

Hinesburg Conservation Commission

June 2, 2014

Dear Members of the Development Review Board,

The Conservation Commission submits the following remarks for the Development Review Board's (DRB) consideration as you deliberate the Haystack Crossings revised sketch plans.

The Conservation Commission is concerned about the impact this development will have on increased traffic and motor-vehicle usage within Hinesburg. If Hinesburg wishes to create a more vibrant, economically competitive, and environmentally sustainable Village community, innovative transportation solutions as a component of development are necessary. We believe that creating such a Village community is within the intent of sections 3.1 and 3.6 of the current Zoning Regulations.

Incorporating innovative approaches to transportation in the development can allow for more multi-family and affordable housing options, making the Haystack Crossings development truly mixed-used and not too heavily concentrated on single-family residential dwellings. Diverse transportation options can connect workers to jobs, improve the quality of our air, and provide real savings for real people. In addition, public and other transit options also play a key role in creating a livable community, providing mobility for those who cannot or choose not to drive. With the incorporation of senior housing building in the plan, there is an even stronger argument to ensure that there are options for local transportation. While automobile transportation will continue to remain important for communities, other options must be made available, particularly so older residents who no longer drive their cars can maintain their independence and quality of life.

We strongly urge the DRB to consider the following regarding this development: 1) How has the sketch plan considered the potential for enhancing any existing transit facilities near the development? 2) Does the development have potential for new transit facilities or services? 3) What has been incorporated into the development design to date that works to better integrate transportation with the commercial and residential uses of land within the Village, as well as with the surrounding greater Burlington community? In order to create more affordable living options, reduce impervious parking lots devoted to motor vehicles (and thereby freeing up space for other uses), incentivize alternative forms of transportation, and reduce the development's impact on the already challenging traffic situation in Hinesburg, the applicant should consider a diverse array of transit options, e.g., ride sharing programs (motor vehicle and bike), dial-a-ride programs, shuttles, public transit, bike paths and walking paths (sections 6.11.1 and 6.12.4 (5) of the Subdivision Regulations support the facilitation of pedestrian and non-motorized transportation), reserved parking for low emission, hybrid, and electric vehicles, etc.

As the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development notes, there are real benefits to fostering development that incorporates transit diversity as a focal point. Transit oriented development provides "people of all ages and incomes with improved access to transportation and housing choices, and reduced transportation costs that reduce the negative impacts of automobile travel on the environment

and the economy.”¹ By failing to recognize and promote mixed-use development opportunities that include mixed transit activity, communities fail to capitalize on a key opportunity for achieving sustainable development.

The Commission is available and happy to meet with the DRB to discuss the above considerations further.

Thank you.
Sincerely,

Members of the Hinesburg Conservation Commission

¹ Strauss, Leslie. “What Does the Push for Transit Oriented Development Mean For Rural Areas?” Housing Assistance Council (HAC). Web. February 14, 2013. Access May 29, 2014.
<http://www.rooflines.org/3078/what_does_the_push_for_transit_oriented_development_mean_for_rural_areas/>