
CHARLOTTE, VERMONT

COMPREHENSIVE

PLAN

BOX HOLDERS
RESIDENTS OF CHARLOTTE ONLY
ONE TO EACH FAMILY

PREPARED BY THE CHARLOTTE PLANNING
COMMISSION: MARCH, 1969

YOUR PLANNING COMMISSION PRESENTS THIS REPORT ON THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR CHARLOTTE

Action by the last Vermont Legislature authorized the creation of town and regional planning groups to help determine the course we should chart to achieve the kind of surroundings we want for ourselves and for our children who will inherit what we have now and what we do with it.

It was apparent that if we did not plan for ourselves someone else would plan for us; or, perhaps worse, no one would do any planning at all, and the growing urban and suburban sprawl at our borders would just move on through our area without restraint or thoughtful direction.

Most of us have likely moved here or stayed here because of certain basic and similar advantages this area provides for ourselves, our children, our businesses, and those who come to visit us. These advantages are not necessarily permanent nor safe from extinction under our present ordinances, and this is why the Charlotte Planning Commission was formed and why we wrote to you to seek your advice and your help when we surveyed the town last summer.

Nearly 50% or one out of every two families responded to our questionnaire and the thoughts and suggestions you submitted have been incorporated in the Suggested Comprehensive Plan you see here today. It is essentially a working framework through which it will be possible to create or preserve the kind of Charlotte you have told us you want to see.

To implement it and to achieve some specific goals in terms of future town facilities will require the thoughtful cooperation of us all.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Planning Commission
March 1969

Peter Bergh
Chairman

Allen C. Moore
Secretary

Mary Field
William C. Horsford, Sr.
Thomas J. Schermerhorn
William O. Spear, Sr.
William L. Wheeler

Murray W. Foote
Chairman of the Board
of Selectmen
Ex-Officio

William B. Pinney
Charlotte Representative
to Chittenden County
Regional Planning Commission

CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGION



Charlotte's growth is dependent to a great extent on the growth and development of the Greater Burlington area. During the period from 1950 to 1960 the population of Chittenden County grew six times as fast as that of the State as a whole. The Interstate Highway System and greatly improved air service have made the region easily accessible from the large metropolitan centers of New York, Boston and Montreal. Many new businesses and industries have been encouraged to locate in the area due to the availability of a labor force and the area's attractiveness as a place to live and work.

The towns immediately surrounding Burlington have received most of the new development; but as these towns have become suburbanized and more fully developed, growth has accelerated in outlying towns like Charlotte.

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission has been created to endeavor to coordinate the major forces at work in the Region which cannot be effectively handled by individual towns. Transportation facilities, schools, taxation, law enforcement, the location of public utilities, etc., are factors that can best be handled on a regional level.

Charlotte is a member of the C. C. R. P. C. and this Comprehensive Plan is intended to reflect the rapidly changing characters of the entire region as it affects the Town, while at the same time conserving and enhancing the Town's unique character.

CHARLOTTE'S HISTORY

Benning Wentworth, royal governor of New Hampshire, granted charter on June 24, 1762, to a group of proprietors, mostly from Dutchess County, New York, few if any of whom settled here. These proprietors met, on July 29, 1762, at the house of Daniel Merritt, in Dutchess County, to appoint a committee to settle boundary lines between "Charlotta" and adjoining towns.

Subsequent meetings recorded the "patent for sd. Charlotta" and provided for "surveying and lotting" the town. The first meeting after the Revolutionary War took place on March 29, 1785, at the home of Jonathan Robinson in Bennington.

Derick Webb, a German, was the first to attempt to settle in Charlotte in March, 1776. He soon left, returning again the following March and left again in May. Webb and Elijah Woolcott, in 1784, were the first permanent settlers, followed by James Hill, on Holmes Bay, where the first grist-mill was established.

Other early settlers, who came here before 1800, included: Dr. James Towner, John Hill, Solomon Squier, Moses Fall, Daniel Hosford, John Palmer, Asa Narramore, Abel Leavenworth, Michael Read, Samuel Prindle, Reuben Martin, James Squier, Col. William Williams, Preserved Wheeler, Elijah Alexander, Joseph Hoag, Eliphal Gillette, Walter Ferriss, William Niles, Gideon Prindle, John Clark, Elijah Powell, John Thorp, William Pease, Elijah and George Pease, Caleb Barton and Gad Root.

