July 2012 Newsletter

CVRPC Commissioners

Barre City - Michael Miller

Barre Town - Byron Atwood

Berlin - Robert Wernecke

Cabot - Richard Payne

Calais - Vacant

Duxbury - Vacant

East Montpelier -Tim Carver

Fayston - Vacant

Marshfield - Michael Schumacher

Middlesex - Ronald Krauth

Montpelier -Tina Ruth

Moretown - Vacant

Northfield - Arlington Supplee

Orange - George Malek

Plainfield - David Strong

Roxbury - Vacant

Waitsfield - Harrison Snapp

Warren - Don La Haye

Washington - Vacant

Waterbury - Gunner McCain

Williamstown - Larry Hebert

Woodbury - Janet Shatney

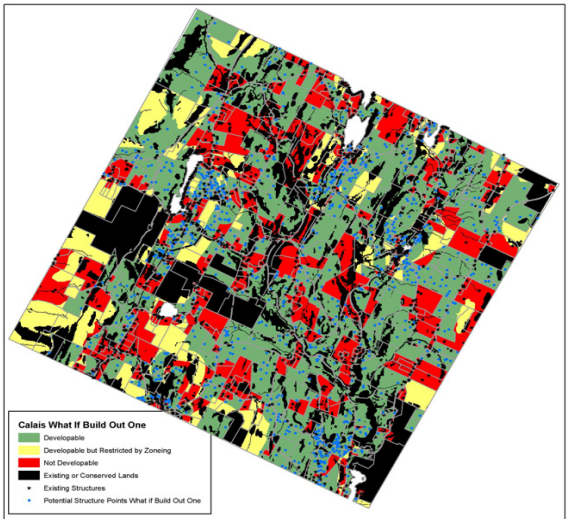
Worcester - Bill Arrand

Municipal Planning Grants

The FY 2013 Municipal Planning Grant applications are due; September 28. This funding is to promote community planning, revitalization, and development activities that will maintain Vermont's land use goal of compact settlements separated by rural lands.

E. Montpelier Village Study funded by a municipal planning grant

According to the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the funding agency, "Applications will be given priority for municipal plan updates or amendments that address a pressing need. Plan updates that occur mainly because the 5 year cycle is coming due will not be considered a funding priority." The maximum grant amount is $15,000, but applicants are required to provide a cash match for any grant amount above $8,000. Applicants requesting $8,000 or less will not require matching funds. Applications are submitted online and can be accessed at http://accd.gov. Confirmed municipalities can apply individually or as a consortium (maximum grant amount would then be $25,000) and municipal organizations other than the planning commission may apply, but only with prior approval of the planning commission and select board. Projects must be completed within 18 months of the award.

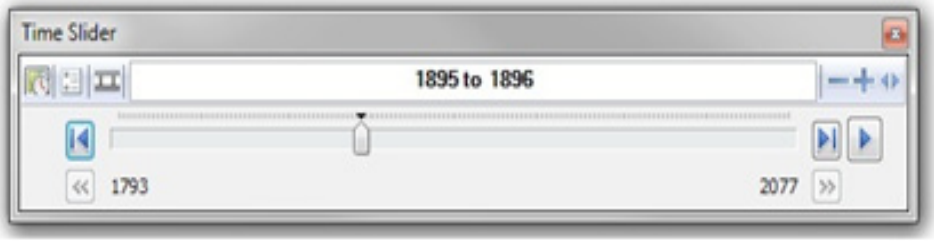


Calais Buildout Map funded by a municipal planning grant

Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission is here to assist you with the application, cost estimating, or most importantly, identifying a project that would benefit your town's planning process. Contact us at cvrpc@cvregion.com.

