

EXISTING CONDITIONS
East Montpelier Planning Commission
May 19, 2016 – v.2

LAND USES

In early May, a field inventory was conducted to identify existing land uses throughout the Town of East Montpelier. The primary focus of this inventory was the area designated within the one mile radius from the existing Village Center Designation. In some cases, additional properties were included for reference and to identify possible use patterns. The tables below are initial results from that inventory.

EAST MONTPELIER EXISTING LAND USE			
LAND USE	ACREAGE	NUMBER OF PARCELS	AVERAGE PARCEL SIZE
Residential	1,136.03	305	3.72
Parks/Recreation/Open Space	74.13	3	24.71
Public/Institutional	151.99	18	8.44
Industrial/Office	154.84	21	7.37
Commercial/Office	255.00	64	12.14
Agriculture/Forest	3,853.04	84	45.87
Water	108.84	11	9.89
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	432.83	8	54.10
TOTAL	6,166.70	514	166.26

EAST MONTPELIER EXISTING LAND USE ACREAGE RANGES			
ACREAGE RANGE	TOTAL ACRES	NUMBER OF PARCELS	AVERAGE
≤ 1	60.46	106	0.57
$1 \leq 2$	134.48	100	1.34
$2 \leq 3$	143.91	56	2.57
$3 \leq 4$	189.17	55	3.44
$4 \leq 5$	76.34	17	4.49
$5 \leq 10$	407.94	57	7.16
$10 \leq 20$	831.97	63	13.21
> 20	3,845.31	56	68.67
TOTAL	5,689.58	510	101.44

Note: Road right-of-way and water features were excluded from this table resulting in different numbers between the two tables.

CONSTRAINTS

The primary constraints for the Village of East Montpelier are generally environmental. Along the Winooski River there is the designated river corridor and the floodplain. Both of these features encompass properties on both sides of the river and include several of the tributaries to the Winooski River.

Limitations also exist for water and wastewater services. The Crystal Springs water system provides potable drinking water to properties within the village, however due to infrastructure issues within the system, no new connections are permitted. This requires individual or community based wells to be used for new developments within the Community. Additionally, soils throughout the Town of East Montpelier have limited septic suitability. While data from the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) indicate that suitable soils exist for on-site septic systems, more detailed analysis will need to be done to confirm the soil quality for on-site septic systems.

Non-environmental constraints that need to be considered include lands that are currently held by the Vermont Land Trust (VLT). These lands have a conservation easement associated with them that limits the development potential. It is possible to change the easement agreements, however it could be a cumbersome process that would take time and would require agreement from the property owner and the VLT. Other non-environmental constraints that could be considered include a lack of infrastructure such as sidewalks, bicycle facilities, or similar facilities that are common in village areas and provide alternatives to single occupancy vehicle trips.

HISTORY OF VILLAGE PLANNING

After concerns were noted for possible malfunctions of on-site wastewater disposal systems in the Village of East Montpelier, a wastewater committee commissioned a study of wastewater alternatives and a subsequent follow-up. These studies were conducted in 2007 and 2008 and included alternatives and cost estimates for possible solutions. These solutions ranged from community on-site, individual on-site, and connections to existing centralized wastewater treatment facilities including the City of Montpelier and the Town of Plainfield. Ultimate, no actions were taken based on these studies based on the solutions being cost prohibitive.

In 2010 the East Montpelier Selectboard authorized the creation of a fire district that includes the properties within the Village of East Montpelier and are served by or contiguous to the Crystal Springs Water System. The Fire District is responsible for potable water service within the district's boundaries. The fire district was formed with the sole intent of taking over the Crystal Springs Water System which is privately owned. The fire district continues to work with the current owner of the Crystal Springs Water System to negotiate for a possible sale.

In 2011, the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission prepared a Village Study Report for the Town of East Montpelier. The majority of this study was focused on the Hull Property where a new village style development was visualized to incorporate a road connection between Village Drive and Route 2 via the existing right-of-way. This concept also included a river walk along the Winooski River as a pedestrian feature that would be associated with a village green in the development. The 2011 Village Study Report also included a buildout analysis based on a 2007 study, however water and wastewater were not taken into account therefore the actual buildout may differ significantly.

In 2008, the Village of East Montpelier was awarded Village Center Designation from the State of Vermont. This designation was subsequently renewed in 2013. The Village Center Designation outlines a specific boundary as the designated village and is an indication of East Montpelier's commitment to maintaining and supporting the historic core of the community and supports the state's land use planning goals. The Village Center Designation is an important tool to leverage state grant funding for future planning efforts and is required to be renewed every five years.

IMPLICATIONS FOR VILLAGE PLANNING AND ZONING

Characteristics of a village

Villages are generally characterized by having several key characteristics. These include a central gathering space or common area; compact and walkable design; density, scale, and massing that is consistent with the overall geographic area and population; and a mix of uses including residential, commercial, and offices. Identifying the overall scale, density, massing, and future uses will help establish the specific regulations for village zoning. It may be appropriate to also identify what properties would most logically benefit from village zoning as a basis for changes. Additionally, it may be appropriate to establish the zoning district and associated regulations, but not implement it in the community until other factors have been addressed such as water and wastewater.

Future considerations

The following is a list of topics and questions that may be prudent to address at upcoming community meetings or Planning Commission meetings. This is not an exhaustive list but should serve as a basis for conversation with the Planning Commission to determine the most important topics for discussion. Specific items include:

- Connection to school
- Connection between upper and lower villages
- River walk
- Community gathering space(s)
- On-street parking
- Businesses that could benefit from on-street parking
- Pedestrian Crossings for Route 14 and/or Route 2
- Reduced speeds on Route 14 and/or Route 2
- Traffic Counts

- What types of scale and density are preferred or acceptable for the village?
- What neighborhoods exist or do citizens associate with?
- Are there activity nodes or centers within the community and what are they?