While most of the early arrivals were farmers, some operated taverns, tanneries, a ferry, grist-mills, brickyards, general stores and blacksmith shops.

The town was organized on March 13, 1787 and, when the first complete census was taken after Vermont became a state, Charlotte was the most populous town in the north half of Vermont, its inhabitants numbering 635.

The first church organized in town was the Congregational on Jan. 3, 1792. The original edifice was built in 1798 and was replaced in 1848 with the present brick building.

The first Methodist Society in western Vermont was formed in 1798 and in all probability itinerants began preaching here that year. The first church building, a wooden structure on South Greenbush Rd., was completed in 1823, burned down in 1837, and was replaced by a brick building in 1840. This building, now at the Shelburne Museum, was purchased by the Breezy Point Library Association in 1903 and for many years served not only as a library, but as the scene of amateur theatricals, motion picture showings, etc. The building was badly damaged by the hurricane in 1950, at which time it was decided to offer it to the Museum.

The Catholic Church in East Charlotte, formerly a Quaker meeting house, was brought here by ox teams from Starksboro during the winter of 1858-59. Previously masses were said in private homes.

The Baptist Church was organized on May 6, 1807, and the first church edifice was built the following year. It was replaced in 1840 by the brick building located near Baptist Four Corners in East Charlotte.

Charlotte Female Seminary, located on Greenbush Rd. south of the Four Corners, was organized in 1835 and the building erected the following year. It was purchased in 1840 by the Methodist Episcopal Society, to be used for the Troy Conference. After the building burned a new one was built by volunteer subscription, and was opened as Lakeview Seminary, John Dewey its principal. It became part of the Charlotte School system in 1895 and remained in use as a school until the Central School was built in 1849.

Another interesting old building in Charlotte houses the Charlotte Memorial Museum. Built in 1850 as a Town House, it was used as such until 1939 when the present Town Hall was built. It was turned over in 1943 to the Museum Society, to be used as a war memorial and to house suitable arts and crafts,

historical documents, and valuable records of the early history of the town.

Visitors to the Shelburne Museum will see the Stagecoach Inn, built in Charlotte in 1783 by Captain Hezekiah Barnes, an officer in the US. Militia, who came here with his wife and four children from Lanesboro, Mass. Captain Barnes also built a trading post across the road from the Tavern (now Harte's Store) and continued both successful enterprises until his death in 1813. The Inn was in constant use until 1948, at which time Museum officials visited it and marvelled at its structural excellence. It was moved to Shelburne, piece by piece, and completely restored to correspond as nearly as possible in appearance to New England inns of the period.

Included in the list of business interests in Charlotte in 1886 were Alanson Edgerton's Cider Mill, Winfield Scott's saw and grist mill, and H. D. Alexander's Vineyard and Fruit Farm. There were three stores: one at the "center", conducted by Swain and Williams; one at Charlotte Village and one at Baptist Four Corners, both owned by S. E. Russell, who came to Charlotte from Burlington in 1878.

The military spirit was rife in Charlotte from earliest days, probably not surpassed by any town in the state. There were no less than five military companies in the town: two infantry, one light cavalry, one cavalry and one artillery.

Interesting anecdotes abound in Charlotte, especially about the origin of such names as Mutton Hill. Legend has it that it was so named when a group of church-goers were alerted to the fact that a bear was hidden in the bushes nearby. W. W. Higbee's account goes on to say: "In those days, as now, it was deemed good policy to kill bears when they were around and so the meeting was suddenly adjourned and everybody joined in a surround." The "bear" turned out to be a large black ram and the territory in question henceforth became known as Mutton Hill.

The startling fact that Charlotte and surrounding areas were at one time completely under water was brought to light in 1849 when workmen laying the roadbed for the Rutland and Burlington Railroad, came across some bones they assumed to be those of a horse. Subsequent investigation by scientists and historians revealed that the skeleton was that of a marine animal, thought to be a small, northern white whale. These interesting remains are now on exhibit at the University of Vermont.

A whipping post and stocks once stood at Charlotte Four Corners. History does not record how many times they were used, but on at least one occasion a transient who had stolen a cow from Capt. James Hill was sentenced by Daniel Griswold to receive nine lashes and pay costs. After the whipping, administered by Constable Clark, the fees were returned but the culprit was ordered to cut wood for Griswold. Griswold allowed the man to sleep in the kitchen that night and woke up the next morning to find the fellow had absconded with his new pair of boots.

