TAFT CORNERS
Williston, Vermont

Vision Plan created by the Residents of Williston

with assistance from the Consultant Team, the Town of Williston and the
Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission,

April 24th through May 3rd, 2021

HANDS-ON DESIGN WORKSHOP REPORT
Since at least 1990 the Town Plan has contained a steady drumbeat: make Taft Corners a “vibrant, mixed use downtown area with a strong pedestrian orientation.”
This is the initial draft of the Williston Community Vision Plan for Taft Corners. An *Agreed Upon Community Vision Plan* will serve as the foundation for new Form-Based Zoning (development regulations to implement the Community Vision). This will set Taft Corners on the road to becoming the “vibrant, mixed use downtown area with the strong pedestrian orientation” the Town has wanted for decades, while alleviating development pressures on the surrounding natural landscape.

The workshop process undertaken in the spring of 2021 reaffirmed the residents’ aspirations for such a place. The Vision Plan is specific in certain aspects: an interconnected network of pedestrian-oriented, tree-lined streets with wide sidewalks and on-street parallel parking, lined with multi-story (typically 3 to 4 stories) buildings that front and engage the street and sidewalk. The building functions will, overall, be mixed-use with loading and on-site parking set behind the buildings. Taft Corners will have frequent public greens and squares connected to surrounding parks and natural areas.
Contents
Invitation/Introduction 5
Context & Foundations 6
Existing Conditions 7
The Planning Process 8
Public Kick-Off Meeting 9
Hands-On Design 11
Workshop Week 11
What the Citizens Said 12
Work-In-Progress Presentation 14
The Vision Plan: 16
Step One: 17
Step Two: 25
Overarching Issues 34
Street-Spaces 35
Economic Report 43
Parking 45
Storm-Water 46
Building Height 47
Act 250 49
Step 2070 51
Phasing Management 52
Appendix 54

Acknowledgements
Town of Williston
Matt Boulanger, Planning Dir. & Zoning Administrator
Emily Heymann, Planner
Melinda Scott, Senior Planner
Bonnie Woodford, Planning Tech
Erik Wells, Town Manager
Shirley Goodell-Lackey, Fin Dir.
Aaron Collette, Fire Chief
Bruce Hoar, Dir. Public Works

Lisa Schaeffler, Assist Dir. of Public Works
Christine Dougherty, Stormwater Coordinator

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission
Taylor Newton
Regina Mahony
Christine Forde
Eleni Churchill
Jason Charest

Consultant Team - Geoffrey Ferrell Associates
Geoffrey Ferrell Associates
Geoff Ferrell
Common Ground Design
Keith Covington
Falango Design Studio
Justin Falango
Partners for Economic Solutions
Anita Morrison
TND Engineering
Rick Chellman
Dreher Design
Paul Dreher
Peter Hudson
Urban Advantage
Steve Price

