholders are hosted by the Town to coordinate collaboration between key participants and keep the project moving forward on schedule and within budget.

- Monthly meetings with the regulatory agencies and design/consulting team are hosted by the Town to discuss project progress and strategize on next steps.
- April 2022: Finalize this CRP that outlines the next phases of the cleanup activities.
- April 1, 2022: Publish notice of public meeting and ABCA on the Town's website. Beginning of 30-day public comment period for the ABCA.
- April 2 & 8, 2022: Publish notice of public meeting in the local newspaper (*Caledonian Record*).
- April 11, 2022: Public Meeting to review ABCA.
- April 30, 2022: End of 30-Day public comment period for ABCA.
- May 2-6, 2022: Respond to public comments and finalize ABCA.
- May – June 2022: Finalize contractor specifications and bid packages for abatement activities. Advertise/submit RFP to prospective bidders (30-day response period). Evaluate bids and make selection. Inform adjacent property owners of schedule for abatement activities.
- July – September 2022: Plan, coordinate and perform abatement activities. Post signage around building notifying the public and onsite contractors of abatement activities in progress.
- October 2022: Construction begins. Update the community about the completion of the abatement process during the Town's monthly Select Board meeting.