

Summary of Charrette Process and Findings

12/7/2005

Background *provided to all charrette participants by Alex Weinhausen*

Hinesburg is a town of approximately 4,500 people (1,600 households), located in southern Chittenden County; approximately 25 minutes drive from Burlington. Hinesburg's village contributes greatly to the essential character of the Town. The village we see today is a function of both the Town's early history and the Town's evolution over time. The village serves as Hinesburg's hub of community activity by providing a rich mix of residential, commercial, municipal, industrial uses. As such, it helps frame the character of the Town by defining a compact built landscape that stands in contrast to the surrounding rural landscape. It is Hinesburg's primary growth center, where essential municipal infrastructure (e.g., sewer and water) are made available to both ensure the public's welfare and to provide for mixed uses at higher densities than the rest of town.

The village is currently comprised of a small historic "core," surrounded by a larger village area. The variety of residential types and businesses in the village make it both a lively place and the economic, social and institutional center for the Town. Village residents vary in age and background, and this diversity provides a rich source of community information, involvement, and participation. While several single-family homes remain, many of the larger homes have been divided into apartments and several businesses have created apartments in their buildings. The condominiums at Lyman Meadows made ownership possible with the affordable pricing available to a larger scale development. The apartments at Kelley's Field offer safe and convenient elderly housing.

Pedestrian access is fundamental to the sense of the village. The proximity of a range of services makes the village an especially appealing place for those with limited mobility, such as the elderly, or those who prefer to walk more and drive less. The density of the village has reinforced the potential for pedestrian movement and future patterns of development in this area must be consistent with this. At the same time, traffic along Route 116 is a growing issue as more people commute to places of work from towns further south.

The village benefits from many natural areas and the agricultural lands around it. The farmland to the west and north define the edge of the village and serves as a visual corridor leading to the Town's center. Other natural features such as Patrick Brook, the LaPlatte River and the hills to

the east serve as important focal points that help define both the core village and the greater village area. These lands are a source of recreational and work opportunities and provide contrast and balance to the village core.

Since the late 1990's, statewide development trends (especially in Chittenden County) have increased rapidly. The housing shortage is now a real crisis. With real estate values skyrocketing, existing residents find it harder to afford their current properties and 1st time homebuyers are forced outside of Chittenden County to find affordable or reasonably priced housing. The new 2005 Hinesburg Town Plan seeks to address these issues via infill development within the existing village core and growth in the greater village area. We recognize that in order to serve as the Town's primary growth center now and in the future, the current Village needs to grow. The challenge will be to integrate the new with what currently exists in such a way that the overall town and rural village character are preserved.

Overview of the Charrette:

Charrette program was developed and facilitated by ORW Landscape Architects and Planners and Alex Weinhausen, Hinesburg Town Planner

The purpose of this charrette was to consider how the village of Hinesburg can be a focal point of compact village development for: housing, commercial, office and local job creation. The town is interested in developing design and planning concepts that both preserve the village's sense of place as well as fulfill its role and a local growth center while also recognizing that the preservation of open spaces and natural resources along the LaPlatte River valley is a significant issue. The results of the workshop will potentially guide a series of recommendations made to the town for future consideration in the updating of their Growth Center plans and could lead to refinements to village zoning and other regulatory/incentive policies.

Issues that were considered:

- Infill development on strategic parcels in the village center proper.
- Creation of a new hamlet in Ballard's corners for mixed use development, just north of the village west of RT 116.
- Integration of workforce housing with other housing and mixed-use blocks, and new housing for local businesses.
- Integration of local job growth incubators to reverse out migration/bedroom community

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traffic and to create a more vital and prosperous village center for local businesses.