Citizen Planners (Participants)
(from sign-ins, interviews) Carole, Aaron Collette, Adam Winter, Al Senecal, Alex Daley, Alex Judge, Alyssa Hill, Andrew LaMar, Anne D, Area70 DCM11, Aurie BER, Autumn Barnett, Barb Giardi, Barbara Chausse, Bill West, Bonnie Woodford, Bradley Falco, Brian and Sonya Worth, Brian Bertsch, Carl Runge, Carol Burbank, Carolyn Weaver, Carrie Williams Howe, Cate Lamar, Chapin Kaynor, Charlie Magill, Chelsea Levis, Chris Snyder, crystal, Dave, Dave Turner, David Howell, Deb Forcier, Deb MacDonald, Deni, Debra Goller, Diane Dumas, Dina Marinelli-VanderVeen, Donna Roesser, Emily Clouatre, Emily Morton, Eric Howe, Erik Wells, Erin Leong, Gail Heppner, Ginny McGinn, Grace Suga, Hana, Hans Buehler, Isabelle Doris, Jan Shanks, Jared Leonard, Jason, Jay Petrillo, Jean, Jean-Marie Clark, Jeff Fehrs, Jeff Davis, Jeff Nick, Jenn Townley, Jennifer Hoag, Jenny Olson, Jim Thornton, Jimmy Turnpike, Jo Conant, Joanna Lemieux, Joe Duncan, John Butterfield, John Hemmelgarn, John Marcotte, Jonathan Levis, Jude Hersey, Karen Fragnoli-Munn, Katie Devitt, Kevin Mazuzan, Kevin Thorley, Kimberly Hornung-Marcy, Kyle Sala, Larry Harder, Laura Meyer, Laura Place, Lisa Braden-Harder, Lucas Jenson, Lynne Winter, Matthew Cinadrii, Marcy Kass, Marge Butterfield, Marie, Mary Hill (Alyssa Hill), Meghan Cope, Miranda Lescaze, Nancy, Ollie Hill, PAUL, Peggy Larson, Pete Kelley, Peter Hudson, Reid Willis, Rep. Erin Brady, Reuben Escorpizo, Robyn Young, Ron Bomer, Ryan Allen, Sam Judge, Scott, Scott Rieley, Shari Westman, Shirley Goodell-Lackey, Stuart Meyer, Susan Cote, Ted Brady, Ted LeBlanc, Jane Kearns, Terry Macaig, Terry Marron, Tim Candon, Tim Carney, Wayne Wilkinson, Jack Gourlay.

Taft Corners Vision Plan
August 2021
Project Introduction and Invitation to Willistonians to Participate

Since Interstate 89 connected the rest of Vermont to Taft Corners in Williston, when shopping opportunities expanded out from downtown Burlington to big box stores, and as apartment living and offices of all types anchored themselves at this formerly rural intersection, the people of the town have struggled with what it means to have a suburban center in their midst. Since at least 1990 the Town Plan has contained a steady drumbeat: make Taft Corners a “vibrant, mixed use downtown area with a strong pedestrian orientation.”

But how? By encouraging the construction of ‘grid streets” around the Taft Corners intersection, by encouraging responsible development though the 2006 state “Growth Center Designation,” and by adopting “performance standards” in 2009 for new sites and buildings to encourage better design, walkability, and a livable mix of uses.

Despite these major strides (and many, many years of visioning, dreaming, and planning), what has been built has fallen short of community expectations. The area remains more strongly vehicle rather than pedestrian oriented, less of a “downtown” than envisioned, with most buildings and sites in commercial or residential use, but not both as the true “mixed use” vision would be.

Williston has an opportunity to add stronger “tools to the toolbox” to achieve its vision. By coming together to collaborate as a community- about how the buildings and streets that make up the town’s long-stated vision should really look, feel, and function, we can (with the help of our assembled team of professionals) map out a path for the town to truly become what its people have been saying they want for the last 40 or more years.

- Matt Boulanger, Williston Planning Director & Zoning Administrator
Sprawl retail development predominates at Taft Corners, with acres of underutilized parking and blank walls facing the street.

Car use is compulsory, with some limited pockets of walkability at Maple Tree Place and Finney Crossing.
The Planning Process

The Town of Williston and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) for Form-Based Code Consultant Services for the Town of Williston July 27, 2020. The RFP was based on a "desire to see the Taft Corners area develop into a vibrant, mixed use downtown area with a strong pedestrian orientation" and the intention that "A form-based code can help ensure that ... streets constructed in the future result in diverse, interesting, walkable streetscapes that transform development patterns in the Growth Center."

The process for this initiative is Citizen-focused, putting the citizens' aspirations for the place first. The Covid-19 Pandemic meant the meetings were all virtual. The basic process was (further explanation follows):

1. Analysis: Understand the Context
2. Listening to the Community
3. Hands-On Design Workshop
4. Work-In-Progress Presentation – “Are We On-Track?”
5. A Shared Community Vision Plan
6. New Zoning, a Form-Based Code for Taft Corners

Steps 1 through 4 have been completed with great participation by the public. 168 people took part in the planning process. This Vision Plan Report is Step 5. It exists to provide the information necessary for the Town of Williston to discuss and accept the Vision Plan as the framework for a new Form-Based Code. After the Vision Plan is accepted, Step 6 can then begin - the drafting of the development regulations (a Form-Based Code) that will guide the implementation of the Vision Plan for Taft Corners.