The first ferry service across Lake Champlain originated from Charlotte and was established by John McNeil in 1701. For many years passengers between Cedar Beach and Essex, N. Y., were transported by sailboat, but around 1830 McNeil and his partner, Ross, built an ingenious contraption operated by six horses on a treadmill. This horseboat made the trip back and forth across the lake three times a day for some 20 years. Finally the ferry collapsed one day under a heavy load of cattle and the cargo had to swim to safety... the ferry was hauled to shore and "beached forever."

The above is a resume of articles which have been published in the Charlotte News --Majorie L. Coleman, editor. Principle sources are The History of Chittenden County, published in 1886, and W. W. Higbee's Around the Mountain.

CHARLOTTE TODAY

Charlotte grew and developed very slowly until the year 1960. The population in 1800 was approximately 659 people, in 1900 it had reached 1254. From 1900 until 1950 the Town's population had declined to 1215. By 1960 Charlotte had 1271 residents.

The population of Chittenden County increased 110% from 1890 to 1960. This compares with a population increase of 17% in the state as a whole. The increase largely came in Burlington, South Burlington, Essex, Shelburne, and Winooski. Charlotte's population increased less than 3% during this time. Charlotte has been on the edge of the rapidly expanding central area of Chittenden County and until recently the population has grown very slowly.

The building boom which has substantially affected many other towns in the Burlington area has just begun to be felt in Charlotte. There are now approximately 1550 permanent residents and about 500 part-time residents who spend summers at camps at Thompson's Point, Flat Rock and Cedar Beach.

The area of the Town is 26,880 acres, or about 42 square miles. The visual character has been established by farming, and over 80% of the land is presently in open meadows and pastures. This character is beginning to change, however, as many farmers decide to discontinue farming due to increasing costs, taxes and the shortage of labor. When farms are sold today in Charlotte, their next crop will probably be houses.

The questionnaire that was sent to all residents and landowners in Charlotte revealed a number of interesting facts about the Town. The excellent response to the survey and the large number of people who took the time to set down additional thoughts and comments indicates that the Town as a whole is very much aware and concerned as to its future development. Below is a summary of the responses to the survey.

Approximately 40% of Charlotters work in the town; 55% work in Burlington, South Burlington, and Essex Junction; and the remaining 5% work in Shelburne or elsewhere. Of this work force, about 1/3 are engaged in farming; 1/3 are professional people (doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc.); and 1/3 work in industry.

Family incomes after taxes vary considerably. 16% indicated an income of less than \$3,000; 22% were between \$3000-5000; 20% were between \$5000-8000; 16% were between \$8000-12,000; 7% were between \$12,000-15,000; and 19% had incomes after taxes of over \$15,000.

It is interesting to note that 46% of the residents were originally from out of state, and 54% are native Vermonters. Of the out of state people, 75% were from outside New England. Of the native Vermonters, only 10% were born in Charlotte.

Over 94% of families own their own homes with an average size of 8 rooms. 2% of families live in mobile homes, and 4% live in two-family houses and apartments.

About 50% of the people indicate they shop for food primarily in Charlotte; 35% in Burlington and South Burlington; and 15% shop in Shelburne, Vergennes or elsewhere.

For items other than food, 72% shop in Burlington and South Burlington; 14% in Vergennes; 7% in Shelburne; and 6% shop elsewhere (New York, Boston and Montreal primarily).

The expressed interest in having additional commercial facilities and services in the Town was large; only 15% indicated they wanted no new businesses, industries or services. Light industry and a small shopping center (similar to Shelburne's) were most frequently mentioned. Others were more specific and mentioned a laundry/dry cleaners, hardware store, library, water system, restaurant, bank and a drug store. One was indicated the Town needed telephone service.

Recreation was a popular item. In the spring and summer most people like boating, swimming, fishing, camping, horseback riding, tennis, gardening and golf. In the fall and winter most popular

activities were hunting, skiing, skating, fishing, cards and reading, snow-mobiling and bowling.

Where do Charlotters go on vacation? 40% vacation in Charlotte, 15% go elsewhere in Vermont, 15% in other New England states, 15% in other parts of the United States, 10% go to Canada, and 5% indicate they take no vacation at all.

The questionnaire and many other factors indicate that the process of change that has already begun to affect the Town is accelerating rapidly. It is the responsibility of your Planning Commission to recognize this process of change, and to suggest how best to accommodate it.

