

SUMMARY OF TOWN PLAN PUBLIC FORUM – 4/8/2003
“MANAGING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
IN HINESBURG’S RURAL AREAS”

The public forum was held at the Community Alliance Church on Pond Road from 7:00 to 9:15 p.m. on April 8, 2003. The forum began with desserts and drinks. Approximately 55 Hinesburg residents and other interested parties were in attendance.

Alex Weinhagen, Town Planner, opened the public forum at 7:20 p.m. He then introduced Brian Shupe of Burnt Rock, Inc., the speaker for the evening. Brian presented a 25-minute talk on techniques and approaches for managing rural growth. Much of the presentation was taken from Brian’s recent work on a State Planning Grant for the town relating to maintaining rural character, analyzing rural density standards in Hinesburg, and proposing a menu of potential regulatory tools. Specific topics included large lot zoning, frontage requirements, fixed-area based density standards, transfer of development rights, resource overlay districts and development clustering.

David Spitz, Planning Consultant, acted as meeting facilitator. At 7:50, after the conclusion of Brian’s presentation, David divided the audience into 4 small discussion groups. Each group represented a different portion of the town:

- Group A – “Southwest” – south of Charlotte Road and west of VT 116, moderated by Brian Shupe
- Group B – “North” – fronting or north of Shelburne Falls Road, CVU Road and Richmond Road, moderated by Dawn Francis
- Group C – “East” – east of North Road extending down to VT 116, moderated by Alex Weinhagen
- Group D – “Village” – bounded by VT 116, CVU Road and North Road, moderated by David Spitz

Each group was asked to address the same 3 questions and to present the group’s responses to the larger group at the end of the session.

1. What are the positive values of your house location? When new rural housing occurs in Hinesburg, what elements are appropriate for a good house lot?
2. What rural values other than housing are important in Hinesburg? What should be protected and/or improved?
3. What approaches/tools will best address housing and rural character issues in Hinesburg?

A summary of each group’s comments is provided in the table on page 2.

The public forum ended at 9:15 p.m. David Spitz thanked all participants and asked people to come to the final public forum:

- Bringing It All Together – April 29th, Community Alliance Church

This forum was made possible by funding from a Municipal Planning Grant awarded by the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs.

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
1/2 (combined). Values relating to house location and other rural values			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenient access – Chittenden/ Addison County, also Burlington • Beautiful views in general; fields and streams, e.g. Lewis Creek • Combination of privacy and neighbors • Vital small town center with vital services to give sense of community • Rural qualities, not suburban • Good neighborhoods – usually small with surrounding open space • Good siting of houses • Rural roads – keep narrow, scenic and tree-lined • Free recreation – conservation land and dirt roads, safe for horses • Pedestrian rights-of-way/bike paths • Access to woodlots – woodlands large enough to be used economically • Active farming – cows • Wildlife corridors • Protect ground water • Don't allow building in the floodplains • Peaceful, quiet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On main road, but secluded house site; or privacy on dirt road • Views • Available land, location and reasonable price • Proximity to village – churches, library, community activities • Village – foster pride in ownership, facelift deteriorating properties • Volunteerism; feelings of helpfulness, neighborliness • Extended family nearby • Lack of bureaucracy in Hinesburg • Improve signage • Rural land uses – farming, forestry • Protect natural wildlife corridors • Protect view/vistas from roads, also ridgelines • Improve knowledge of natural areas, and access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proximity to Village from Buck Hill • Combination of land types, resources and scenic character • Privacy – neighbors nearby but not as visible or audible • Dirt roads – rural character, slow • Ability to wander across private land; preserve trails - walking, VAST, etc. • Preserve/improve connectivity – difference between motorized & non-, need to respect landowner rights • New lots need: (a) drainage, flat, good soils for septic, (b) preserve scenic and natural resources • Preserve ability to work at home • Preserve working lands/forest with large parcels that can be managed and preserving access • Natural features – streams, slopes, forest, wildlife, views • Farmland • Ecological values – water quality, habitat • Protect viewsheds; ridgeline issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village has rural character; proximity to stores existed 200 years ago and is still there • Good mix of homes and open space; can walk to village and to nature; • Maintain access to open spaces including some public ownership • Village location must include safe pedestrian access – to recreation facilities, other amenities • Consider impact of housing on traffic; separate local and through • Houses shouldn't be too large • Keep diversity of housing types and people • Encourage privacy by design, not by space; fit housing into surroundings • Don't need 10-acre lots, clustering is better; for rural development, fit the land character but be fair to owner • Concern with land being used up faster than population growth • Connectivity also means forestry, agriculture and wildlife
3. Approaches/tools to use			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned residential developments; don't waste land – save open space • Keep land open for new agricultural possibilities, beyond dairy; preserve agricultural soils • Area-based density regulations • House siting regulations; master planning for house parcels • Tax policies that encourage agriculture and open land • Vermont Land Trust • Village needs to be strong to support rural areas; they are interdependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve consistency in development standards – landscaping, etc. • Provide balance of options – very small to very large lot sizes • Siting standards – feel of isolation • Provide for variation in area-based/sliding-scale plan • Development must be responsible for the environment; consider all future impacts including soils, water, wetland, and runoff • Pursue transfer of development rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation easements – to protect features, to protect working lands/ rural character, to protect access • Limit development on steep slopes • Siting issues – locate on edge of forest vs. meadow; issue of higher costs vs. dealing with constrained sites • Analyze effect of regulations on a given area before implementing • Design standards? – restrictive, but look at house color, massing, siting, screening • Use site-specific review vs. technical standards that blanket a whole area • Fairness/equality in development review regardless of rural, village, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use regulations that allow diversity, different housing types • Use clustering with mixed uses (not commercial) where people can use their open space – gardens, etc. • Type of mix will differ in village vs. rural areas; encourage housing in all areas of village, recognize differences between commercial uses, rural – encourage home occupations, etc. • Open space shouldn't just follow aesthetic values, consider use of land • Prepare trails maps – recognize existing trails and have subdividers give easements