Analysis: Understand the Context

The first task for our consultant team was to understand the context of Taft Corners. The team analyzed the urban framework and natural features of Taft Corners, Williston, and its surroundings. This included a review of existing uses, density, open spaces, traffic patterns, parking usage, topography, view sheds, environmental conditions in the study area, and the synergy between the Town and the local environment. The analysis was performed with the livability of Taft Corners and the larger Town area in mind.

The consultant team also reviewed the Williston Unified Development Bylaw, past studies, and recently proposed/approved developments to gain an understanding of the dynamics of Williston and its surroundings. The consultant team weighed best practices for neighborhood planning in the context of sustainability and quality of life—the layout or absence of streets, blocks, mix of uses, pedestrian and bicycle connections, stormwater, landscaping, etc., in order to improve the overall environmental health of the area.

In addition to studying planning documents from the prior three decades, the consultant team had over 24 meetings/interviews with key stakeholders before the Hands-On Workshop, including with:
- 19 Board Members – individual meetings, HAAC, PC, Select board, DRB
- 5 Property Owners – individual meetings,
- VTrans, VELCO, and
- Select board, Development Review Board, Planning Commission, Conservation Commission meetings.

The consultant team also had 11 other meetings during the Hands-On Workshop week (two with municipal staff, nine with property owners).
Community Kick-Off Event
The process began with a presentation describing elements of traditional town design and placemaking as well as the overall online workshop process. A general Q & A discussion with audience members followed. At the close of the meeting, the public was asked to go to the MyTaftCorners.com website and participate in two online information gathering exercises. Community participation was strong with 87 people taking part in the Mapping and 163 people taking part in the Visual Preference Exercises.

Mapping Strengths and Weaknesses (below)
The exercise asked people to place green ‘I like’ dots and/or red ‘don’t like’ dots on a map of Taft Corners. There was also an option to leave comments, see all the comments at https://covingtonferrell.mysocialpinpoint.com/mytaftcorners-ms#marker/209519.
**Visual Preferences**

The exercise asked people to simply apply green dots on the environments they liked, and red dots on environments they disliked. This simple exercise provided a clear aggregate picture of the positives (foster) and negatives (avoid)

What the highly rated images had in common was not simple height or intensity, some were examples of quite intense urban development, rather it was that they were spatially enclosed places that included green (canopy street trees at a minimum). They all had a human scale, even within multi-story developments.

The complete set can be seen in the Appendix.

*Visual Preference Exercise, the full 14 Image Sets are in the Appendix*
Hands-On Design Workshop

The Hands-On Workshop process enabled the community to realize that consensus exists, in a collaborative and constructive format, for key issues. The process provided short feedback loops and also specific discussions about the character of future development, such as street types, street connections, public gathering spaces, building characteristics, and urban design strategies to make Taft Corners a vital town center and the place they desire.

Small Group Design Session. After introductory remarks and an explanation of the process, the participants moved from the virtual workshop 'room' to virtual 'breakout rooms.' Working in small groups, with a facilitator to identify important issues in and around the study area, the groups discussed and designed what they wanted the future Taft Corners to be. A large scale aerial photograph of the study area was on-screen, and group issues and solutions were drawn or written onto it by the facilitators. Participants were able to see and discuss their issues and recommendations as they were drawn.

Presenting Back to the Whole - At the conclusion of the breakout session, a spokesperson from each group presented the group ideas to the full workshop. These presentations allowed participants to share common goals, as well as providing an opportunity for in-depth discussion of particular issues or concerns. Participants saw how similar their ideas were to those of their neighbors.