- Conservation zones for wetlands, riparian corridors, and aglands, and stormwater.
- Revitalization of parcels with low utilization vis a vis a village location.
- Enhanced pedestrian access to serve future village development.
- Creation of a central green or common with mixed development around it.
- Rehabilitation of river corridors to natural stream flow characteristics and conversion of village land for greater density infill.
- Village traffic calming and pedestrian/bike enhancements

Charrette Participants:

Team 1: Village Center area:

This group emphasized a plan that retained Lyman Park in its current use as playing fields.

Mike Buscher, Landscape Architect

Polly McMurtry, VTrans Planner

Karen Bates, VT ANR Lake Champlain.

Watershed

Coordinator

James Donegan, Village Landowner (Village Core Area)

Kathy Beyer, Affordable Housing Consultant

Team 2: Village Center area:

This group assumed the partial/complete relocation of the Lyman Park playfields to an alternate location (not determined) to allow for changes in this area.

Emma Melvin, UVM Extension, Water Quality

Sarah Hadd, Town Planner, Colchester

Karla Munson, Village Steering Comm.,

Hinesburg

Tracy Applin, Village Steering Comm.,

Hinesburg

Jake Owens, Landscape Architect, ORW

Team 3: Ballard's corners: lesser scale hamlet development

Amy Bell, VTrans Bike/Ped. Planner

Mike Barsotti, Champlain Valley Water District

David Spitz, Town Planner, Jericho

Brian Shupe, VT Forum on Sprawl

Maura Collins, Housing Policy/Planning, VHFA

David Lyman, Village Landowner (West Side

Area)

Carolyn Radisch, Planner, ORW

Team 4: Ballard's corners: greater scale hamlet development

Robin Pierce, Landscape Architect

Erik Hoekstra, Affordable Housing, Housing Vermont

Donna Constantineau, Village Steering Comm., Hinesburg

Wayne Bissonette, Village Landowner (West Side Area)

Lisa Godfrey, River Geomorph Scientist, Hinesburg

Bill MacLay, Architect

Team 5: Mechanicsville Road Corridor

Melissa Levy, Rural Area Development, Yellow Wood Consultants

Dona Walker, Village Steering Comm., Hinesburg

Betsy McDonough, Planning/Zoning, South Burlington

Ty Mack, VT ANR River Scientist - Fluvial Erosion

Hazards

Faith Ingulsrud, VT DHCA & former Hinesburg Town Planner, Landscape Architect

Robert White, Landscape Architect, ORW

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Areas of Study:

1. Mechanicsville Road - This team looked at configurations of new housing along the hillside and filling out density opportunities in coordination with river corridor management concepts, preservation of the valley bottom floodplains and wetlands, and integration of bike/pedestrian access between the village and the high school. This team also looked at ways to invigorate the commercial park with more pedestrian scale amenities. They decided, given the challenges of placing new large-scale buildings on unstable soils in the commerce park, it would be better to use the unbuildable center area as a village green and build at the edges and neighborhood areas.

2. West Side – Two teams looked at the creation of a new hamlet with commercial uses and new neighborhoods. The two teams looked at greater and lesser - scaled scenarios and min. /max build outs of development on both sides of RT 116.

3. The Village Center

Two teams looked at housing infill in the village proper, dealt with the preservation/relocation of the playfields and defined new neighborhood blocks with housing, and mixed uses. These groups considered ways that the existing fabric of the village could be expanded to allow more mixed use buildings, parking etc. can be enhanced. Special attention was paid to the frontage on Main Street, so that new infill/adaptive reuse of historic fabric could match with planned sidewalk improvements. Optimal location of commercial use that could be complementary to the village was also explored. The group didn't have the time or specific inclination to more specifically integrate affordable housing for families and elderly, as considered it as part of a larger question of how to accomplish mixed-use job growth/residential development. Some village parcels with special sensitivities and opportunities were defined as strategic lynchpin parcels without which the comprehensiveness of a plan was challenged.

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Summary of Charrette Team Findings:

Charrette plans for the village center. Above, maintaining the Lyman Park recreation fields and below, redeveloping Lyman Park as a village green.

