

INTRODUCTION

The Charlotte Town Plan is the principal policy statement for the Town of Charlotte. It presents existing conditions in Charlotte, a vision for the future, and means to achieve this vision. This Plan addresses many areas including town services and facilities, housing, transportation, economic development, and resource protection. The Plan will be implemented through the Town's land use regulations and will help guide the work and decisions of the Selectboard, Planning Commission, and other town groups and employees, as well as the actions of residents, property owners, businesses, organizations and developers.

Purpose

The authority to prepare and implement the Plan is granted through Vermont Statutes Annotated (VSA) Title 24, Chapter 117, Municipal and Regional Planning and Development. The purpose of the Chapter is to "... encourage the appropriate development of all lands in this state by the action of its constituent municipalities and regions, with the aid and assistance of the state, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety against fire, floods, explosions, and other dangers; to promote prosperity, comfort, access to adequate light and air, convenience, efficiency, economy, and general welfare; to enable the mitigation of the burden of property taxes on agricultural, forest, and other open lands; to encourage appropriate architectural design; to encourage the development of renewable resources; to protect residential, agricultural, and other areas from undue concentrations of population and overcrowding of land and buildings, from traffic congestion, from inadequate parking and the invasion of through traffic, and from the loss of peace, quiet, and privacy; to facilitate the growth of villages, towns, and cities and of their communities and neighborhoods so as to create an optimum environment, with good civic design; to encourage development of a rich cultural environment and to foster the arts; and to provide means and methods for the municipalities and regions of this State to plan for the prevention, minimization, and future elimination of such land development problems as may presently exist or which may be foreseen and to implement those plans when and where appropriate".

Process

The roots of this Plan were established with the adoption of Charlotte's 1990 Town Plan. The most significant public involvement in the formulation of that plan was through survey, committee work, and informal discussions with neighborhood groups and individuals. The 1990 Town Plan was readopted in 1995.

A comprehensive assessment of conditions in 1999 was conducted by seven committees: housing, economy, community facilities and transportation, agriculture, natural resources, lake and lakeshore, and neighborhoods and villages. This committee work was supplemented by survey information. After revisions crafted by the Planning Commission and the Selectboard, a 2000 Town Plan was put to vote. This Plan was defeated; however, much of the content carried forward into an adopted 2002 Town Plan. The principal content change associated with the

2002 Plan was the added focus on village development, particularly of the West Charlotte Village. This Plan was readopted in 2008.

In 2012, Charlotte again recognized the need to reassess its Town Plan in full. Significant events like 9/11, the bursting of the housing bubble and accompanying economic downturn, and Tropical Storm Irene had occurred. State policy initiatives involving the development of renewable energy resources and flood resiliency were added to the state's land use goals related to "good civic design" and the preservation of agriculture. Property taxes and education funding continued to be hot topics in Montpelier. Charlotte had also completed several specific plans including the 2002 West Charlotte Village Plan, the 2009 East Charlotte Village Plan, the 2011 West Charlotte Village Wastewater Study, and the 2012 West Charlotte Pedestrian Improvements Plan. In 2007, the Town became one of the two communities to receive Delegation Authority under the State Wastewater Rules (Environmental Protection Rules, Chapter 1, Wastewater System and Potable Water Supply Rules). Additionally, Land Use Regulations have been revised to promote agriculturally-related businesses (i.e. commercial farm stands and farm cafes).

A consultant was hired to coordinate efforts towards completion of the 2013 Plan; however, time constraints related to process, staffing, and other duties of the Planning Commission resulted in the re-adoption of the 2008 Town Plan. The Commission has continued to work on a more comprehensive revision. In 2011, a Town Plan Kickoff Workshop was conducted at the Charlotte Senior Center. Several policy considerations were identified during this workshop and there was also consensus on the need to reformat the Plan to make it more reader-friendly. The Conservation Commission and the Energy Committee provided expertise and content for the Natural Resources and Energy Sections, respectively. Other sections were drafted by Commission liaisons for public review in the summer of 2014. Workshops targeting significant changes or addendums were conducted throughout the summer and fall of 2014 and the language in the Plan evolved based on these discussions. *The Charlotte News* ran a series entitled "Charlotte's Web", which focused on key planning considerations including demographic "dichotomies", housing costs, agriculture and natural resources, and community. In 2015, the Planning Commission reviewed two proposed amendments to the Plan – consideration for village designation and an updated Energy section – as well as several key land use regulation amendments. The Town Plan amendments were adopted by town vote in March of 2016. Work on the comprehensive update resumed in 2016 to have a final document ready for voting on the Town Meeting Day of 2017.

This Plan is based on new state law and current conditions in the Town and region. As specific local conditions change, public attitudes evolve, and more data become available, the Plan will be updated and revised. At a minimum, the Plan will be updated every eight years as is required under state statute.