A summary of the small group design session findings are on the next page.
What the Citizens Said:

**Big Ideas Summary**

- **Change from Auto Centric to People Centric**, bike and transit centric
- **Mixed-Use**: (is good, want more) a “Park Once” environment
- **Housing**: mixed/diverse and affordable/attainable
- **Green Spaces**: preserve and enhance
- **Public Spaces**: gathering spaces/places for performances, children’s play, adult’s play, farmer’s markets, skating, swimming pool, lunch
- **Community Halls**: indoor gathering, etc.
- **Streets for People**: on-street parking, wide sidewalks, street trees, affordable housing over storefronts
- **Reutilize/Absorb**: parking & big box

**Small Group Maps and Big Ideas**

Maps from each of the Small Group Sessions. (larger reproductions are in the Appendix)
Open Design Studio Week+
During the days following the workshop, the consultant team took the residents’ aspirations for Taft Corners and worked to turn them into an implementable Vision Plan. The week continued with our consultant team developing concepts, testing them with staff, stakeholders, and the public, and refining them into the final Vision Plan.

The Vision Plan will provide the foundation for the form-based standards and regulating plan that will implement the Vision Plan.

The Team (this includes Town staff) worked from the April 24th Hands-On session through May 3rd, testing the citizens’ ideas as they met with stakeholders and technical staff (Department of Public Works, Town Manager, etc.). The consultant team also weighed the information in the draft Official Town Map and the Town Plan, and state policies.

Ongoing Stakeholder/Technical Reviews. The consultant team reviewed the citizens’ concepts with town staff and primary stakeholders such as landowners and community leaders early in the week.

Technical Meetings. A series of one-on-one or small group meetings were scheduled with Town staff (Public Works Department, Finance, and Fire), VTrans, key property owners, and other stakeholders.

Continuing Transportation Coordination. Armed with the initial analysis and information, consultant team member TND Engineering analyzed the Vision Plan from a traffic and parking perspective, to better inform the decision-making process while developing a mobility system that emphasizes an interconnected pedestrian and bicycle-friendly street network.

Continuing Economic and Market Analysis. More analysis completed by consultant team member Partners for Economic Solutions related to socioeconomic demographics and market supply and demand for different housing forms and mixed-use development. They followed-up with members of the real estate and development community about market-related concerns identified during initial stakeholder interviews.

Virtual Community Updates. During Studio Week the consultant team held a series of online sessions for the public with updates, special presentations, and open discussions.

Monday Night: general background, Q&A
Tuesday Night: more background with Q&A, discussions
Wednesday Night: Recovering Shopping Centers: New Town Center Developments; Justin Falango., Falango Design Studio.
Thursday Night: Streets and Human Transport, Rick Chellman, TND Engineering

The Team worked through the week and weekend in the Design Studio to further refine the Vision Plan in preparation for the May 3rd Work-In-Progress Presentation.
What did people think about the Vision Plan?

The Work-In-Progress Meeting presented the Vision Plan prepared by the consultant team, including: development scenarios for targeted redevelopment sites, rendered build-out plans, street sections, and “before and after” photo-simulations.

This presentation provided the residents with a clear view of the Vision Plan as assembled by the consultant team. It provided an important “check point” and opportunity for corrections/adjustments as deemed necessary by the citizens.

The presentation ended with the question: “Are We On-Track?” The response, recorded in real-time online, was overwhelmingly positive.

The Vision Plan can be seen on the following pages.

---

**Table: Overall, is the vision you saw tonight on the right track, or should it change course? If so, how?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes!</td>
<td>ON Track!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right track!</td>
<td>right track, emphasize housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I like the direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How get zoning that brings the best of this not more massive parking lot and no appeal to linger</td>
<td>I would like to see the natural areas elevated to a higher level of importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks great - wish we could fast forward</td>
<td>It's more walkable when you get there, we also need to be able to travel within Williston without a car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the right track, yeah I think so. Hope there will be opportunity for some new buildings to be interesting design-wise</td>
<td>Not so sure about VTC residence halls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffering between businesses of the same type, i.e., too many banks</td>
<td>any space where outdoor concerts/large events could take place? on a hill, built in stage nearby parking?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suggestions for renderings if the town CAN'T take over the mentioned properties</td>
<td>On the right track just concerned how seasonal flow will be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for renderings if the town CAN'T take over the mentioned properties</td>
<td>On the right track just concerned how seasonal flow will be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Screen-grabs from the live “Menti” online session.*
What did people think about the Vision Plan?

