



BEACON ASSOCIATES

THE ADVANTAGE
of PERSPECTIVE

North Hero Town Plan Project

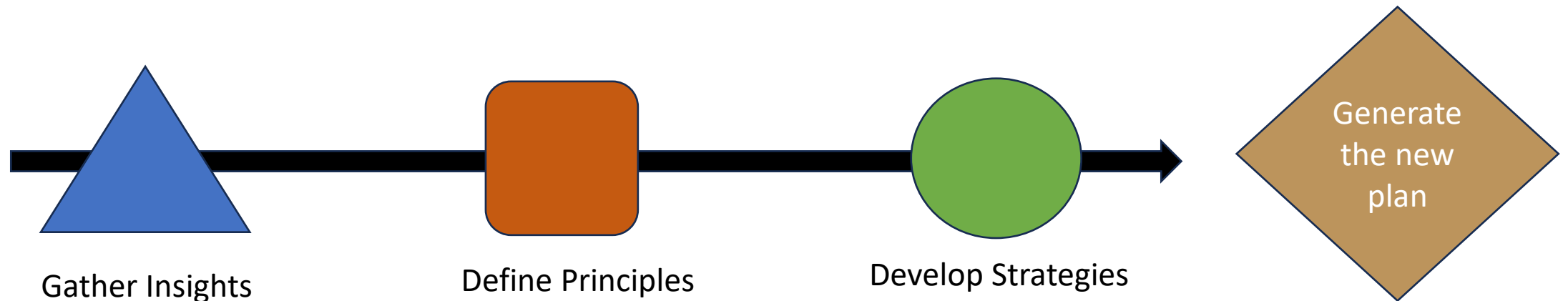
RESIDENT DISCUSSION SESSIONS, SUMMARY AND
NEXT STEPS

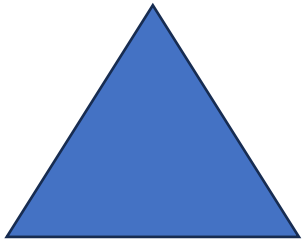
JULY 26, 2028



LAYING THE FOUNDATION

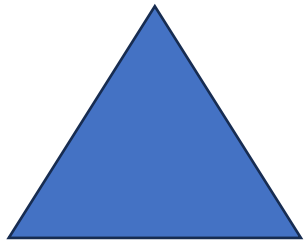
- In preparation for developing an updated town plan for North Hero, Vermont, the planning commission is following a three-step process





Gather Insights

- In this stage, commission members and NRPC have been gathering and sharing information about North Hero's characteristics and its residents' (full and part time) relationship with the community
- This information will be used to
 - Define the character of North Hero
 - Highlight the key features, history and attitudes that make North Hero unique
 - Identify what makes North Hero, North Hero
 - And what is most needed to continue and improve North Hero's unique identity going forward



Gather Insights

- The gathering process has included 3 steps to date... with two more to come



Community Meeting



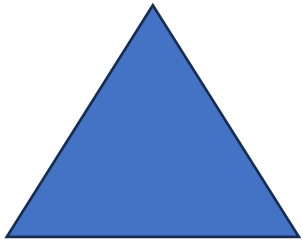
Discussion Sessions



Quantification



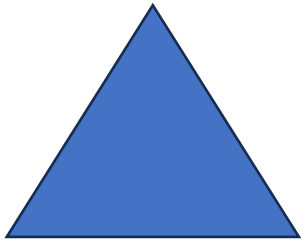
Team
workshop to
identify the
key learnings
and
implications
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Gather Insights

Quantification

- On-line plus hard-copy survey
- Advertised community-wide
- Including:
 - Respondent characteristics
 - Housing and property uses and characteristics
 - Business definitions and scope
 - Engagement in community
 - Attitudes and perceptions of living on NH
 - Key contributors to the character of the community
 - Threats, needs and ideas
 - Questions around State planning requisites



