



Town of Charlotte

ESTABLISHED 1762

September 25, 2020

Sheehan Green Homeowners' Assoc.
c/o Richard Stowe
242 Sheehan Green
Charlotte, VT 05445

Dear Mr. Stowe,

Thanks for your recent memo expressing concern about pending zoning bylaw and zoning district map changes for the East Charlotte Village Commercial District. I'm writing on behalf of the Planning Commission to respond to issues raised in your memo, and invite your participation in the upcoming public process for reviewing and voting upon these amendments.

With respect to your request for further studies and analysis of the potential impact of proposed zoning changes upon your neighborhood and East Charlotte Village in general, a few points:

- 1) As some of you know, in 2009 the town hired a consulting firm to work with area residents to conduct a comprehensive study and master plan for East Charlotte Village. LandWorks organized several public workshops and a site walk, conducted surveys, and produced a report documenting the results of this work, including a vision statement and a prioritized list of action items to achieve the planning goals identified for the East Charlotte Village by residents. Among the top ten action items which came out of this highly inclusive public process were these objectives for the Village center:
 - Develop commercial establishments like a coffee shop or pub
 - Plan for future housing that is affordable, attractive and walkable
 - Reconsider/redraw boundaries for village and commercial districts (integrate as mixed use commercial/residential district)

The final report of this planning project, completed and released in May 2010, is available on the town website, on the 'Planning Studies' page.

As a relative newcomer to this role, it's clear to me that the current round of proposed zoning changes is firmly grounded in this work. Adjusting our zoning framework for East Charlotte Village to permit higher densities is also clearly supported in the 2019 Town Plan, pages 1-28 and 1-29, adopted by vote of town residents, as referenced in the report attached to the draft zoning bylaw, and the Village Commercial zoning district map change that's currently under review. You will also find (on the East Charlotte Village 2019 study page) build-out analysis (re: housing units) of potential zoning changes. So, we believe the current proposals have been extensively studied for over 10 years, and have been fully vetted through several public processes before they reached this stage.

- 2) We are aware of long-standing concerns in the community about pedestrian safety and traffic flow at the village crossroads. Current conditions and challenges there have been extensively studied by staff at regional planning. Going forward, the Planning Commission would likely require traffic &

other impact studies in conjunction with any major development projects proposed for the East Village. The Commission can condition project approvals on developers making improvements such as pedestrian crossings and road improvements. That said, no such projects have been proposed yet. So, it's premature to insist that no zoning changes be considered until additional studies are done.

- 3) To that point, the Planning Commission's upcoming review and decision to advance these draft amendments is just the first step in a lengthy and detailed process of adopting changes to the Charlotte Land Use Regulations (LURs) and Town Plan, as regulated in state law (24 VSA §4441 and 4442). Required additional steps include:
- A public hearing during the October 1 Planning Commission meeting (duly warned)
 - Consideration of public input, with possible modifications of the draft based on comments
 - Planning Commission vote on the (possibly revised) draft at a future meeting. Adopted draft is then forwarded to the Selectboard for their consideration.
 - Selectboard must hold a public hearing on the PC's recommended draft.
 - Selectboard may also revise the draft based on public input at their hearing, or abandon it.
 - If they approve the draft, Selectboard votes to place the (possibly revised) draft on the town meeting ballot for consideration by voters at Town Meeting 2021.
 - The drafts can be debated at Town Meeting prior to the vote.

Thus, there are many upcoming opportunities for residents to weigh in and influence this process. The full text of all documents associated with this proposal are available online at: <http://bit.do/draft-LUR-updates>. This page will be updated with any changes, as drafts move through the public process. I would encourage you to read the materials on the project page, and follow the process. All town board meetings on these drafts will be duly warned, and are open to public participation.

- 4) Finally, it's important to note that the current draft does not anticipate or propose any changes to the East Charlotte Village boundaries, or applicable bylaws. Also, no changes are possible to the Open Space Agreement for the 50-acre parcel that you referenced. Members of the Commission believe the current zoning boundaries and bylaws for the East Charlotte Village are working well & do not feel it would be appropriate to change them, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary.

If you have such evidence, or would like to propose a change in those district boundaries, we welcome your input on that point. The Planning Commission would take that information into consideration for future updates to the LURs and zoning districts.

Again, we invite you to examine in detail the 2010 East Charlotte Village planning study, buildout analysis and the bylaw amendment and town plan proposals currently under consideration, and to follow the process and weigh in on the specific proposal as they make their way through the process.

Please contact me if you need hard copies of any of the materials referenced, or have any questions.

Sincerely,

Larry Lewack, Town Planner
Town of Charlotte
(802) 425-3533 ext. 206