Screen-grabs from the live “Menti” online session.
The Taft Corners Vision Plan is about creating a great human environment - with all the necessities and privileges of daily life within a comfortable walking distance.

The following pages present the Vision Plan in (potential) steps. Step One includes developments that are likely and/or preferred in the near to medium term. The overall Taft Corners Map is shown first, followed by 'close-ups' of individual areas as they might develop under the Vision.

Step Two includes additional infill development and a great many projects that may well happen sooner (or later).

Note that while 'when things develop' can be influenced by incentives like infrastructure and/or disincentives like the growth management allocations, ultimately there are myriad factors within the private sector that have great influence, many of which are unpredictable. Options for sequencing or 'phasing' development are discussed on page 51.

The Vision Plan includes a subsequent step of infill development - here labeled "Step 2070" to call attention to the long timeline for such a comprehensive plan to develop. Development takes time and this represents what could be built over time - decades - in accordance with the Vision Plan.
**Illustrative Plan: An Illustrative Step One**

An Illustrative Plan illustrates the vision by showing one way development might occur within the community Vision. These speculate about developments that are likely and/or are preferred to happen in the near to medium term. The overall Taft Corners Map is shown first, followed by 'close-ups' of individual areas.
Step One - Trader Lane

Illustrative Plan Key
- Existing Buildings
- Potential Buildings
- Civic Green
- Natural Areas

View South across Williston Road

Illustrative Plan for a new Trader Lane and Village Green.
A New Village Green

The Vision for Trader Lane includes a new Village Green that will provide a pedestrian focal point and calm automobile traffic between Williston Road and Marshall Avenue.

1. Today Trader Lane is a stub-out, only giving access to the back of a grocery store.
2. The Vision Plan lays out for new streets and a Village Green with wide sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian curb-extensions and on-street parking. This new infrastructure can set the stage for development. The land along most of new Trader Lane is vacant and available for near-term development. It also takes some pressure off the 2/2A intersection.
3. Street trees and streetscape begin to give the area a ‘green’ character.
4. Here the private sector has taken advantage of the opportunity (and new form-based code) and built new residential buildings along Trader Lane. The gardens in their front dooryards take root and bloom.

With Marshall Ave just a block away, a coffee shop might reasonably sit at the corner and overlook the green. Parking behind the buildings complements the on-street parking.
A "Main Street" for Williston

The Vision Plan shows new storefront buildings lining Wright Avenue, creating a walkable retail street between 2A and new Trader Lane. This is a direct complement and connection to the Civic Green at Maple Tree Place across 2A on Connor Way.

1. Today Wright Avenue has plenty of parking - but little reason to be there.

2. New infrastructure complements the existing. New street trees, pedestrian curb-extensions and on-street parking on the north side. Pervious paving means the tree lawn area is part of the pedestrian realm as well.

3. The private sector takes advantage of the opportunity (and new form-based code) and new storefront buildings begin to line Wright Avenue.

4. The build-out continues and gains synergy to make a great pedestrian and retail environment. Parking behind the buildings complements the on-street parking. The street trees thrive in their continuous tree trenches.

Bike-share and car sharing, as well as increased transit service, all make more sense as the area becomes a model mixed-use Town Center and neighborhood.
Wright Ave becomes the Neighborhood "Main Street" for the Western side of Taft Corners.
Step One - Maple Tree Place

**A Better Site for the Blair House**

The current location of the tavern is unfortunate and it also prevents redevelopment of a suburban office area in the heart of Taft Corners. The Vision Plan proposes a more visible, more central location, right on the literal “corner” at Williston Road and 2A.

