

# Early Winter Newsletter

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## **DOWNTOWN BRANDON ALLIANCE**

### **Keep Brandon Buzzing**

Welcome to the Early Winter newsletter, with news and information about goings-on in Brandon and the work of the Downtown Brandon Alliance. The DBA is Brandon's part of the Vermont Downtown Program which was established in 1994 providing technical assistance and training to help towns revitalize their downtowns, a program which was strengthened by the Downtown Development Act of 1998. Towns that receive downtown designation under this Act are eligible for a number of benefits, including tax credits, [loans and grants](#) from various state agencies. Under the leadership of Steve Beck, Brandon succeeded in getting Brandon re-certified as a designated downtown – and one of the first benefits of that program has just given a lift to the Brandon Inn. Literally. The Brandon Inn recently applied for and received an historic preservation tax credit totaling \$50,000 to upgrade their aging elevator. Because a working elevator is critical for their bus tours and guests that continues to bring visitors – and dollars – to Brandon.

### **SEGMENT SIX PROJECT**

The DBA is organized into four committees and they have been hard at work at many projects helping make Brandon a better place to live, to shop, and to work. The Design Committee has been fully engaged in an upcoming project that will change the face of Brandon for years to come – the Segment 6 Project. Their ideas about how this could and should take shape were presented to the Select Board, the project engineers, and all interested parties (the proposal can be found in the Downtown Brandon Alliance's portion of the Town of Brandon's website — <http://townofbrandon.com/2012/08/16/downtown-brandon-alliance-design-committee/>).

Discussions are planned for meetings between the engineers, the SB and the design committee, and it is hoped that a fruitful interchange will take place to accommodate changes that can be made to the original plan. To be continued...

While we are on the subject of Route 7, we should be aware that the upcoming work on the water main will be a dress rehearsal, of sorts. It involves rights-of-way, compensation, drawings, plans, and then, finally, construction and accompanying traffic changes. It is hoped that work will begin in May but there are many steps that have to be [completed](#) before then. In any event, people should be prepared for some form of dislocation this summer.

## **THE TOWN OFFICES**

The Design Committee has also been working closely with the Select Board and Town Manager on renovations to the Town Offices at 49 Center Street. Plans and drawings have been prepared for the town and the project is about ready to go out for bid. Hopefully construction will start in the Spring. Soon the town offices will move back into a much improved building. It also appears that planning is about to begin on the reconstruction of Green Park. It is hoped that the Design Committee will be asked to get involved with this, too.

## **ECONOMIC SURVEY**

The DBA's Economic Restructuring Committee is charged with figuring out how to support the rehabilitation and maintenance of our downtown commercial core by expanding the business mix and the market area. Although our downtown will never likely provide the range of goods and services they provided a generation ago, with a concerted and focused effort downtown Brandon can contribute to the economic vitality of the region. To accomplish this, the Committee has worked with a Community Development Specialist from the UVM-Extension to conduct a market survey and analysis. Two surveys were prepared – one for businesses and one for consumers. The results are being “scored” by Extension personnel and an analysis prepared. The results will provide the data that can then be used to attract and develop the business mix that will improve the long-term viability of both Brandon downtown and the area at large.

## **BREAKFAST BUSINESS MEETINGS**

Under the joint auspices of the DBA and the Brandon Area Chamber of Commerce, a monthly breakfast meeting of downtown businesses was launched in early Spring of 2012 to increase communication between Brandon area businesses. The group meets the second Tuesday of each month at Café Provence's event space starting at 8AM and concluding at 9AM. The focus of the meetings is on sharing practical ideas to enhance profitability and to spread news of interest to the business community. It is proving to be a valuable resource to those who attend.

While changes continue in the downtown business mix, it appears we won't be losing one of Brandon's landmark structures – the Watershed. The new owner feels that it's much too important a building to see demolished and he is busy rehabilitating it. It's much too early to know its intended use, but it is wonderful to see work underway.

Kennedy Park is right beside the Watershed. Notice that once again the Love-a-Park group has cleaned and decorated the park for the winter season. Improving downtown Brandon is a group effort that benefits all. And although much has been accomplished, there's always room for more and the committees and activities of the DBA are open to all. Should you wish to play a part in

Brandon's next chapter, contact Steve Beck at the town offices: [\(802\) 247-3635](tel:8022473635) or [atbrandondoesit.beck@gmail.com](mailto:atbrandondoesit.beck@gmail.com).