CHARLOTTE'S FUTURE

While it is impossible to predict with absolute certainty Charlotte's population at any future date, we can make a reasonable estimate based on current local, State and national trends. These all indicate a rapid increase in population surrounding principal centers such as we have seen and are seeing in the Burlington area. Chittenden County is now home to more than 80,000 people, or, viewed another way, nearly 20% of the population of the entire State of Vermont live in this county. There are indications that this figure will nearly double by the year 2000.

The county's growth will exert its influence on the growth of Charlotte and, if the trend continues, our town will have between 5,000 and 6,000 or more people by the start of the next century.

Such growth will put an ever increasing demand on the land and services the town has to offer. Considering the town's history and its current status and desires, what then must we plan for its future to insure the great natural values it already has and the kind of cultural and economic growth its present and future residents need?

Essentially, these problems can be reduced to answering two major questions - What do we have? and What should we do with it?

First of all, experience has shown that where nature is allowed to work her normal course, things tend to run smoothly. It is only when man tries to interfere that things go wrong as evidenced by the flooding and erosion in California where drainage ways have been altered and hillsides stripped of trees and improperly developed. Therefore, we strongly urge that all natural streams, rivers and drainage ways and high, long view wooded areas be preserved for this reason and for open space to be hiked, ridden, skied and generally enjoyed by the people of Charlotte.

Charlotte and East Charlotte Villages and the Mutton Hill area are portions of the Town which may develop in greater density, but still maintain an equivalent of one residence per acre, provided that these areas can meet State Health Department and Local Board of Health standards for sewage disposal. Such areas could provide the conveniences and other advantages of community life desired by many families and individuals, especially those with young children or older, retired people.

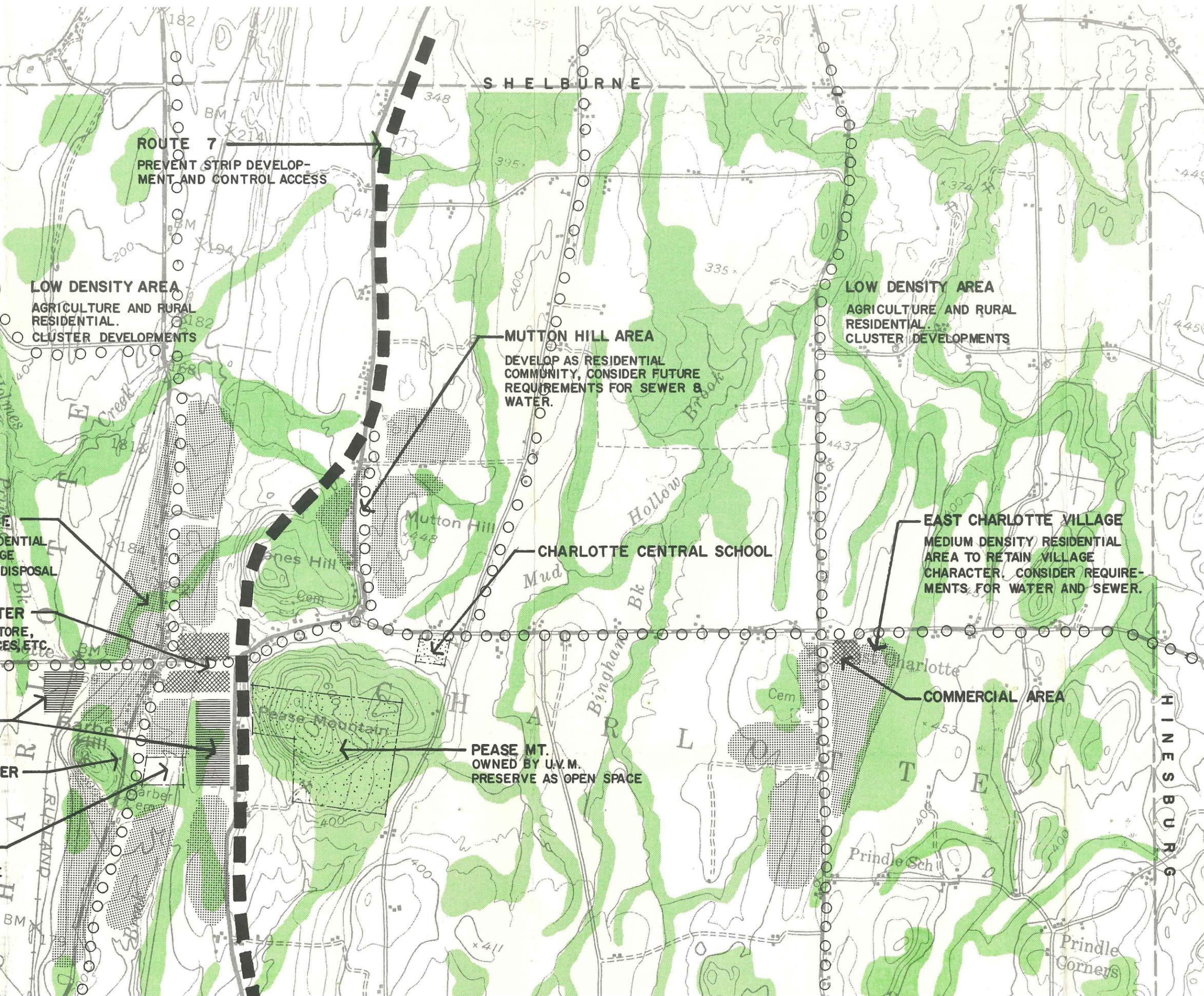
The character of the houses in the Village of West Charlotte along the Greenbush Road is most attractive and compatible, one to the other. Alterations to existing buildings and construction of future buildings should be in the same style to preserve this character.