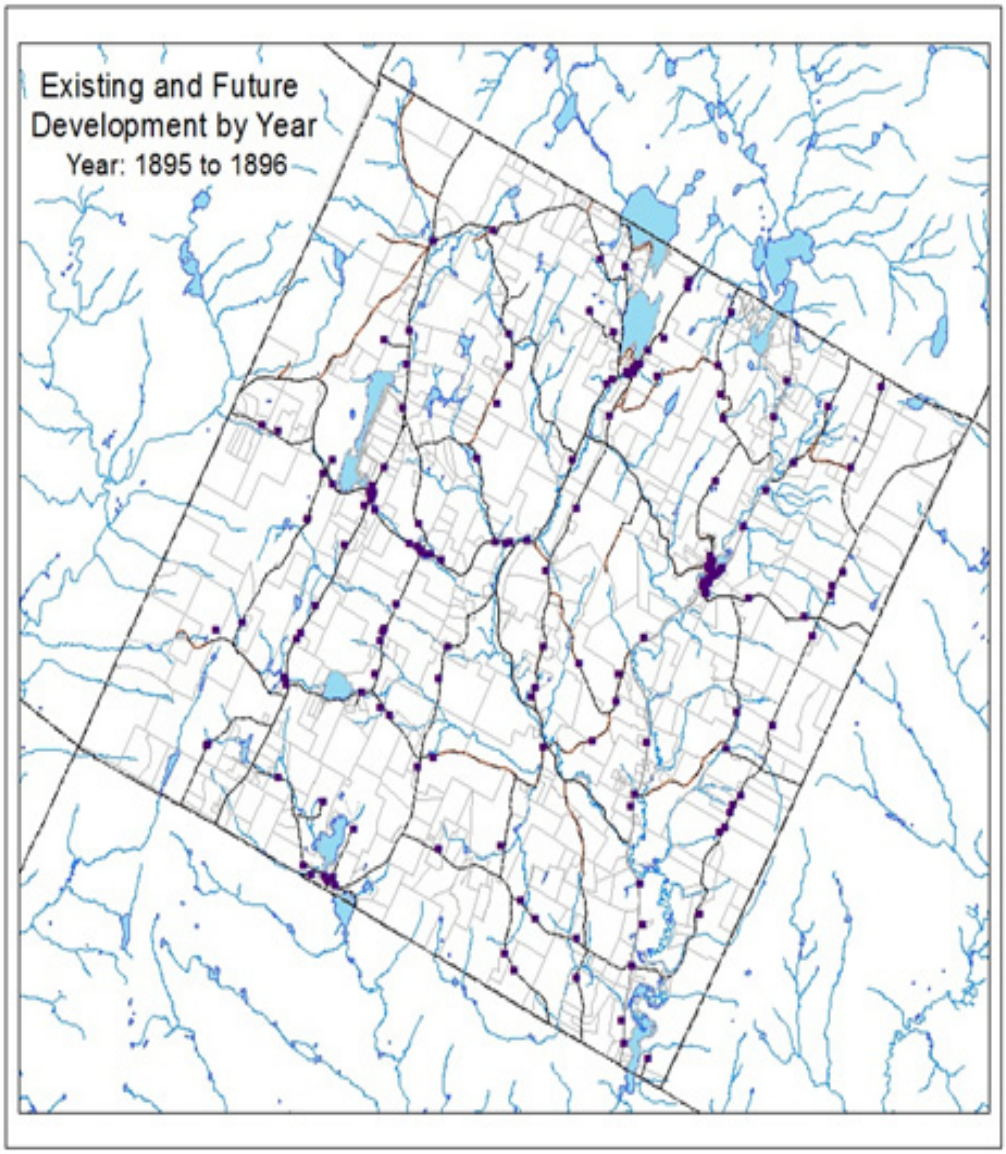
Calais Housing Growth Video

In 2007, CVRPC worked with the Town of Calais to develop a video that shows the growth of housing in Town. The Town provided CVRPC a list of houses constructed from 1792 to the present (2007 at the time of the original video) with address and year built. Using our mapping software, CVRPC GIS staff converted the address data to points and used the year built to animate the point data. The video then showed the progression of housing growth over time in Calais.



