

CHARLOTTE EAST AND WEST VILLAGES PROJECT

VIRTUAL DESIGN WORKSHOP SUMMARY



This workshop was held on Wednesday April 10th, 2024 at 6 pm via Zoom. In attendance were 13 members of the public, 3 moderators, and 6 additional members of the Steering Committee and project team.

Agenda

- 6:00 - 6:30 pm - Introduction to the project team, the project thus far, and the current results of the Visual Preference Survey, available online from February 22 to April 15.
- 6:30 - 6:35 pm - Get into breakout groups; one for East Charlotte, and one for West Charlotte.
- 6:35 - 7:45 pm - Breakout group design activities.
- 7:45 - 8:00 pm - Re-convene and workshop closing.



Image above: the workshop flier distributed in and around the Villages before the event.

Project Introduction; Water & Wastewater Overview

After introductions and a summary of project efforts thus far, the moderators addressed important concern for many in Charlotte: water supply and wastewater disposal. Although beyond the scope of this project to directly address, the project team has been conducting preliminary research into water and wastewater solutions and the range of options available to address these challenges. These solutions will be best explored in a Feasibility Study, conducted as a follow-up to this Villages Project. However, having this preliminary information publicly available through the final report of this project will be an important step in preparing for this next phase. It is not a question of if Charlotte's villages will need additional water and wastewater capacity, but how much, and where.

Breakout Room Activities

After the project introduction, participants chose to join a breakout room for either the East or West Village. Within each room, a moderator used the Miro platform to display a virtual whiteboard showing an aerial basemap of the Village overlaid with natural resource features. Moderators and members of the project team facilitated discussions around the themes of community spaces, scale and density, and mobility, using the Miro board to add participants' ideas and notes directly to the map. The prompts and themes covered in the Virtual Design Workshop reflected those covered at the in person Design Workshop on March 16, 2024 as outlined below.

Geographic Extents of the Villages:

Some participants noted that the boundaries of the Villages, taken from the Town's current zoning map, did not reflect where the Villages truly 'are' or historically have been, emphasizing the need to consider the East and West Villages as places that can be experienced beyond simple boundaries on a map. There is a need to consider the effects the Villages have on the wider Town of Charlotte, and even of the community beyond, and vice versa. It is also important to consider the needs of people who wish to become residents of Charlotte, and those who will live here in the future. Finally, participants noted the physical constraints and conservation elements that need to be considered regardless of the official extent of the Villages.

Housing Density and Scale:

Housing was also a popular topic of conversation. Several participants noted the need for more housing, including affordable housing, with direct references to the current housing crisis in Vermont. There was not a complete consensus on how much housing, and what kinds, may be needed. However, there was a desire to understand more details about demographics and housing need in Charlotte. There was also a desire to retain and encourage a “neighborhood” rather than “village” or “downtown” feel, particularly in the East Village, and that nearby communities of Hinesburg and Shelburne fill the niche of larger functional downtowns.

Community Spaces and Amenities:

Regardless of how and what type of development occurs, there was consensus that both Villages need more places for events and chance encounters with other community members. In addition, there was a desire for more amenities like the General Store and restaurants to improve the vitality of the Villages. This should balance serving the basic needs of Charlotte residents with encouraging others to stop in Charlotte rather than passing through, possibly by leveraging the town’s scenic and recreational features. Elements could include a gazebo in the town greens, bus shelters, art or sculpture, more defined parking, seating, rain gardens, skating rink, picnic area, or playground.

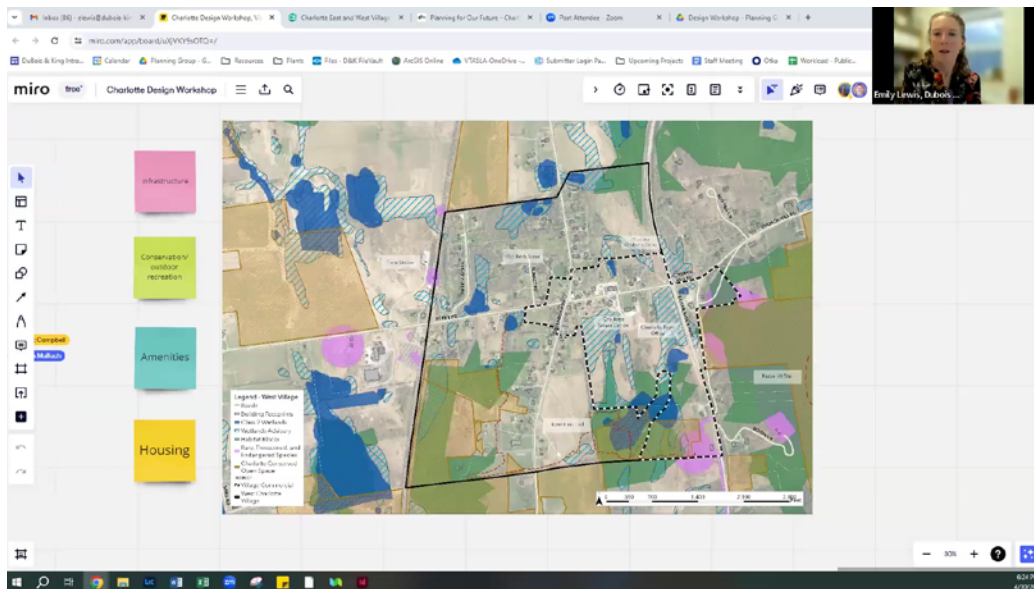


Image above: A screen capture showing the mapping exercise during one of the break out groups.

Mobility:

Participants also highlighted barriers to walking and biking in both Villages, including high-speed traffic around the main intersections, not having separation from the road, and not having safe crossing locations. Some participants also expressed desire for alternatives to driving to reach destinations within the community and in other communities. While some were concerned that adding pedestrian amenities could be costly and might change the rural feel of the Villages, all participants advocated for implementing traffic calming measures.

Infrastructure:

There was acknowledgement that achieving any community goals for the Villages likely will require investing in infrastructure: sidewalks, parking, water & wastewater, and community spaces. Participants felt it important to right-size infrastructure for the desired scale of each Village and not to overbuild while making sure developers could achieve economies of scale. These investments should also bring benefits to the whole community and should be done in “the Charlotte Way” to avoid making a place that people won’t like.