

Memo

To: Williston Selectboard
From: Matt Boulanger, Director of Planning
Cc: Erik Wells, Town Manager
Date: September 29, 2022
Re: **Taft Corners Form-Based Code: Public Hearing to Consider Taft Corners Form-Based Code, Official map, and Bylaw Amendments**



OVERVIEW

This memo discusses the procedures for the Selectboard to hold a public hearing and to consider adoption of a new Form-Based Code Overlay District for Taft Corners (TCFBC), new townwide Official Map, and associated amendments to the Williston Unified Development Bylaw (WDB) made necessary by these additions.

HISTORY

Following extensive work with a consultant team beginning in the Fall of 2020, intensive public outreach and a weeklong design charette in Spring of 2021, and the Selectboard's review and endorsement of the Taft Corners Vision Plan in July of 2021, the Williston Planning Commission, planning staff and consultant team developed an initial version of the proposed zoning changes. At its meeting of March 15, 2022, following several public hearings, the Planning Commission voted to transmit its final draft to the Selectboard for consideration. After several public meetings on the matter, the Selectboard held an initial public hearing on July 5, 2022.

Following further discussion at its July 19, August 23 and September 6 meetings and Selectboard consensus on substantive changes to the draft TCFBC, Map, and WDB changes, the Selectboard directed staff to warn a public hearing on adoption of an altered proposal.

PURPOSE

The purpose public hearing tonight, October 4, 2022, is for the Selectboard to take public testimony and consider the adoption of the altered draft. Because this draft contains substantive changes from the draft considered by the Selectboard at its July 5, 2022 public hearing, a new public hearing and the submission of a new Bylaw Report from the Planning Commission (attached) are required¹.

CHANGES TO THE ORIGINAL PLANNING COMMISSION TRANSMITTAL

The hearing draft under consideration contains the following changes:

Building Height

- In addition to existing limits on building height based on number and height of stories and roof pitch, add an absolute height limit of 87 feet above the clear sidewalk in all Building form Areas in the proposed TCFBC.

Taft Corners Form-Based Code Overlay District:

- Change the northeastern boundary to remove approximately 58 acres comprised primarily of the lands proposed for the residential mixed-use project known as The Annex, currently vested under the WDB as it existed before consideration of the TCFBC

¹ 24 V.S.A. 4442(b) "If the legislative body at any time makes substantial changes in the concept, meaning, or extent of the proposed bylaw, amendment, or repeal, it shall warn a new public hearing or hearings under subsection (a) of this section. If any part of the proposal is changed, the legislative body at least 10 days prior to the hearing shall file a copy of the changed proposal with the clerk of the municipality and with the planning commission. The planning commission shall amend the report prepared pursuant to subsection 4441(c) of this title to reflect the changes made by the legislative body and shall submit that amended report to the legislative body at or prior to the public hearing."

- Change the southwestern boundary from the edge of Harvest Lane and Future Depot Street to a line 150 feet south of Marshall Avenue, removing approximately 35 acres from the TCFB

Official Map

- Alter the Official Map to contain specific street requirements and proposed open spaces to the area within the revised TCFBC boundary, showing generalized desired street connections outside the boundary where TCFBC streets were shown before.

Bylaw Amendments:

- Generally, amend chapters 1-9, 11,13-20, 22-26, 30, 32, 34, 37, 38,41, 44-46 and Appendices A-J to reflect changes imposed by the adoption of the TCFBC standards and procedures. Changes in boundaries as discussed above required changes to chapters 11,30,32,34,37,38,41, and 44-46: the chapters related to individual zoning districts, growth management allocation areas and procedures, impact fees, and definitions.

PROCESS

Should the Selectboard close the public hearing, they can consider taking a vote for adoption at a meeting following the hearing. The meeting may take place following the closure of the hearing on the same date, or at a later Selectboard meeting².

Attachments:

Updated Bylaw Report

² 24 V.S.A §4442 (c)(1) "A bylaw, bylaw amendment, or bylaw repeal shall be adopted by a majority of the members of the legislative body at a meeting that is held after the final public hearing, and shall be effective 21 days after adoption unless, by action of the legislative body, the bylaw, bylaw amendment, or bylaw repeal is warned for adoption by the municipality by Australian ballot at a special or regular meeting of the municipality."

Town of Williston, Vermont

**7900 Williston Road
Williston, VT 05495**

**Planning Commission Reporting Form
for Municipal Bylaw Amendments
Updated Version of Proposed Taft Corners Form-Based Code Overlay District,
Official Map, and Unified Development Bylaw Amendments**

This updated Report is submitted by the Williston Planning Commission to the Williston Selectboard in advance of the Selectboard’s new warned public hearing on October 4, 2022. The hearing will be for the purpose of considering a revised version of the above-referenced documents, wherein the Selectboard has made substantive changes, including placing additional limitations on maximum building height, altering the boundary of the proposed Form-Based Code Overlay District, and making amendments in the Overlay District and Zoning Bylaw Amendments text necessitated by the boundary changes. While these changes are substantive pursuant to 24.V.S.A §4442, the statements below, originally drafted for the Planning Commission’s first public hearing on the matter, remain unaltered.