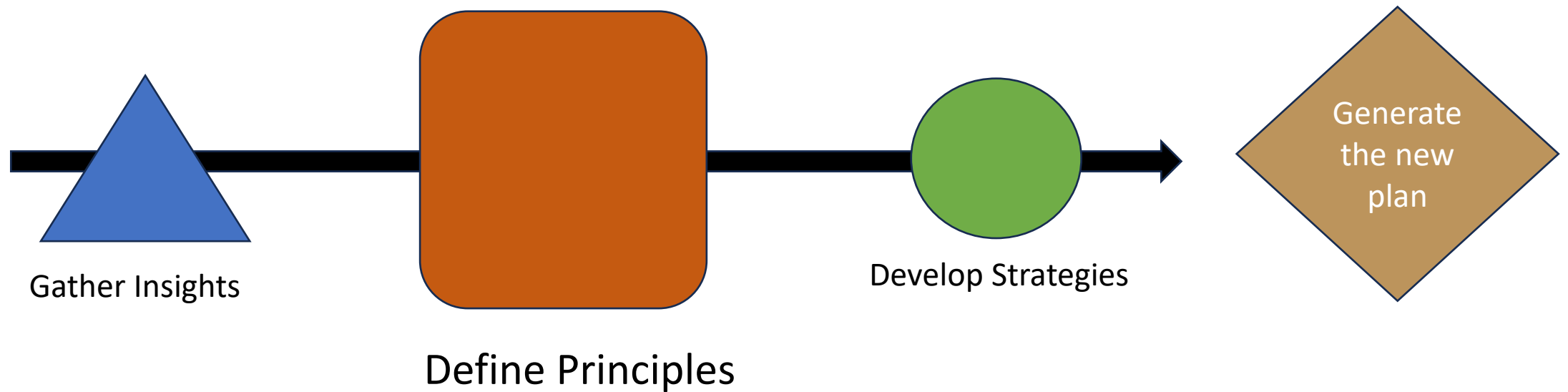
Gather Insights

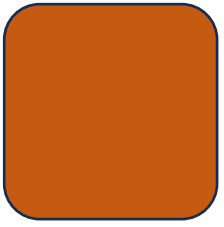


- Review of key findings from steps 1-4
- Identification of Key Insights from the explorations
 - What has the information revealed:
 - What about North Hero is unique and highly valued by residents?
 - What challenges face North Hero that should be taken into consideration in a town plan?
 - What may have been learned to help with those challenges?

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

- Moving on to the second phase



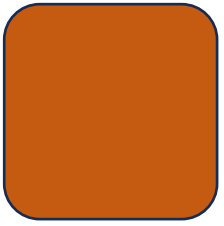


Define Principles

- A Key Question:

“What must North Hero always be / do to continue and enhance its character and identity...

And its obligations as a Vermont community?”



Define Principles

Approach

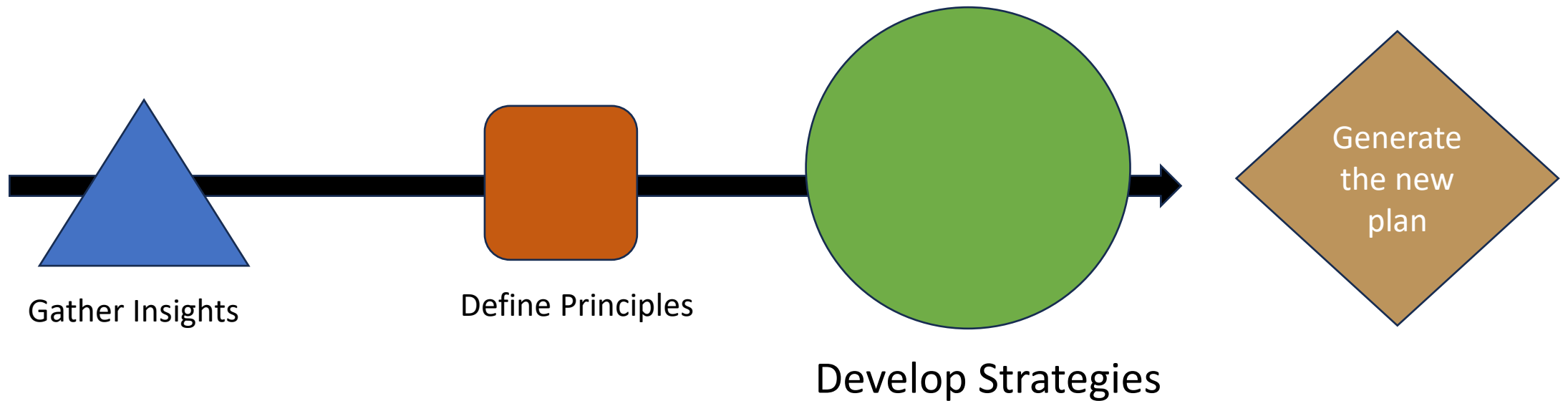
- One or more team work sessions to:

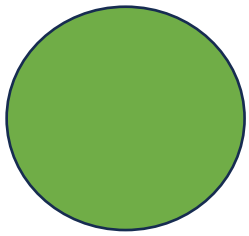
Define the key dimensions the plan must address

- Community Desires
- Character and Identity Needs
- Questions
- Mandates (e.g. state requirements)

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

- And the third phase



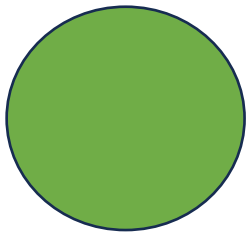


Develop Strategies

Identify the key approaches that will lead to a plan that fulfills the character and identity of the community as well as its requirements

- For Example
 - Strategy: Protect and enhance the historic character, aesthetic charm, slow pace and accessibility of the village and city bay
 - And, subsequently, the plan could include:

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Actions</u>	<u>Evaluative Criteria and Timeframe</u>
1	1	
2	2	
3	3	



Develop Strategies

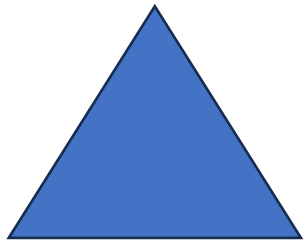
Method

- “Topic-driven” work sessions
- For example:
 - Town character
 - Business and Agriculture
 - Housing
 - Facilities and Activities
 - Regulations

THEN, JUST ONE MORE SMALL STEP



Generate the
new plan



Gather Insights

Today, we're reviewing
what we learned here



Community Meeting



Discussion Sessions



Quantification



Team
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explorations

Resident Deep-Dive Discussions
into
North Hero Perceptions and Meaning

Summary of Findings

HIGH LEVEL OBSERVATIONS

North Hero is an inspiring and deeply cared-for community

Full and part-time residents alike have a deep connection with, and appreciation for, the singular physical characteristics, atmosphere and commitment to community engagement that define North Hero

HIGH LEVEL OBSERVATIONS

North Hero's difference is found in its physical features and the intense appreciation of the place and community exhibited by the people who reside there

- **It is an island** – which in and of itself defines distinction as a singularity
- The island is **accessed by an iconic bridges and signs welcoming visitors to the Shire town** – both memorable notices of transition to a different place
- It is **located within a large lake with mountain vistas** to the east and west making the viewshed, sunrises and sunsets spectacular
- **The 18th and 19th century vernacular is clearly present** with open lands, agriculture, farm homes, buildings, ancient cemeteries and quiet back roads
- **History is present** with great battles, the marches of armies, native settlements, the age of steamboats, fishing camps and railroads all at hand and largely known and appreciated by residents
- **And the village** – with its quaintness and charm, historic buildings, inn and restaurant, general store, brewery, charming boat access and spectacular views – **is the historic showpiece of North Hero and all the islands.**

NORTH HERO PEOPLE

North Hero is a mix of year-round residents and seasonal residents and cruising boat owners.

- Year-round people
 - Are older – many past the age of retirement
 - They look at North Hero as “a place you want to be”
 - Some have been here all their lives
 - Others have chosen to be here for the beauty, peacefulness and engaging community
 - By and large North Hero residents are givers – engaged in one or several aspects of the community. Working in the government, on one or more committees, volunteering for the library, arts association, food shelf and more.
 - Residents are described as open, thoughtful, well educated and welcoming

NORTH HERO PEOPLE

North Hero is a mix of year-round residents and seasonal residents and cruising boat owners.

- Many seasonal people have long / often multi-generational relationships with the island
- Regardless of tenure, seasonal people come for the lake, the beauty of the setting, the serenity and the welcoming, active community
- They acknowledge that their lives are different from those of the people who live here. They appreciate the friendliness, welcoming nature and care for the community that full time residents display.
- **They feel that they are North Hero people when they are here.**