In this same area, we have suggested a future school site within walking distance of the population center of the town, where the arrival of water and other facilities indicates a more rapid growth.

As the town grows in population, so will the demand for additional shops and stores. It is suggested that these be grouped in two areas with the possibility of developing a very attractive shopping complex around a Village Green.

Route 7 is a regional thoroughfare and, because of its increasingly heavy traffic, it is recommended that no further commercial developments, other than the proposed limited industrial district, be

CHARLOTTE VERMONT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



ROUTE 7
PREVENT STRIP DEVELOPMENT AND CONTROL ACCESS

LOW DENSITY AREA
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RESIDENTIAL.
CLUSTER DEVELOPMENTS

MUTTON HILL AREA
DEVELOP AS RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY, CONSIDER FUTURE REQUIREMENTS FOR SEWER & WATER.

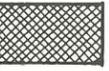
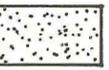
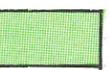
LOW DENSITY AREA
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RESIDENTIAL.
CLUSTER DEVELOPMENTS

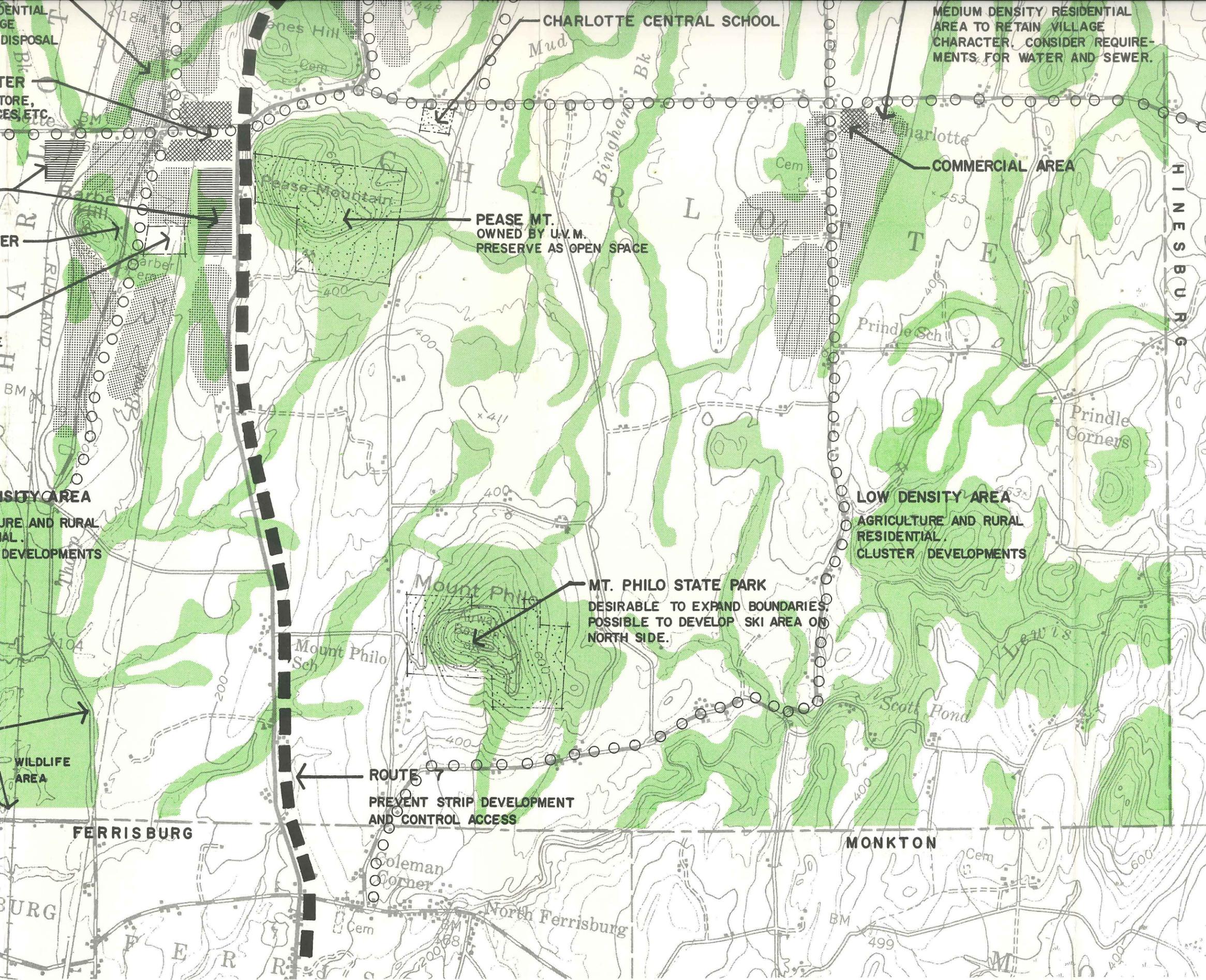
EAST CHARLOTTE VILLAGE
MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL AREA TO RETAIN VILLAGE CHARACTER. CONSIDER REQUIREMENTS FOR WATER AND SEWER.