The Town of Williston, Vermont is proposing changes to the town’s development regulations contained in the *Williston Unified Development Bylaw*. This report summarizes the proposed changes to the chapters of the *Unified Development Bylaw* being considered.

This report is in accordance with 24 V.S.A. §4441 (c) which states:

“When considering an amendment to a bylaw, the planning commission shall prepare and approve a written report on the proposal. A single report may be prepared so as to satisfy the requirements of this subsection concerning bylaw amendments and subsection 4384(c) of this title concerning plan amendments..... The report shall provide (:)

a) brief explanation of the proposed bylaw, amendment, or repeal andinclude a statement of purpose as required for notice under section §4444 of this title.

The Town of Williston is considering the adoption of a Form-Based Code to implement a Vision Plan developed through a public process. The proposed Form-Based Code focuses on community character, through an emphasis on development character, intensity, and physical form and patterns, rather than solely on land uses. This code emphasizes the relationship between private development and the public realm to promote an overall sense of place within Taft Corners while allowing a wide variety of land uses. Taft Corners is intended to be a model of sustainability, employing smart planning and technologies for solar gain and generation, storm- water management and enabling transportation alternatives to the automobile. The Taft Corners FBC regulations establish requirements related to form, character and design that will promote compatible redevelopment and create an environment where people can live, work, learn, worship, and relax within a compact walkable setting.

The Vermont Planning Information Center defines an Official Map as a “powerful tool available to Vermont municipalities to control community design by identifying the locations of future public facilities. The map—which can show future street alignments, planned trails, sites reserved for public buildings, and areas reserved for stormwater and flood control—provides a clear picture to property owners, developers, and the public of the municipality’s intentions with regard to its future physical form and design.”

The Town of Williston is considering the adoption of an Official Map to 1) identify and locate desired facilities in a systematic manner and 2) provide the regulatory means to develop these facilities as mapped.

Improving the transportation system, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and public transit, has been a longstanding high priority in Williston. Williston has multiple geographically disconnected nodes of residential, commercial and mixed-use development that are not yet connected by multi-use paths, sidewalks, trails, or in some cases, streets. Connecting these places within the Town will increase livability and provide additional options for multimodal travel.

The adoption of a Form Based Code and Official Map concurrently will help to achieve complementary goals of making Taft Corners a more vibrant, pedestrian friendly, and people-oriented place, while supporting the development of facilities throughout town that will enhance multimodal connections.

Amendments are also proposed for various chapters in the bylaw to reference and incorporate the Form Based Code and Official Map to ensure consistency with these proposed elements. The Official Zoning Map will be amended to include the boundary of the Taft Corners Form Based Code Overlay District.

b) and shall include findings regarding how the proposal:

1. Conforms with or furthers the goals and policies contained in the municipal plan, including the effect of the proposal on the availability of safe and affordable housing:

The proposed amendments further the goals of the Williston Comprehensive Plan to:

- **3.1 – Taft Corners and Growth Center.** The Town of Williston will encourage and support a design-conscious, pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use development and redevelopment pattern in the Taft Corners area. The town has worked toward this objective by successfully obtaining Growth Center Designation in 2008 and revising the Unified Development Bylaw in 2009. The town envisions the majority of new growth and development activity taking place in the Growth Center. The town will continue to support this objective by encouraging the construction of planned infrastructure in the Growth Center, concentrating new development in the Growth Center, and examining and monitoring the effectiveness of its bylaws
- **3.1.1 Work with Developers to Build Grid Streets.** Williston will support and encourage landowners to build the grid streets that have been planned for the Taft Corners area west of route 2A between Marshall Avenue and Williston Road...These streets will provide the access needed for a more intense, bicycle and pedestrian-friendly

development pattern. They should also help relieve congestion on Route 2A and Marshall Avenue.