BENEFITS

- Residents appreciate the **closeness to nature** that comes with the island's open spaces, shorelines, dark skies and preserves. There is a sense of connection to the land and water because of its immersive presence. They say there is a strong "sense of place" to North Hero.
- And a feeling of being a world apart (on an island)
- There is a **sense of ownership** in North Hero – especially on the part of full-time residents – due to the high level of participation in volunteerism, the preservation of buildings, intimate size and welcoming culture
 - The village, and people's common appreciation of it, is seen as a key driver in the community's cohesiveness
 - The fact that homes and buildings are well maintained contributes – a sense of pride in how things look
- There is a **sense of pride in being from North Hero**. It appears to tie to the historic nature of the place (with buildings like the courthouse and designation as the Shire town), and to the beauty of the island and its surroundings.
- **Apart, but not isolated:** While appreciating the feeling of being apart, full and part-time residents also appreciate being close to Montreal and Burlington with Boston and New York also reachable

ISLAND PERSONA

- The persona of North Hero is strongly positive and well-grounded in the place. But it does shift a bit with length of time in residence.
 - Those who have been here full time over 15 years identify the character of the island with its agrarian roots: farmers, prideful, have their basic needs met
 - Less than 15 year residents speak more to the character of their peers: older, educated, liberal, grounded in this place, outdoorsy, appreciative of community and traditions
 - And part-time people see North Hero as: hard working, resilient, happy, trustworthy, helpful, neighborly.
- In all cases, the character of the island is welcoming, collaborative, good at listening / engaging and reaching-out to those who visit

DEEPLY POWERFUL EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

- The words that respondents use to describe how living on North Hero touches their lives are critical to understanding the depth of feeling and appreciation residents have for their community.
 - Awe and wonder
 - Centers me, calming
 - Intense gratitude
 - A place in the world
 - A sense of being wealthy without being rich

ISLAND INTERNALIZATION

- And the feelings associated with being from North Hero were equally powerful
 - Proud
 - Grateful
 - Special
 - Lucky
 - Among friends
 - Belonging to a community – something important

WHERE NORTH HERO STANDS IN TIME

- Showing how removed North Hero is perceived to be from the contemporary residential world...
 - Animal associations are Herons, Osprey, Eagles
 - The temporal reference for the island is the Revolutionary era
 - The famous persons to associate with the islands were: Teddy Roosevelt, Ira and Ethan Allen (and Bernie Sanders)
 - And the representative mode of transportation is boats – steamboats, kayaks / canoes, ferries
- North Hero is largely perceived to exist in a highly romantic and aspirational setting

WHERE NORTH HERO STANDS IN TIME

- North Hero is largely perceived to exist in a highly romantic and aspirational setting
 - This is why:
 - Winter skating in the village
 - Arriving at restaurants and Hero's Welcome by boat
 - Quiet back roads
 - Historic buildings
 - Cemeteries
 - Open lands and agriculture
 - Welcoming, happy, hard-working and community-dedicated people
- all contribute to, and fit so well with, the town character

KEY TANGIBLES

- Physical assets and features that are felt to represent the town's character included:

The Village and City Bay	Community Hall	The Courthouse
Knight Point State Park and new pickleball courts	Aqua Vista Cabins	Fishing
The lake	The Marinas	Old stories, books, pictures – Straton's history
Camp Ingles and Pelots Point Nature Areas	Birdland	Revolutionary History
The Carry Place	Hero's Welcome	The Historic Society – Hookenspoon
North Hero House	Accessibility by boat	Great Ice Festival
Will's place	Amount of public land in the town	Historic homes
Operating farms	North Hero House	The cemeteries
The Draw bridge	North Hero State Park	Pier Bar and Bravo Zulu
Camp Abenaki	The Rail Trail and Beach	

WHAT'S MISSING

- Some community voids / things that would make the community better included:
 - A school
 - More services (medical care, drug store, grocery store, etc.)
 - Affordable housing
 - More children and young people living in the community
 - A few more shops in the village
 - A farm market
 - More bike lanes
 - More year-round things to do -- activities in the community hall and village
 - Lean into the shire – the village hub
- At the same time, development pressures were offset by appreciation for
 - The open spaces
 - The distinctiveness and purity of the village vs. South Hero and Grand Isle
 - “Less stuff”
 - “We get by with what we have here”

ESSENTIAL TO PROTECT

- The “must do to continue to be North Hero” list was quite similar across the groups. The main points were:
 - **Protect and maintain the character of the village**
 - **Make / keep the lake healthy**
 - **Support local businesses – protect the ones we have**
 - **Prevent development of condos**
 - **Protect open spaces / support agriculture**

THREATS THE COMMUNITY NEEDS TO ADDRESS

- The biggest threats to building and maintaining the North Hero respondents envisioned were:
 - Loss of a community school
 - Decline in full-time residents
 - Property values and taxes
 - Lake water quality
 - Development pressure / maintaining open spaces