Village Center – combined results:

As a general rule there was considerable enthusiasm for the potential of new infill development to strengthen the village economically. Both plans emphasized greater housing density and choices, and making a more vibrant pedestrian scale village. Reclaiming the village center from a state highway with high volumes of through-traffic was recognized as a major challenge.

Some village landowners expressed opposition to development of their property. This issue needs to be further explored as we proceed in this planning effort. The following summarizes the results of the village center infill teams:

1. Define a strong pedestrian realm along Main Street with particular emphasis between the school and Mechanicsville Road.
2. Traffic calming along Route 116 is essential for the village to succeed as a focal point of community life and economic development.
3. Define improved areas of access where streets and pedestrian ways can penetrate Main Street to create unified back blocks for future development.
4. If the field is preserved, frame it with greater density development so it is more than just accidental back yard space.
5. Make the green more than just a recreation field—a town park can also support the recreational uses.
6. Create better inter-parcel parking/driveway connections.
7. Better access and connections between parcels means that mixed development can be crafted to fit into the village pattern.
8. Need to create more incentives for higher density housing.
9. On the south end of the village add more development to the area between RT 116, Buck Hill Road, and the elementary school.
10. Define better ways for existing parking areas to be more useable for more uses, and to make them more attractive.
11. Add on-street parking to all of Main Street and side streets and enhance connectivity and create better “park and walk” opportunities.
12. Relocate the formally designated village green to the larger interior green area and instead of the green being a roadside attraction, make it a central village park.
13. Sell the green for development; make the corner of RT 116/Silver Street a T-intersection to stop speeding traffic, and then build on the corner site.
14. If the village center rec. fields are relocated, then the green space can have more flexible uses and be of a different character.
15. An improved village street network linking Landtmans and other blocks is essential to new development.
16. Make the new green a focal point framed on all sides by new housing and mixed uses.
17. Key into wetlands areas as a way to enhance stormwater detention.
18. Expand the senior housing area with an assisted living wing.
19. Infill along Main Street.
20. Make sidewalk/pathway/walking trail connections from village center to conservation lands on hillsides above the village.
21. Higher density development in the village should be coordinated with broader stormwater accommodations so that water quality is preserved or even enhanced, but not on a parcel by parcel basis.

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Charrette plans for Ballard's Corners. Above, a "lesser" hamlet alternative, and below, a "greater" hamlet alternative.

Hamlet at Ballard's Corners

1. Side road access for the hamlet was deemed as key to new development so that primary access was not from RT 116.
2. The issue of what is close to and how new development faces RT 116 was a hard question that was addressed in a variety of ways.
3. There is a lot of development potential for both housing and mixed uses, so the hamlet

could become part of the village growth future.

4. There was a sense that emerged that this area could supplant the commerce park because it does not have the bad soils and larger development could fit relatively well.
5. The potential developable area for Ballard's corners is very large; one group suggested that perhaps the stream corridor be defined as a phase 1 boundary so that development could be focused initially then expanded in the future if necessary.
6. The above was also linked to a concern that if the town pursued higher density residential development, it might trigger the need for a middle school, and this site would be a good location to hold in reserve.
7. The area on the north side of Shelburne Falls Road was seen as the optimal location for greater commercial building of the convenience store, bank and other small businesses located there.
8. Facing Shelburne Falls Road was seen as a location for larger three story buildings with mixed uses and a handsome streetscape.
9. Access management of side driveways from Shelburne Falls Road was seen as essential to the orderly development of the entire area. A larger scale development would also require some form of north-south road connector parallel to RT 116.
10. Linkage from this site to the village proper was seen as essential and a shared use path or bike path was seen as the best way to promote alternative transportation.
11. Higher density housing was seen to be mixed in a neighborhood format - one group showed 75 MF units, the other group showed more than 200 units total build out of the area. At that scale affordable units become very possible.
12. At the above densities, it was also seen that perhaps the beginnings of a transit center or "park and ride" arrangement could be developed so that local working people might not have to drive. Northern connections on RT 116 to Williston Road and Dorset Street to the South Burlington City Center via CCTA could both be pursued.
13. The area surrounding the hamlet was seen as prime area for river corridor preservation, aglands, and linkages via unpaved walkways to the LaPlatte.
14. Local employees of NRG and other companies that sought to locate in the new hamlet could occupy some housing.
15. Use the eastern side of RT 166 where soils are more stable to develop larger industrial uses to complement NRG.