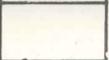
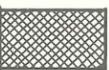
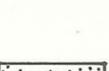
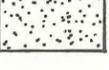
CHARLOTTE CENTRAL SCHOOL

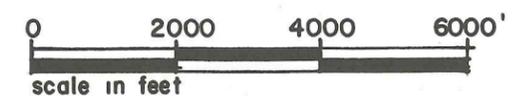
COMMERCIAL AREA

PEASE MT.
OWNED BY U.V.M.
PRESERVE AS OPEN SPACE

-  MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
-  AGRICULTURE
LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
CLUSTER DEVELOPMENTS
-  COMMERCIAL
-  LIGHT INDUSTRY
-  LAND IN PUBLIC OWNERSHIP
-  AREAS GENERALLY BEST SUITED FOR AGRICULTURE, VERY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL, FORESTRY, AND RECREATION. INCLUDES DRAINAGeways, MARSHLANDS, AND EXISTING WOODLANDS.
-  REGIONAL THOROUGHFARE
-  LOCAL THOROUGHFARE



-  AGRICULTURE
-  LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL CLUSTER DEVELOPMENTS
-  COMMERCIAL
-  LIGHT INDUSTRY
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-  REGIONAL THOROUGHFARE
-  LOCAL THOROUGHFARE



PREPARED BY CHARLOTTE PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 1969

CHARLOTTE VILLAGE
MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
AREA TO RETAIN VILLAGE
CHARACTER. SEWAGE DISPOSAL
POTENTIAL PROBLEM.

COMMERCIAL CENTER
FUTURE BANK, DRUG STORE,
LAUNDRY, TOWN OFFICES, ETC

LIGHT INDUSTRY

RECREATION CENTER

**PROPOSED SITE FOR
FUTURE SCHOOL**
TO SERVE CHARLOTTE
VILLAGE

LOW DENSITY AREA
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
RESIDENTIAL
CLUSTER DEVELOPMENTS

CAMPING

BEACH

**WILDLIFE
AREA**

PROPOSED STATE PARK
DEVELOP THIS AREA AS A
MULTIPLE-USE PARK IF
POSSIBLE.