**A Transit Center for Taft Corners**

The Vision Plan includes a new Transit Center along with a new Community Hall on the dedicated transit land between the Shaws Grocery and the retention pond on Williston Road.

Additional mixed-use or residential buildings take advantage of the improvements.

**Facing up to the Power Lines**

This Vision includes special Incubator/Flex Buildings and Community Gardens along the VELCO transmission lines. The buildings provide an enabling space for business start-ups as well as unusual businesses that may otherwise never begin. They, and the accompanying gardens (under the lines themselves), help make good use of the land and take the edge off a negative force in the area.

**Celebrating both the Burr Oak Hill environment and the View**

Burr Oak Lookout Park, is envisioned, a 16 acre park and a view tower and trails (that can connect with miles of trails outside Taft Corners) for runners, bicyclists, skiers and walkers.
Step One - Cottonwood Crossing

New Civic Green and New Blocks at Cottonwood Crossing

The Civic Green will be improved by having similarly scaled buildings surrounding it. The townhouses currently prescribed for its southwestern edge will not form a strong enough edge to enclose it. They can be built in the next phase where they can be part of a more coherent arrangement.

The buildings are mixed-use and/or residential.

New street intersections are introduced, with Williston Road and Maple Tree Place, beginning the next set of blocks and interconnecting the Taft Corners grid of streets, further diffusing traffic.

Cottonwood Crossing. A Town Center Neighborhood.
Step One - Essex Alliance Church Property

A mix of single-family attached and small apartment buildings around a Civic Green begins development of the Essex Alliance Church Property.

More than six acres of land at its Northwestern corner will be a public park. Additional lands around its perimeter will remain undeveloped and contribute to the natural area of Allen Brook.

Walking and street connections to 2A and Finney Crossing will connect it with the larger Taft Corners community.
Illustrative Plan: Step Two

The Step Two plan speculates about developments that are likely and/or are preferred to happen after the Step One, in the medium term. This Plan is followed by ‘close-ups’ of individual areas as they might further develop under the Vision.
Step Two - Maple Tree Place

Completion and Connection.

The underutilized parking lots currently lining 2A are converted into an Urban Village with mixed-use buildings, walkable tree-lined streets and Blocks.

Adequate parking is still provided, but as on-street and lots and/or structures behind the buildings.

The street grid/network is based on and plugs into the existing layout of parking lots surrounding Maple Tree Place, creating a 'place' out of large underutilized surface parking lots. The current "pedestrian only" streets are part of the interconnected network - whether autos are allowed or not.

The traffic circle at the southern end of Maple Tree Place no longer serves a purpose and has been replaced with a regular intersection.

These streets are configured to be comfortable pedestrian-first streets. Automobiles are welcome - but at speeds constrained to ensure pedestrian safety and comfort.
Infill Mixed-Use buildings face 2A
Walkable streets in Maple Tree Place, parking behind the buildings and in a new hidden parking structure. Vermont Route 2A (if under the Town’s control as a Class 1 Town Highway) can become a beautiful tree lined Boulevard.
Step Two - Cottonwood Crossing

**Burr Oak Lookout Park and Allen Brook Park with a new Green and new Blocks**

**Burr Oak Lookout Park**
Preservation and celebration of this unique habitat, including trails, a view tower, and trailhead building

**A Mix of Types of Housing**
This neighborhood provides single-family attached, small apartments and stacked flats, with variety of unit sizes and types, as well as retail and other commercial uses.

**A New Green**
Storm-water will ‘riffle and spill’ as it runs down these green / view corridors, pre-treating as it moves toward the wetlands east of Cottonwood Crossing. Later phases will add two more greens. These open spaces also enable views to the mountains

**Better Transportation**

**Interconnections**
A new southern connection to 2A near I-89, in addition to connections with the Taft Corners streets west of the VELCO transmission lines, and the new Williston Road connections, contributes to the interconnected transportation network (vehicular and pedestrian) of Taft Corners.
Step Two - Harvest Park

New Harvest Park and Residential Buildings

Residential Buildings
A mix of small apartments with a variety of unit sizes and types and single-family attached residences. Civic greens sit between the new buildings, adding usable public open space.

