Strengthening Vermont Communities through Neighborhood Development

VERMONT NEIGHBORHOODS PROJECT PARTNERS:

NANCY NYE, CONSULTING, INC.

VERMONT FORUM ON SPRAWL

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HOUSING VERMONT

THE HARTLAND GROUP

NANCY NYE, CONSULTING, INC.

Vermont Housing Finance Agency
The Project
Vermont Neighborhoods Project encourages neighborhood development that fosters vibrant communities, helps alleviate Vermont’s housing shortage and protects the environment.

Initial Project Communities
Middlebury • Shoreham • Vergennes
Project partners worked successfully in three Addison County communities to create financially feasible neighborhood site design plans for three parcels of land within, or adjacent to, the community centers. Partners developed the plans through a series of public design meetings. Project partners continue to serve as a resource to Middlebury, Shoreham and Vergennes as these communities decide how to proceed in developing these parcels.

Project Activities
The Vermont Neighborhoods Project is sharing the valuable lessons of this work, and provides training and resources to promote this type of housing development in Vermont. The Project works with members of the housing community to explore how Vermont can create more smart growth developments.

Statewide Workshop
The Project will organize and host “New Directions for Vermont Neighborhoods,” a statewide conference working with housing developers, planners, municipal officials and lending institutions on strategies for making neighborhood development a reality.

Statewide Roadshow
The Project meets with community leaders, municipal officials, citizens and local groups around the state to engage them on smart growth principles and specific neighborhood designs.

“The Vermont Forum on Sprawl encouraged communication, which brought about a concise vision for housing in Shoreham village.”—HEIDI LANPHER, Member, Shoreham Selectboard

Shoreham

Neighborhood Design Concept
The overall concept for the Shoreham site is to complete the definition of the village commons on the south side, with a public edge and houses facing the green, in the traditional New England vocabulary. Two alternatives were developed for the Shoreham site. One provides for the development of five new single-family houses on lots that are approximately 75 feet wide plus a five-unit cottage cluster, providing an option for more affordable housing. Simple gabled houses face onto the street, sidewalk and Commons. Front setbacks are reduced from the 60 feet required by the zoning to no more than 20 feet in order to provide a sociable distance between the porch, sidewalk, street and green space.

As illustrated in the diagrams below, housing may initially be developed as a basic house with a detached carriage/barn building behind the main house. Over time, an attached “ell” building can be added to the house for additional living space. Upper floor space in the carriage barn can also be finished for a separate “in law apartment”, home office space or additional living space.
Neighborhood Design Concept  The guiding concepts for the Middlebury site are preservation of the Otter Creek open space corridor and providing a good “fit” between neighboring Seymour Street houses and Otterside condominiums.

The site plan provides 44 new homes in a range of housing types. Single-family attached housing is accommodated in two-unit buildings that reference traditional barn and connected village-housing models. The barn buildings face the community gardens and open spaces, creating an intimate and sociable gathering place for neighbors. Parking is accommodated behind the main buildings in garages with upper floor carriage units. The plan also includes cottage clusters behind the carriage units.

“The plans they showed me are nothing short of exquisite. They really hit the nail on the head. My hope is this will be the first of many projects like this.”—LOU COLASANTI, Developer and Owner, Middlebury parcel
Vergennes

Neighborhood Design Concept  The 114-acre Vergennes site is located on the edge of town set between single-family and multi-family housing on one side and open fields on the other. The strategy for the site is to cluster the development next to the existing development and maintain a majority of the site in open space. The plan provides for the development of a new neighborhood of 59 homes on approximately 15 acres (including the park) of the site, leaving almost 100 acres in open space.

The new neighborhood is organized around a central open space, which allows views east to Otter Creek and beyond. A mix of houses and cottages face onto the green, and attached condominium units anchor the west end of the green. A large community garden is provided at the edge of the neighborhood facing the surrounding fields, providing for broad views east to the Green Mountains. The neighborhood is laced with pedestrian-friendly streets that link trail connections from the neighborhood to surrounding open space and Otter Creek. The plan envisions the barn on the property to be renovated as a farm stand with the possibility of other commercial uses, such as a day care, small store and/or small office space.

At the urging of the community, a diverse mix of housing was planned for this site: single-family detached housing, cottage clusters and attached condominium housing. Like the Shoreham houses, the single-family houses have the potential to be expanded over time to suit the needs of an individual homebuyer. Similarly there is a variety of open space envisioned on the site, including a neighborhood park, a community garden and larger natural and agricultural open space.

“We want housing in Vergennes that fits in with the character of the community. These designs are a great tool for showing the community how that can happen.” —DAVE AUSTIN, Chairman, Vergennes Planning Commission