

**Town of Hinesburg**  
**Planning Commission**  
**Good Development Design Forum**  
**February 18, 2015**  
Approved 4-8-15

Present: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning) , Peter Erb (Zoning Administrator), Freeda Powers (Recording Secretary), Michael Wizenewski (Local Architect), Brian Wright (Architect from TN).

Planning Commissioners Present: Kyle Bostwick, Joe Iadanza, Maggie Gordon, Rolf Keilman, Russell Fox, Aaron Kimball. Absent: Dennis Place.

Public Present: Gill Coates, Maxamed Ibrahim, Jean & John Kiedaisch, Nancy Baker, Bill Stuono, Holly & David Pasackow, Bill Marks, Barbara Forauer, Rob Bast, Catherine Goldsmith, Meg Handler, Renae Marshall, Bill Maclay, Nancy Goodrich, Dorothy Penar, Anne Donegan, Ted Bloomhardt, George Dameron, Ray Mainer, Lenore Budd, Andrea Morgante.

Start: 7:15pm. The forum began with Alex W. explaining that here in Hinesburg, Vermont, planning happens at a local level and is reviewed roughly every 5 years. Over the last 10 years, Hinesburg's Town Plan has had some tweaks and changes, but it is now time for a gut-check on the vision. Surveys taken by over 400 respondents as well as consideration and feedback from many committees and partners at the local schools who have all given input is essential. We hope to have a draft of revisions by May or June at which time the Planning Commission will forward on their work to the Select Board. The Select Board then has their deliberative process. Ideally, the revised Town Plan will be adopted by the end of the year. Results of feedback and survey responses indicate management of growth and development is a top issue of concern. Having said that, we are going to hear tonight from two speakers about good development design and how we might achieve that through different approaches.

Michael Wizenewski, a local architect, spoke first. He spoke about the importance of local conditions influence on development. In Hinesburg's case, he said, this would mean paying attention to local waterways such as the LaPlatte and Patrick Brook as well as major state infrastructure such as Rte. 116. He encouraged people to consider the essential nature of green space, to consider a variety of sizes and shapes, consider efficient parking and strong streetscapes. He encouraged people to not fear large scale buildings and explained how by economic and energy measures, they can often be up to 30% better than small buildings. He encouraged a consideration for a mix of large and small buildings. He said phasing with a Master Plan works but said an inability to fund them through all of the phases can impact the final build out. He encouraged consideration for livability in terms of garden space, porches, etc. He lauded underground parking and encouraged attention to details with layering to facades, variety of materials, etc. He encouraged working towards integrating existing development and old structures with new development projects. He aims for design with definition; hardscapes, garden spaces, play areas all clearly defined. He encouraged consideration for some continuity and connection between buildings in larger projects.

His take-aways, he said, were this: Varied and defined spaces, usable space, detail, variety of scale, and ultimately, he said, seek developers with passion to get what you desire.

Nancy Baker spoke from the audience, asking about the cost of underground parking and Michael W. said that even with underground parking, most large buildings are still more economical.

John Kiedaisch spoke from the audience, asking about the local density of the Creekside neighborhood and also asking about building height limits. Alex W. explained that when considering the density of projects like Creekside it is important to remember to consider the take-outs of no developed land. Michael W. said the height limitation of 35' has always bothered and confused him. There are some allowances up to 41' with affordable housing projects. Kyle B. said he thought the 35' limitation had a tie to fire safety. Michael W. said he felt that was unlikely the sole reason for the limit as sprinkler systems are required in structures over 4 stories.

Bill Marks spoke from the audience about energy efficiency in design. Michael W. said the cost to developers to heat their larger scale projects and buildings encouraged the increase in interest towards building more energy efficient structures.

Rolf Keilman spoke from the audience, saying infill can increase density without dominating the streetscape.

Alex W. asked about green space and how to determine the required amount of green space in large scale projects with multiunit structures. Michael W. said in the projects that he has worked on this has not been part of the discussion; there is naturally an increase in available green space on projects which chose to implement underground parking which he highly favors.

\*\*\*\* spoke from the audience, encouraging regulations which incentivize tenants and residents to achieve the goals of the town and project when considering such things as recycling, garden use, energy efficiency, etc. Also, he said, the height limitation varies and is not always serving the goals of the community and should be re-examined.

Brian Wright spoke next. He does a lot of Master Planning for municipalities and some work with private developers as well. He said it is important to remember that good design is up to the locals— You! If what you get isn't equivalent to what you lost, people oppose through zoning. He encourages towns to not lose the neighborhood they already have. He explained briefly use-based zoning, which is what Hinesburg zoning implements and form-based zoning, something he works to help towns implement.

He said remember; traffic problems are development problems. Also, he said, we should question the regulations that infrastructure be built to worst case scenarios (i.e., 500 yr. floods). He encouraged reconsideration for what we once prized; narrow roads, on-street parking, and slow streets. He urged caution around the language of "open space" which he said is often development code for "leftover space" and encouraged a refocus of that space to reclaim its spot as the heart of a village, the local park where parades begin, farmers markets are held, etc. He encouraged use of clear definitions to get what you truly want.

Brian W. encouraged a refocus on landscaping potential, saying consider instead edible landscaping as a way to incorporate some aspect of agriculture that the area is known for.

Key principles in his view are: walkability, mixed-use, compact, diverse design. He encouraged consideration for the term *walkability* as it should mean getting you to a destination; connectivity. Mixed-use, he said, doesn't mean *urban*. Compact development, he said, encourages us to consider multi-story structures and asks us to think in terms of stories vs. feet. Diverse development, he said, includes consideration towards a diverse mix of people, ages, etc. with a variety of housing types to serve them all.

Form-based code, he said, is character-based. It sets agreed upon parameters while allowing flexibility for architects. It is objective, offers a range of options, is efficient in its use of land and allows for a mix of uses. This acts to also increase property rights and preserves what you love.

Lenore Budd spoke from the audience, asking how to integrate national chain stores' designs into an existing area. Brian W. said the chain stores will deviate from their "standard design" and encouraged the Town to remain steadfast in its desire.

Nancy Baker spoke from the audience, asking Brian W. who hires him and his firm. He said often they get jobs through requests for proposals and sometimes directly from municipalities. On occasion, they are also contacted by landowners. Alex W. asked about the cost. Brian W. said that state grants are typically not enough; the cost is around \$150,000.

John Kiedaisch asked about the book referenced in Brian's slide presentation. The book was called "Anatomy of a Village" by Thomas Sharpe.

Peter Erb spoke from the audience, saying the new growth in Hinesburg is happening quickly and large projects being considered now are likely locked into current zoning. How to address this and improve our results. Brian W. said that is a great question. There is only so much you can do with current zoning. You *can* however, inspire developers before you to do something better. Educate them, incentivize them.

Nancy Baker spoke again from the audience, saying the density and scale of a rural area is different from that of a city; how to keep the rural character? Brian W. said form-based development contains the essence of addressing those concerns.

Catherine Goldsmith asked if anyone can do form-based code. Brian W. said no, because so much goes into it. Andrea Morgante spoke from the audience, commenting on times' influence on our perception of change. Brian W. said indeed, a vision gains momentum. However, he said, time can be your friend, with proper planning.

Peter Erb asked about Home Owners Associations' and their ability to "overlay" their rules. How to keep flexibility with those associations? Brian W. said covenants and restrictions should always be reviewed by the Town.

Rolf K. spoke from the audience, saying it seems the process of character identification takes time and money. Brian W. said pretty quickly, actually, less than a year.

The forum adjourned at \*\*\*\*\*pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Freedra Powers, Recording Secretary