BIFURCATIONS

- While the overall findings indicate commonness in residents' definition, distinction and meaning of North Hero...
- There are potential divides that should be explored in the quantitative study
 - Newer vs. longer-term full-time residents
 - Full time vs. part-time residents
 - Lakeside vs. inland residents
- Hopefully sufficient sample sizes will be obtained from each of these populations to enable comparison

OVERALL

- What is outstanding in this work is the depth and power of feelings residents share about how being from North Hero touches them.
- The emotional benefits of living in this community are commendable, enviable and to be jealously guarded.
- How many places have residents who say that living there leaves them in awe and wonder, and filled in immense gratitude?



OVERALL

Respondents were able to connect those feelings to physical and experiential elements of the island

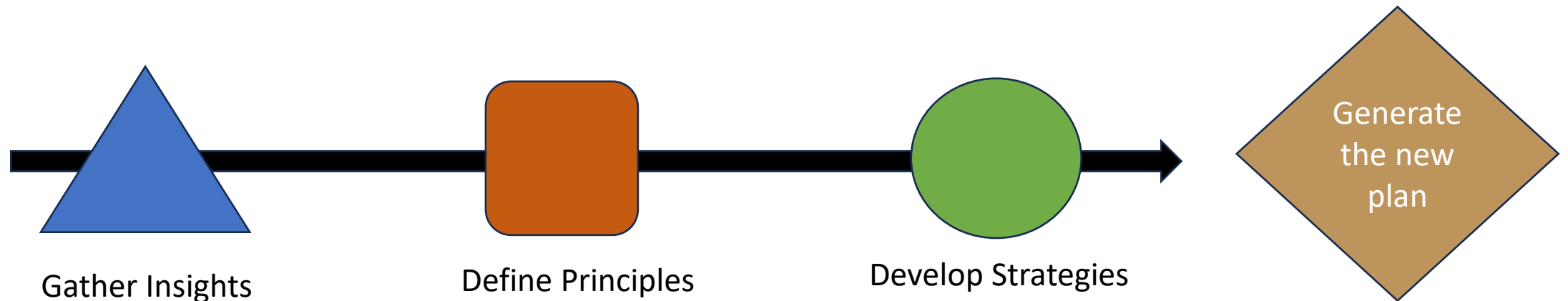
- The fact that it is an island with clear transition gateways that signal movement to a different “place”
 - The draw bridge and Alburgh passage bridges
 - The shire town designation (is there a sign at the north end?)
- The scenic beauty of the island
 - Its open lands
 - The lake and mountain vistas
 - The quiet and dark skies
- The Village and City Bay
 - The vista and viewpoints
 - The setting for the village – on the water, at the head of the bay
 - The approaches and lines of sight
 - The historic and well preserved / kept-up buildings
 - The appealing hospitality and retail options and the appropriateness of their scale relative to the village
 - The open lands behind the village
- The living history
 - First people’s lives here
 - The ties to the Revolution
 - The steamship and fishing camp era
 - The railroad era
- The uniquely engaged and welcoming community
 - All groups felt it
 - And reference the high level of participation in the community as evidence
- The accessibility
 - Quiet back roads
 - The nature areas and trails
 - The state parks
 - The marinas
 - Boat access to retail and hospitality locations
 - The welcoming community
 - And exceptional level of participation / volunteering in the community

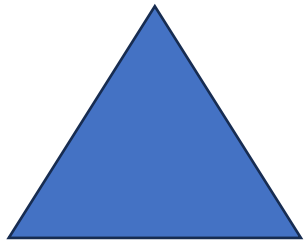
OVERALL

- Should these observations be confirmed in the broader quantitative study...
- The Planning Commission and community have a unique window of opportunity...
 - **To create a plan that defines and acts upon not just characteristics, but on the character and meaning of life in North Hero that are the true core contributors to its value.**

