



East & West Villages Project Update #2

March 2024

Charlotte Planning & Zoning office

Charlotte's East & West Villages Project kicks into high gear in March, with two important opportunities for residents to influence the shape of things to come:

• An online **Visual Preference Survey**, to share your likes & dislikes for what types of housing, businesses, transportation, parking, community spaces and wayfinding could enhance our two historic village centers, going forward. This survey can be accessed at this link:

https://bit.ly/Villages_visual_preference_survey.

• A **Community Design Workshop** will be held on **Saturday, March 16** at the Charlotte Congregational Church, from 9 a.m. to noon. All are welcome. Come use your design and community-building skills to guide plans for future development of Charlotte's East and West Villages. (Coffee, pastries and childcare will be provided.) **Important: you must RSVP for childcare by March 14:** email townplanner@townofcharlotte.com.

Your ideas & creative energy are needed now -- please join us!

January & February Community Conversations:

The project Steering Committee met with a range of community groups starting on January 11 and continuing into mid-February to gather their ideas and concerns surrounding possibilities for future development and multi-modal transportation in Charlotte's two village centers. Participating groups included:

- Charlotte Grange
- Members of town boards & commissions
- Charlotte Central School staff & PTO Board members
- Library & Senior Center staff & volunteers
- Lewis Creek Association & Charlotte Land Trust
- Charlotte business owners & farmers
- Charlotte Children's Center staff

More of these "focus group"-style meetings are planned with residents of the East & West Villages, senior center participants, and others.

Community Survey:

The project Steering Committee published a Community Questions survey that was distributed widely in five high-traffic locations across town, and also published online. Over the five weeks the survey was "live," 114 residents responded. Topics covered in the survey included what resources are currently available in the villages, what types of growth residents would like to see, and current perceived barriers to development. Full survey results will be made available at the upcoming Community Design Workshop.

Meanwhile, here are a few themes that emerged in resident responses:

- *What people love about the villages now:* rural, historic character, Library, Old Brick Store & other locally owned businesses, small scale, surrounding open land, dark night sky.

- *What people travel outside of town to access, which they'd prefer to have available locally:* cafes, bakeries, & grocery stores; shops & services, such as a hardware store & hair salon; health care services; community gathering spaces; a gas station.
- *Type, scale & amount of development people would want in the villages:* One- and two-story buildings; mixed-use development (commercial and homes/apartments); more diverse housing types, including affordable housing, smaller single-unit houses and duplexes; a health care center; cafes & restaurants; more (indoor) recreational opportunities; more services for younger families with children.
- *Most important obstacles to development in the villages now:* unsafe roads for walking & cycling; speeding vehicles; 'NIMBY' mentality/resistance to change; insufficient water & wastewater capacity to support development; wetlands; insufficient parking.
- *Key challenges for residents now:* high cost of living generally; limited housing options that people can afford; high cost/low access to quality day care; over-reliance on cars to get around; few options & services geared toward young families with children; high taxes.
- *How far are you willing to walk or bike to get to village services? Why do you drive to these destinations vs. walk or ride your bike?* Distance: 1-3 miles, up to 30 minutes. But, roads are unsafe for either of these activities, due to speeding cars and narrow roads (given lack of separated walkways, sidewalks & wide shoulders). Most people won't walk or ride bikes in the villages due to perceived danger.
- *What other Vermont villages could be a model for Charlotte?* Bristol, Shelburne, Richmond (many others were mentioned).

The visual preference survey underway now, and the March 16 Design Workshop (see above) will provide additional detail on what residents want & don't want, and guidance for developing village designs for preferred styles and building types. *Stay tuned & join the discussion!*

Recent coverage in *The Charlotte News*:

A recent article in *The Charlotte News* reported on the project launch in January:

https://bit.ly/Village_Master_Plan_project_launches

Another report by long-time Planning Commission chair Peter Joslin, with reflections on what this project represents for Charlotte: https://bit.ly/Tide_changing_News_article

Where can I find out more?

If you have specific questions, concerns or suggestions to share, please contact the Town Planner at: townplanner@townofcharlotte.com.

The project Steering Committee welcomes your ideas, feedback and inspiration to this process. We invite every resident to be part of this exciting visioning process. To learn more, visit the project website at: http://bit.ly/Charlotte_Villages_project. You can also sign up to receive project updates (like this one) at this link: https://bit.ly/Sign_up_for_notifications.