ArcGIS slider bar

In 2012, the Town requested an update to the original video. The update included the addition of new houses built in Town from 2007 to 2012 and the addition of the projected housing growth based on a Town wide build out analysis to the year 2077 (full build out under current zoning). With the addition of the new points and associated years, CVRPC reran the video to show the existing and future housing growth. The housing growth video animates every housing point by its year constructed and shows the total number of houses built up to that point in time. The updated video was utilized by the Town during their recent public meeting on proposed zoning changes.



Town of Calais Housing Growth Map

Land Use and Health: The Health Impact Assessment Tool

A healthy built environment is more than just cities and towns. The effect of land use on health has been acknowledged in the U.S. for almost a century. In 1926 the Supreme Court ruled that zoning could be used for the purpose of "public health, safety and welfare." Since then land use planning has played an important role in protecting people from industrial pollutants and unsanitary conditions that present serious health risks.

Morning commute & morning workout!

Today, though environmental hazards remain a critical issue, chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and Type 2 diabetes pose a far greater health risk to the population as a whole. Physical inactivity and poor diet, major risk factors for these diseases, are fueling the chronic disease epidemic.

Although we are faring better than many other states in the nation, Vermont is not immune to the obesity "epidemic." The Vermont Department of Health keeps statistics on obesity and the chronic diseases that result. The numbers are as follows:

- More than half (59 percent) of Vermont adults are overweight or obese; that equals 280,000 Vermont adults who are above a healthy weight.
- 22 percent of adults are obese weighing more than 30 pounds above a healthy weight.
- The prevalence of obesity among Vermont adults has doubled between 1990 and 2007.
- Annual medical expenses related to adult obesity in Vermont total about $141 million. (This is about the total spent on all transportation projects each year in Vermont.)

The good news is that local decision makers can have a positive impact on the chronic disease problem. A growing body of research from the transportation, planning and health fields tells us that the way we design and build our communities can encourage healthy behaviors such as exercise and good eating habits. There is much more to learn, but science is beginning to paint a picture of how community design can promote healthy lifestyles that might help reduce the chronic disease burden. A healthy, built environment includes high quality opportunities to live, work and play, and is the true partner to a healthy, natural environment.

Energy

Vermont's regional planning commissions and area organizations are working together to help develop strategies to move municipal energy audits towards actual implementation of weatherization projects. These strategies could include:

- organizing an energy forum for energy committees and town leaders that will address what's in your energy audit report and how to finance efficiency improvements;
- organizing an energy forum that addresses the new State Energy Plan and how towns can help achieve those goals through town plans and zoning;
- working with municipalities who have already developed their "short list" of weatherization projects and assist with coordination and outreach to residents and town officials; and
- developing a statewide inventory of municipal building audits that have been completed over the past two years to help establish baseline levels and track energy use and savings.

Final details of the strategies will be determined in the upcoming months. For additional information or if you have ideas regarding outreach and projects in your town, please contact CVRPC@cvregion.com.

The North Moretown Transportation Study

The intersection of US 2 – VT 100 is directly to the south of Waterbury Village, lies within a commercial zoning district of Moretown, and is adjacent to a village zoning district in Duxbury. As such, the surrounding area has enough development potential to significantly impact this regionally important intersection. The North Moretown Transportation Study presents a plan for improvements and provides a vision for the US 2 – VT 100 intersection in which all stakeholders can benefit. Under the guidance of a study committee comprised of VTrans and CVRPC staff, local representatives and stakeholders, the plan:

1. Provides a thorough review of existing conditions and resources;
2. Develops specific, detailed and cost effective improvement alternatives;
3. Makes reasoned estimates of existing and future intersection performance; and
4. Makes recommendations that improve safety and operations that are context-appropriate and take into account local plans and concerns.

Improvements are needed because:

- There is a lack of bicycle and pedestrian facilities at the intersection and that particularly impacts schoolchildren in the area.
- New development is proposed nearby that will impact the intersection operations.
- Delay for the VT 100 approach is unacceptable at certain times of the day.
- The offset alignment of Commercial Drive and the Juniper's Fare Restaurant driveway creates conflicts and safety issues.