- **3.1.3 Commercial Zoning Districts. Taft Corners** – The Taft Corners Zoning District (TCZD) is the core of Williston’s commercial area – the place where the town’s goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly, design conscious, mixed use commercial center can best be realized. Coupled with the construction of the grid streets, this will allow diverse, smaller-scale retail, office, and residential uses to be intermingled with the large retail stores and extensive parking areas that now dominate the area.
- **3.1.4 Review and Refine Development Standards in the Zoning Districts within the Town’s Growth Center.** ...The town should evaluate the effectiveness of these standards thus far based on current experience and consider refining these standards further if necessary....
- **3.1.5 Consider Developing and Adopting a Form Based Code.** ...The town should consider making greater use of form-based techniques in the Growth Center as a means of refining the town’s current development standards...
- **4.2.3 Minimize the Surface Area Devoted to Parking.** The town will continue to require adequate parking and to require shared parking where feasible to create “park once” conditions in the growth center.
- **4.2.4 Continue to Minimize the Visual Impact of Parking.** Asphalt and automobiles should not dominate Williston streetscapes. The design guidelines will continue to require that parking be placed behind or beside buildings wherever the site permits.
- **4.4.3 Refine the Requirements for Urban Parks.** The town will examine the effectiveness of the current requirements for urban parks and will revise these requirements as necessary...
- **5.1.6 Encourage Higher Density Residential Development in the Town’s Approved Growth Center.**
- **6.1.2.1 Build the Paths Supported by the Bond Issue.** ...The town should periodically review the identified needs and gaps in the path system, and establish priorities in order to continue to vigorously pursue grant opportunities to supplement these funds and continue to build out the town’s multi-use path network.
- **6.1.2.2 Build Other Sidewalks and Paths, as Needed.**
- **6.1.2.5 Link Recreation Paths and Trails to Sidewalk Network.** The town’s recreation paths and trails should be tied to paths and trails in the town and region designed primarily for transportation.

- **6.1.2.7 Build Paths in New Developments.** New development projects, especially those in the town’s Growth Center, should continue to include requirements for pedestrian and non-motorized transportation facilities with these projects.
- **6.1.3.2 Continue to Promote Construction of Ride Sharing Facilities.**
- **6.1.3.3 Build a Transit Center.** Williston requires a conveniently located, comprehensive, and central transfer station that would allow riders to easily connect between these various bus lines, provide options and facilities for riders from all transportation modes to access the center, and provide shelter for users during waiting periods. A comprehensive transit center such as this would best be located in the town’s designated Growth Center in the Taft Corners area where high intensity development already exists and is anticipated in the future, and where the existing bus lines through Williston intersect.
- **6.4.1 Connect Marshall Avenue and Williston Road (Trader Lane). Extend Wright Avenue West to Harvest Lane.** Working with landowners to build these grid streets in the Taft Corners area (see Map 3 – Taft Corners Grid Streets) will provide better access and relieve congestion. It may also alleviate the need for improvements at the intersection of Route 2A and Marshall Avenue...
- **6.4.6 Build Other Taft Corners Grid Streets.** ...Other grid streets in the Taft Corners area, including those linking the properties to the east to Maple Tree Place should be constructed as development proceeds.
- **6.6.1 Continue to Require Developers to Provide Local Streets and Bicycle and Pedestrian Ways.**
- **7.4 – Support Additional Affordable Housing.** ...The town will also explore other means of promoting the provision of more diverse, more affordable housing.
- **11.3.5 Encourage Walking, Cycling, Ride-Sharing and the Use of Public Transportation.** ...provide the infrastructure needed to support pedestrians, cyclists, and public transportation. Planning objectives should support grid streets and pedestrian friendly developments...
- **11.4 – Energy Conservation and Efficiency through Land Use** - The Town of Williston will continue to pursue a land use and transportation strategy centered on mixed-use, compact development in the town’s Growth Center.

2. Is compatible with the proposed future land uses and densities of the municipal plan:

The proposed amendments are supported by Williston’s stated vision for the future:

Williston will strive to balance responsible, livable suburban growth with rural character and conservation. To do this, the town will concentrate and limit high intensity development to areas within the town's designated Growth Center in and around Taft Corners.

The Comprehensive Plan Section 3.1 states the goal to concentrate the majority of new development in the Growth Center:

The town envisions the majority of new growth and development activity taking place in the Growth Center. The town will continue to support this objective by encouraging the construction of planned infrastructure in the Growth Center, concentrating new development in the Growth Center, and examining and monitoring the effectiveness of its bylaws. The town has worked toward this objective by successfully obtaining Growth Center Designation in 2008 and revising the Unified Development Bylaw in 2009.

The adoption of Form Based Code for Taft Corners supports the goal of more dense development in the Growth Center by reducing parking requirements and encouraging multi-story buildings for new development.

3. Carries out, as applicable, any specific proposals for any planned community facilities.

The adoption of Form Based Code and an Official Map would establish a regulatory framework for building out desired grid streets and facilities in the Growth Center – Trader Lane, Wright Avenue and a transit center are called out specifically in the Comprehensive Plan and are shown on the proposed Regulating Plan and Official Map. The grid streets on the Regulating Plan would be required to be constructed as parcels build out. The Official Map ensures that other facilities likely to be built by the town, such as a transit center, must be accommodated by future development.