



East & West Villages Project Update #1

January 2024

Charlotte Planning & Zoning office

Project FAQs:

What's this project about? Where did it come from & why now?

This planning project will build upon the recent state designation of Charlotte's two historic village centers with a deep dive into its land use regulations and *Town Plan* to evaluate the potential for higher density development (including affordable housing) in the two historic villages. The overall goal is to assist the community in developing a shared vision for more vibrant and diverse village centers that will drive future planning work and regulatory reforms.

This project begins with a "10,000 ft. view" of the East and West Villages to assess how they fit into the broader landscape. Traditionally, Charlotte has been a rural community. But as Charlotte considers how to address the housing crisis, the effects of climate change, and the needs of an aging population, we will discover where residents of Charlotte want to focus future development, while preserving the rural character of the town.

The project will explore what Charlotters of different ages, interests and groups care about, and what they feel might be missing in the two villages. Residents will have myriad opportunities to share their ideas and vision for what they want to see happen in the villages, and identify what types and extent of development people want to see there.

This project was made possible by \$85,000 in federal and state funding the town has secured. Town Planner Larry Lewack secured a \$13,000 Bylaw Modernization Grant from the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development in late 2022. That funding leveraged an additional \$72,000 in federal funds, plus a commitment of \$12,000 for a transit options study through regional planning.

Who is leading this project? How is it being managed?

This project was initiated by the Charlotte Planning Commission, and endorsed by the Charlotte Selectboard in early 2023. The project Steering Committee includes Planning Commission and Energy Committee members, staff from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), the Town Planner, and consultants from Dubois & King, a land use planning firm based in Randolph, VT. The Steering Committee meets monthly, and is leading project outreach and stakeholder engagement. Overall project management is being handled by CCRPC staff.

What specific work products will be produced? What is the timeframe?

- Project website launched, with interactive features (fall 2023) (*Complete*)
- Base mapping, data collection, analysis of prior studies & constraints (early 2024)
- Design charette & visual preference survey conducted (February/March 2024)
- Conceptual village designs presented for feedback and refined (April 2024)
- Village Master Plan published, noting needed infrastructure, official map (May 2024)
- Develop draft zoning bylaw amendments based on master plan (June-Aug. 2024)
- Develop community outreach materials for public hearings & town vote(s) (fall 2024)
- Prepare grant applications for preliminary engineering studies to build community water and wastewater systems as needed to support development in Master Plan (early 2025)

How is this one different than earlier planning studies, that didn't produce any actual changes in the villages?

With help from outside consultants, the town commissioned planning studies for the West Village (circa 2002) and the East Village (in 2010-11). Both included substantial outreach to residents, and visions with conceptual designs for future development. However, neither study was followed-up with specific draft changes to the town's *Land Use Regulations*, which govern what can actually be built.

This project includes draft changes to the *Land Use Regulations* and *Town Plan* that will be required to fully implement the village plans as they emerge from this project. In other words, it will link conceptual plans to specific changes in the town's permitting environment, and include scoping of infrastructure investments needed to enable growth at the scale envisioned. That said, adopting major changes to the *Land Use Regulations* and *Town Plan* are political questions that will ultimately be decided by Charlotte residents, with multiple public hearings and town-wide votes in 2024-25.

How will residents' views influence project outcomes?

The project kicks off this winter with a series of focused conversations with a range of local groups, organizations and town volunteers, including the Charlotte Grange, library, Charlotte Central School parents and staff, business owners, farmers, faith congregations, the Senior Center, the Land Trust, and members of town boards and commissions. More meetings are planned with additional groups around town. Also, displays with printed surveys are set up at five locations around town, with an online version of the survey linked on the project website. The survey gives residents a vehicle to weigh in about what they value in the current villages, what's needed to make both villages more vibrant and useful, resident challenges and needs, and their transportation patterns, among other topics.

Later this winter, a visual preference survey and design charette will invite residents to share their ideas about what types of housing, commercial development, public amenities and transit infrastructure would enhance the villages. Responses will be compiled, and provide the framework for the conceptual village design document and master plan to follow. Residents will have the chance to comment on the draft master plan before it's finalized. After the team presents draft changes to the *Land Use Regulations* based on the master plan, residents will again have the opportunity to comment in public hearings that will be widely advertised in advance, and vote on whether to adopt these proposed changes.

OK, I'm interested. How can I get involved?

- Stay tuned to upcoming editions of the Charlotte Front Porch Forum and The Charlotte News for announcements of upcoming project events.
- If you'd like to receive notifications of upcoming events via email, visit this page on the town website: https://bit.ly/Sign_up_for_notifications
- Fill out the online survey at https://bit.ly/Charlotte_villages_survey_1, or fill out a print surveys at the Old Brick Store, Senior Center, Library, Town Hall, and Charlotte General Store in East Charlotte.

Where can I find out more?

- Learn more at the project website: https://bit.ly/Charlotte_Villages_project. (will be updated as the project proceeds)
- A recent article in The Charlotte News reported about the project launch: https://bit.ly/Village_Master_Plan_project_launches
- Information about upcoming events will be shared at Charlotte's Town Meeting on Saturday March 2, from 9 a.m. to noon at Charlotte Central School.
- If you have specific questions, concerns or suggestions, please contact the Town Planner at: townplanner@townofcharlotte.com.