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16. Sewer would need to be extended to the area and at the above densities could probably be paid for by the developers, not the town.
17. An average density of 6 DU/ac was considered.
18. The larger the build out, the greater was the need for open space and mediation between the developed areas and the RT 116 corridor.



Charrette plans for Mechanicsville Road area.

Mechanicsville Road

This group identified several major opportunities:

- Regarding the Commerce Park – the last remaining lots in the center of the park have soils that are highly unstable, and are inappropriate for intensive development such as NRG or other larger scale buildings commensurate with the property available. The group determined that it might be better to let that property become an asset in other ways than a development site at lower value, and to transform it into an open space asset that would inspire other forms of economic development in the larger area.
- Regarding the Patrick Brook, based upon advice of several ANR representatives, the primary brook becomes dissected in a series of watercourses that have been artificially shaped and forced. From their perspective, it would be far better to let the natural

watercourses have their way and to allow the stream to consolidate itself into a single more viable channel. This meant that the unnecessary channels could be abandoned and allowed to be reclaimed in some way for additional development density along Mechanicsville Road.

- The area between Mechanicsville Road and CVU is the optimal location for new village housing. It allows the extension of a framework of neighborhood housing types in combination with the preservation of the steep ledgy knolls that punctuate the horizon around the village edge. Housing here also is centrally located to the schools and local services including the PO.
1. Allow Patrick Brook to become consolidated and form a more natural channel than the current artificially constructed straight line ditches.
 2. The above completed, reclaim space for additional neighborhood development to provide for additional housing density. Have development contribute to the cost of river corridor restoration.
 3. Implement the planned sidewalk /shared use path projects along Mechanicsville Road.
 4. New hillside neighborhood development on the lower slopes above Mechanicsville Road. Use traditional neighborhood development patterns and housing types to redefine traditional neighborhood patterns as opposed to suburban style development. Promote as much multi family housing as possible.
 5. Similar development facing RT 116 south of the Commerce Drive would also be desirable as part of redevelopment of the auto yards.
 6. Create a central park space in the commerce park, and surround with people gathering uses such as a restaurant.
 7. Relocate storm water treatment ponds to a consolidated location for multiple parcels.
 8. Redevelop single story commercial properties into mixed use development with residential development on upper floors to allow for improved economic use, shared parking and redevelopment of underutilized property.
 9. Extend the canal pathway as a connecting path between developed areas and preserved open space.
 10. Create a gateway to the village.
 11. Interconnect streets and new neighborhoods on the hillside.
 12. Create pathways from the road corridor to the Russell sugarhouse and conservation lands along the ridges.

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Summary where do we go from here?

This will be the basis for a key plan to be developed for the December meeting and for Alex's use in property conversations.

1. Define plan for traffic calming/on-street parking and pedestrian improvements for Main Street corridor from Mechanicsville Road to the Elementary/Middle School.
2. Reconfigure Main Street/Silver St. intersection to a T-intersection.
3. Establish both vehicular and pedestrian connections from Main Street to inner blocks of village center.
4. Redevelopment of Main Street buildings into mixed uses with shared parking and access.
5. Relocation of the common to the interior village green location.
6. Sale and redevelopment of the corner parcel of Main/Silver Street for a mixed use building.
7. Create a network of village streets and lanes to interconnect parcels and future development.
8. Infill housing around interior streets and the green.
9. Infill mixed uses of commercial office, and arrange of residential housing types.