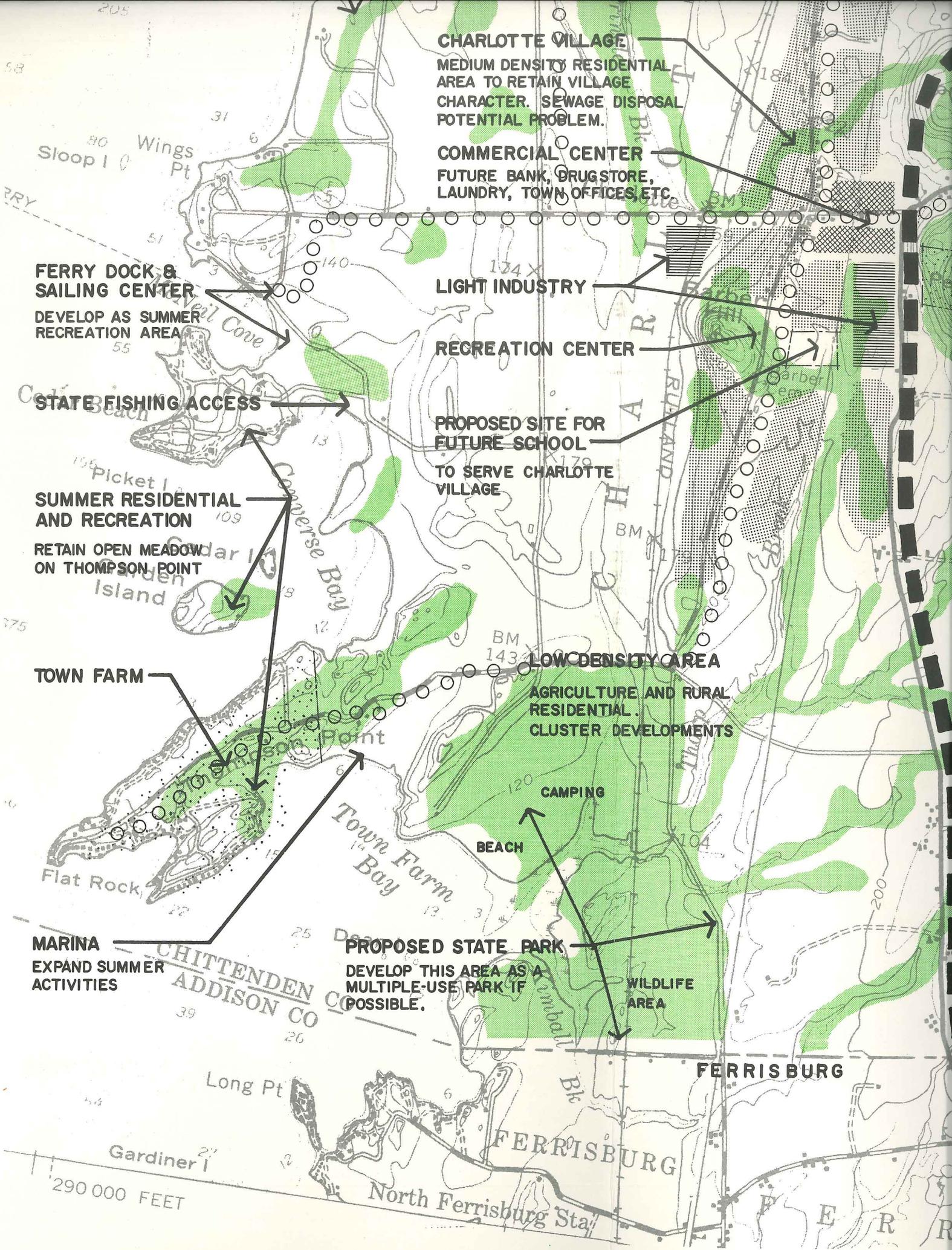
**FERRY DOCK &
SAILING CENTER**
DEVELOP AS SUMMER
RECREATION AREA

STATE FISHING ACCESS

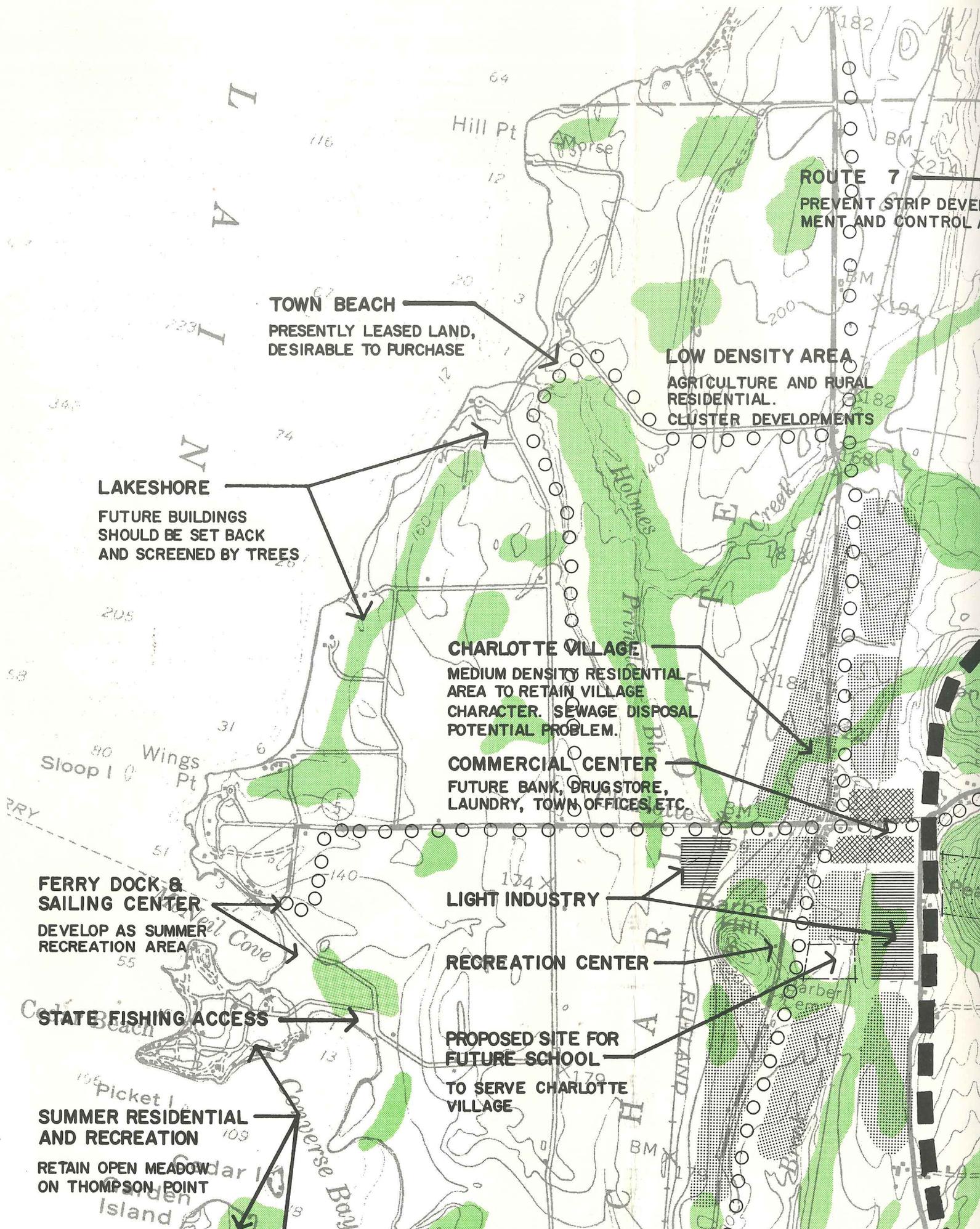
**SUMMER RESIDENTIAL
AND RECREATION**
RETAIN OPEN MEADOW
ON THOMPSON
ISLAND

TOWN FARM

MARINA
EXPAND SUMMER
ACTIVITIES



290 000 FEET



ROUTE 7
PREVENT STRIP DEVELOPMENT AND CONTROL AC

TOWN BEACH
PRESENTLY LEASED LAND,
DESIRABLE TO PURCHASE

LOW DENSITY AREA
AGRICULTURE AND RURAL
RESIDENTIAL.
CLUSTER DEVELOPMENTS

LAKESHORE
FUTURE BUILDINGS
SHOULD BE SET BACK
AND SCREENED BY TREES

CHARLOTTE VILLAGE
MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
AREA TO RETAIN VILLAGE
CHARACTER. SEWAGE DISPOSAL
POTENTIAL PROBLEM.

COMMERCIAL CENTER
FUTURE BANK, DRUG STORE,
LAUNDRY, TOWN OFFICES, ETC.

LIGHT INDUSTRY

RECREATION CENTER

**PROPOSED SITE FOR
FUTURE SCHOOL**
TO SERVE CHARLOTTE
VILLAGE

**FERRY DOCK &
SAILING CENTER**
DEVELOP AS SUMMER
RECREATION AREA

STATE FISHING ACCESS

**SUMMER RESIDENTIAL
AND RECREATION**
RETAIN OPEN MEADOW
ON THOMPSON POINT
ISLAND