Next Steps

THE NEXT TWO STEPS WILL COMPLETE THE GATHERING INSIGHTS PHASE





Gather Insights

Where we're going next



NRPC &
Commission
characteristic
data
gathering &
presentation
to residents

Residents'
input on
features most
appreciated
and needing to
be maintained

Deep dive
qualitative into
NH identity,
difference and
meaning

Community-
wide
quantitative
validation
survey

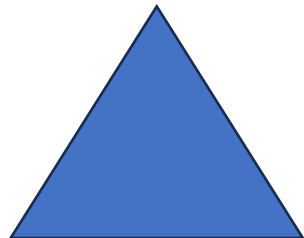


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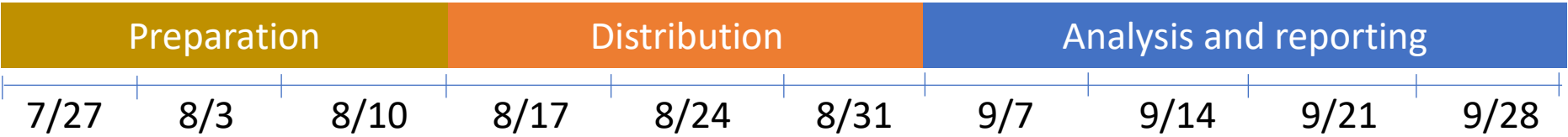
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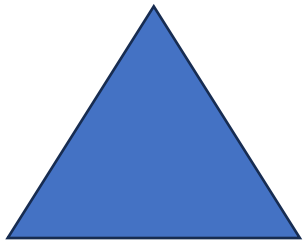
Discussion Sessions

Quantification



Gather Insights





Gather Insights

- Preparation

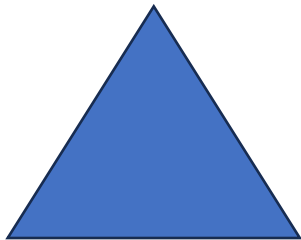
Questionnaire
Development



Distribution plan

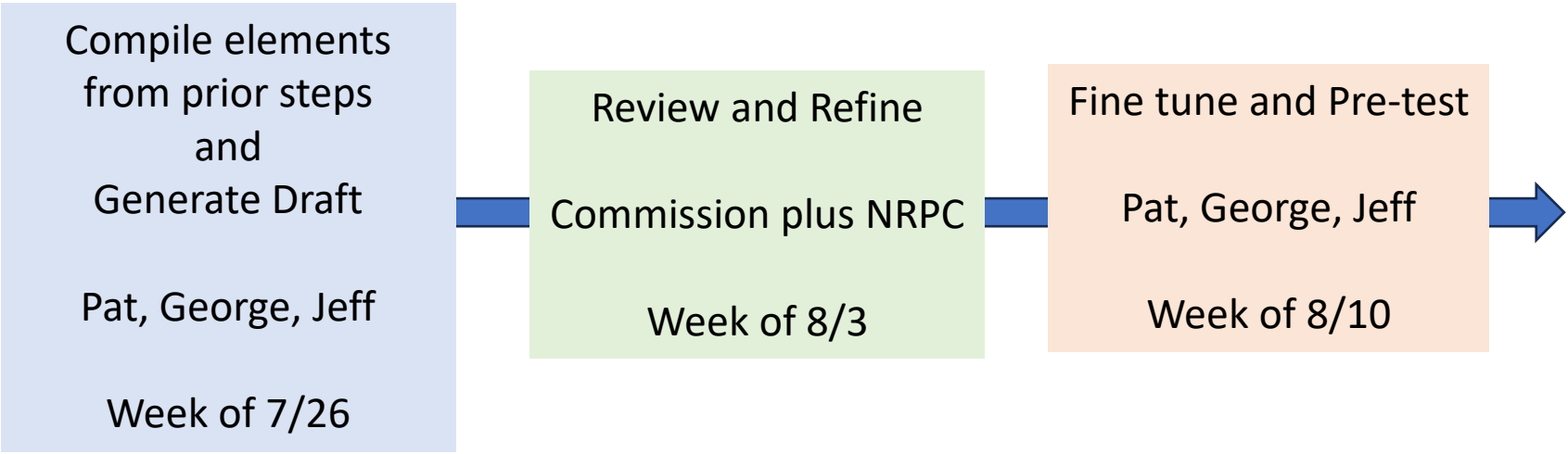


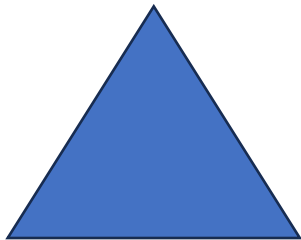
Community-wide
quantitative
validation survey



Gather Insights

Questionnaire
Development





Gather Insights

Distribution Plan