Several alternatives were considered. A four-way stop was originally considered as a preliminary alternative, but was discarded after it didn't meet warrants and performed poorly in modeling analysis. Alternative 1 involves installing a traffic signal and realigning Commercial Drive. Also included are the base improvements of new crosswalks, sidewalks, and a green strip/landscape buffer which would require additional right-of-way width. Alternative 2 builds on Alternative 1 by adding a right-turn lane on eastbound US 2. Lastly, a roundabout was evaluated as Alternative 3.

Proposed Roundabout design at Route 2 & 100

This study's recommendations aim to provide a vision for the US 2 – VT 100 intersection and improve performance and safety. In particular, the study addresses:

- The lack of bicycle and pedestrian facilities at the intersection which particularly impacts schoolchildren in the area.
- Intersection performance, especially for the VT 100 approach.
- The offset alignment of Commercial Drive and the Juniper's Fare Restaurant driveway, which creates conflicts and safety issues.

Each of the three alternatives achieves this purpose, but the roundabout does so most effectively. The roundabout best addresses traffic performance, vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian safety, community character, and the potential to create a gateway. In the interim, adding pedestrian facilities such as pavement markings/crosswalk, signs, and other safety improvements would enhance safety at the intersection. It's also suggested that reducing speed limits be considered.

Enhanced Consultation

Over the past four months, CVPRC has performed enhanced consultations with 10 municipalities. Of the 10 communities, 7 communities were in the midst of updating their town plans with hopes of adopting a plan within the next 6 months to one year. Three towns had recently adopted an updated plan within the past year. The 10 communities that participated in the enhanced consultation process are: Barre Town, Berlin, Cabot, Fayston, Middlesex, Moretown, Waitsfield, Warren, Washington, and Waterbury.

Through the consultation process, several topics in all plans that could include stronger and more specific language were identified. One of the main topic areas was natural resource protection. Although the State provides data on wetlands, deeryards, prime agricultural soils, floodplains, water ways etc, towns are encouraged to identify additional areas that they would like to see protected and provide the criteria that would be used to determine the level of importance. This includes view sheds, ridgelines, mountain peaks, stream buffers, and historical resources not listed on historic registries. It was recommended that towns identify and highlight these additional areas to help direct new development away from these resources and instead to areas where the town would like to see development occur.

Another topic that can be strengthened is siting of renewable energy facilities. Although many towns have not yet encountered large scale renewable energy development, stronger language around specific scale and siting requirements and natural resource protection would aid developers and the Section 248 review board during the 248 process. Additionally, many towns asked for training regarding the Section 248 process and how the town plan is used during the 248 process.

The new economic development element is proving to be somewhat challenging for smaller, more rural towns with no central village or downtown area. Although these towns might not have a central business area, it is important to encourage the development of agricultural/forestry/natural resources based enterprises, as well as home-based businesses. Many of the rural communities have found that broadband technologies have helped spur the development of smaller home-based businesses.

CVRPC feels the enhanced consultation process is a positive experience for both the towns and CVRPC. Towns were open to the enhanced consultation review and that they found the feedback useful and beneficial. The enhanced consultation meeting helped inform and expand the dialogue between CVRPC and the towns, and set the stage for future opportunities for CVRPC to assist during the town plan update

process and implementation of town plan policies and projects. We look forward to working with your town to perform an enhanced consultation. For more details, please contact Jen Mojo at mojo@cvregion.com or Jackie Cassino at cassino@cvregion.com.

Front Porch Forum

Towns in the Region currently signed up with Front Porch Forum (FPF) include: Waitsfield, Warren, Fayston, Moretown, Calais, Worcester, Duxbury, Waterbury, East Montpelier, Cabot, and Middlesex. FPF is a moderated weekly digest that can include town government updates, lost and found, meeting schedules, group activity organization etc. More recently, FPF has proved to be a valuable tool for organizing volunteer efforts in towns affected by flooding from Tropical Storm Irene, as well as publishing meeting minutes and town-wide notices. For more information regarding Front Porch Forum or to learn how to enroll your town, please contact Jennifer at mojo@cvregion.com or visit www.frontporchforum.com.

front porch forum™

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