Using ArcGIS to Develop a Holistic Plan for Downtown Revitalization

STONE ENVIRONMENTAL

Esri Partner Conference 2017 Award Winner
Best Use of Story Maps

Services / Expertise
Environmental Assessment and Remediation
Brownfield Redevelopment
Area-Wide Planning
Geospatial & Data Solutions
Data Visualization
Story Mapping
ArcGIS Online

Markets
Local Government and RPCs
Site / Property Owners
Commercial Developers
Community-Based Organizations

Project Location
Town of Bennington, Vermont

Date Completed
2016–Present

Project Owner
Bennington County Regional Commission

Project ID#
15-016

Project Managers
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Link to the Bennington Downtown Area-Wide Plan Story Map:
http://arcg.is/1mcFYls

esri Partner Network Member

State and Local Government Specialty

The town of Bennington used the Story Map to gain community buy-in on redevelopment scenarios, allowing stakeholders to visualize outcomes of the area-wide plan. One of the concepts, as shown above, provides the perspective of the redeveloped block at Main and Washington with public green space, improved streetscapes, and new, mixed-use buildings to fulfill recreation, hospitality, and public needs in the downtown area.

FOSTERING and sustaining a vibrant downtown is critical to any planning commission's vision for an economically healthy community. That's why the town of Bennington, Vermont, worked with private and public partners—including Stone Environmental—to create the Bennington Downtown Area-Wide Plan in 2016.

As a historical manufacturing center, Bennington faces major redevelopment challenges. Shifts in industrial and commercial activity throughout the twentieth century left numerous properties vacant and underutilized. Many of these sites are classified as brownfields, meaning they require environmental remediation. To successfully address these challenges, Bennington needed a holistic plan for revitalizing its downtown area.

Using ArcGIS, Stone helped the town perform an environmental and infrastructure assessment. Information related to the appraisal—including data about historical land use, natural resources, infrastructure, and brownfield sites—was collected, stored, and managed in a geodatabase. Using ArcGIS Online, stakeholders were able to quickly access information for any parcel in the downtown area.

The final downtown plan includes the results of the environmental assessment, a set of conceptual visions for the downtown area, and a detailed implementation strategy. ArcGIS maps bring the development scenarios to life, which is especially helpful for prospective partners as they evaluate property development opportunities.

To help communicate the plan effectively to stakeholders, Stone also built an interactive story map journal. It recounts Bennington's economic history, summarizes the plan's recommendations, and illustrates the proposed development scenarios. The town presented the story map at a public meeting to gain community buy-in for the plan.

To date, the plan has helped spur Bennington's Putnam Block redevelopment project, which will create a mixed-use space with offices, residences, retail stores, and restaurants. Bennington is engaging in other, similar public-private partnerships soon as well.

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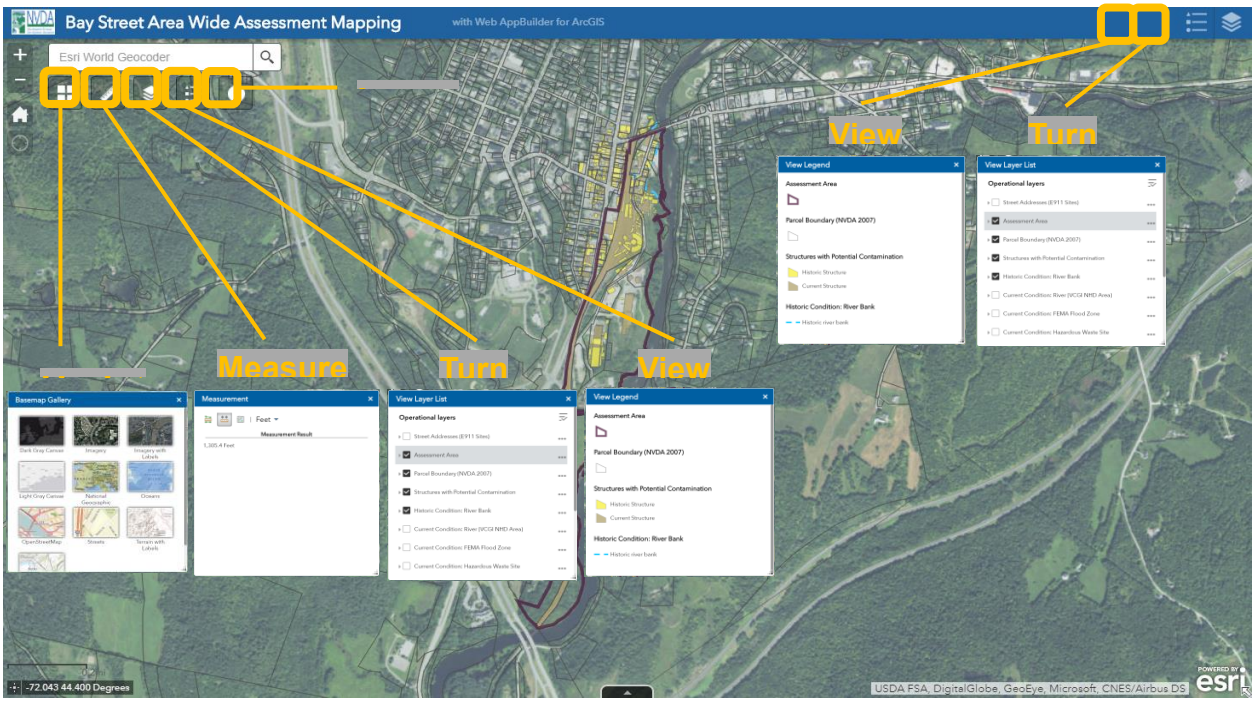
In 2011, Stone performed Area-Wide Assessment (AWA) of the Bay Street Project Area in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. The overall objective of the AWA was to provide a preliminary evaluation of environmental conditions and potential environmental concerns within the assessment area, which included 41 properties along Bay Street. As part of this project Stone reviewed pertinent historical documents, published geologic literature, Town records, archives from the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum and Fairbanks Museum, Federal and State environmental databases, and VT DEC files for known hazardous waste sites in the vicinity.

Using the results of the AWA, NVDA retained Stone in 2018 to develop web-based ArcGIS Online map to assist in upcoming brownfield redevelopment efforts. Stone compiled data from the AWA and designed an online, interactive mapping application, including user-friendly features. The map, which is accessible to the public, includes baselayers such as roads, parcels, planning boundaries, FEMA flood zones, and hydrography; managed environmental sites from Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR); potential contamination areas including railyard location, petroleum tank locations, building locations with potential contamination; and historic uses by date and type. Using the mapping application, users can navigate the various datasets, zoom in and out, and identify on features to obtain additional information.



The workflow of the mapping application with highlighted features.