



# Charlotte East & West Villages Project Update #3

April 2024

Charlotte Planning & Zoning office

**The East & West Villages Project continues to gather momentum this month, with two more opportunities 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 through Tuesday, April 9: [https://bit.ly/Villages\\_visual\\_preference\\_survey](https://bit.ly/Villages_visual_preference_survey).

• A virtual (online only) **Community Design Workshop** will be held via Zoom on **Wednesday, April 10**, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. This event is designed for those who missed or could not attend the March 16 design workshop held at the Congregational Church. Use your design and community-building skills to guide plans for future development of Charlotte's East and West Villages. For more details, including the Zoom login, see the event listing on the 'Meeting Calendars and Agendas' page of the town website [at this link](#). (**Note:** If you attended the March 16 event, rest assured that your input and ideas have been noted & will be included in the work products, going forward. Consider letting others have their say this time around).

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

## **March 16 Design Workshop: over 50 residents, sharing lots of energy & ideas:**

Interested Charlotte residents gathered at the Charlotte Congregational Church on the morning of Saturday, March 16 to participate in a wide-ranging discussion and workshop to envision their preferred future for the town's two historic village centers. In small-group discussions, participants worked with table facilitators to respond to several prompts, including:

- What would your 'ideal day' in one of Charlotte's villages look like? How would you get there? What errands would you accomplish? What activities? Who would you see and visit with?
- Identify and note on the village maps places that you love, and places that you think need some kind of improvement. Include details about each.
- Should increased density (number and proximity of structures) and scale (size of structures) be allowed in Charlotte's two village centers? & If allowed, what would be the right balance between housing and commercial development? For new construction, should we require building designs and styles that are in alignment with the historic character of the villages?
- What can be done to increase pedestrian and bicycle safety along roads through the villages? What other options for getting around (besides driving in private vehicles) should Charlotte explore and promote?

Participants used color markers, stickers and index cards to show their preferences. At the end of the workshop, the project team collected many marked-up maps, notes and drawings from the small group tables. A wide variety of views were expressed about what kinds of development should (or should not be) allowed in the villages, going forward. All this information, along with over 300 resident responses to the two online surveys, and notes from other events coming up in April, will inform and frame the consultant team's conceptual plans for the villages, which is due by early June.

Interested in seeing the marked-up maps and a more detailed summary of the day's work? We have posted that report to the town website' project page, at: [https://bit.ly/Charlotte\\_Village\\_Plan\\_project](https://bit.ly/Charlotte_Village_Plan_project).

## About Water and Wastewater Capacity:

In both historic and current conversations, many residents have noted that drinking water supply and wastewater disposal capacity are currently very limited, due to soil conditions in the village areas. Many community members are rightly concerned about how future development could occur given these limitations, and what physical and fiscal impacts could result from the possibility of a more dense development pattern under consideration.

Completely addressing these very technical challenges is beyond the scope of the current project, which is focused on envisioning and supporting the community's hopes and desires for the Villages. However, the visioning process may identify opportunities to further pursue creative solutions, such as water/wastewater systems that can be shared between several properties, one or more Town-managed systems, or even connecting to the regional Champlain Water District system. Any decisions to change the Town's zoning rules or other ordinances will be evaluated within the context of these challenges.

Regardless of the local rules adopted or decisions made, no new development can occur without obtaining permits under the Vermont Water Supply and Wastewater Disposal Rules, which ensure that new and modified wells and septic systems do not impact adjacent properties, and meet high standards for public safety and environmental protection. And it's likely that if the town decides to pursue development of additional village wastewater treatment and water supply systems, the town would seek state grant funds to cover some of the design and capital costs, and (once built) charge user fees to cover operating costs, to limit additional burdens on local residents to finance these systems.

## Who is paying for this project? And who is in charge? Project FAQs

An earlier edition of this newsletter (#1) answered these (and other) questions in detail. All three newsletters are available on the 'Planning for the Future' project page on the town website, linked here: [https://bit.ly/Charlotte\\_Village\\_Plan\\_project](https://bit.ly/Charlotte_Village_Plan_project). Scroll down to the bottom of the right sidebar to find it.

## Recent media coverage & other online resources:

- A recent article in the Hinesburg & Charlotte *Citizen* reported on the project at: [https://www.vtcng.com/thecitizenvt/news/local\\_news\\_charlotte/](https://www.vtcng.com/thecitizenvt/news/local_news_charlotte/)
- Consulting team's project website: [Village Master Plan story map website](#)
- Resources on 'smart growth' and why this concept is central to this project's focus: <https://www.planetizen.com/definition/smart-growth>
- An overview of planning principles that respect the historic character of Vermont's traditional neighborhoods & village centers, which is a core value and theme for this project: <https://vnrc.org/community-planning-toolbox/tools/vermont-traditional-neighborhoods/>

## 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](mailto:townplanner@townofcharlotte.com) or at (802) 425-3533 ext. 206.
- The project Steering Committee welcomes your ideas, feedback and inspiration to this process. We invite every Charlotte resident to be part of this exciting visioning process. To learn more, visit the project website at: [http://bit.ly/Charlotte\\_Villages\\_project](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](https://bit.ly/Sign_up_for_notifications).