Harvest Park:
Preservation and celebration of the tributary/stream, including Trails and a eight acre park that will help with storm-water management. The big box stores are screened from view by street trees and trees in the park.
Step Two - Essex Alliance Church Property

A Mix of New Residential Buildings, with Small Apartments, Townhouses, and Stacked Flats add Home-Ownership Opportunities

**New Park and Neighborhood**

The Essex Alliance Church Property contains a mix of two to four story, "missing-middle" single-family attached, stacked flat, and small apartment buildings.

Additional single-family attached (rowhouses) and small apartment buildings add more housing choices to the area. The streets will be green with canopy street trees and narrow lanes, making an ideal walking and bicycling environment. A new pedestrian trail and a full street connection to Finney Crossing connect it with the larger Taft Corners community.
This master plan removes the encircling parking lot with a design for a more collegiate atmosphere. It features a Central Quad, minimizing the presence of the power lines. Additional parking is provided, allowing the expansion of both a commuter and resident student body.

The existing campus buildings are, after 25-plus years, near the end of their life span, and the circular parking lot is an inefficient form for most any use. This master plan provides a long-term vision for the development of a real campus. The Quad and land dedicated under the power lines will provide locations for storm-water management, supporting compact walkable development elsewhere. This arrangement for a new campus is done in such a way that new buildings can be phased in without having to demolish all of the existing structures at the same time.
Neighborhood Meeting Halls, Potential Locations

During the Visioning process many people spoke in favor of community meeting facilities. The Vision Plan supports the idea of one or more Neighborhood Halls and suggests the above as potential sites. Neighborhood Halls could include a wide level and variety of programs. At base, they would provide meeting rooms and facilities for community activities. The Vision Plan does not specify precise locations - that is something for the community to decide when the various times come. This is a long range plan and conditions, needs and desires may change over time. The Town is planning to study such community building locations and needs.
A variety of Open Spaces is central to the Vision Plan design. There are two formal types: Civic Greens and Squares (and the proposed Community Gardens under the VELCO lines) within the streets and blocks; and there are Natural Open Spaces that add to the wetland buffer areas and will aid in storm-water management. While the Civic Greens can help with storm-water (trees, pervious surfaces, and natural percolation), they are primarily for use by the community. Similarly, the Natural Areas are placed primarily to add to the natural systems; they will also function as community park space.
Thinking in a Sustainable Manner about the Future

If our human settlements (Neighborhoods, Towns, and Cities) are to be resilient and sustainable beyond the near term future, we need to think differently about many things and manage ourselves more holistically. In the 1970s, Williston was a rural community that found itself quickly becoming a suburban community. Fortunately the town realized what was happening and halted the sprawl before all the rural lands were gone.

To realize its vision of a viable Town Center / Downtown, Williston needs to "think differently." The Vision Plan raises questions and issues that need to be dealt with before the Town Center Williston wants can succeed.

These pages lay out some of the Overarching Issues that must be decided as the Vision moves forward.

- **Green Streets for People:** A core principle of the Vision is streets as vital public space.
- **The “Market”:** The economics support the Vision and mostly demands new homes.
- **Parking:** We can “right-size” parking through coding without consuming too much land and undermining walkability.
- **Building Height:** The Vision calls for a slight increase over current standards. This will increase the ability to develop affordable housing in Taft Corners.
- **Act 250:** is an impediment to achieving the total Vision and transitioning Taft Corners from a suburban place to an urban village. Environmental protection can be fully maintained through existing local regulations and existing, non-Act 250 State permitting programs.
- **"Step 2070":** illustrates Taft Corners if fully “built out” under the Vision -- over a very long time frame.
- **Phasing:** and focusing development is necessary to ensure that the "places" envisioned are built in the early stages of the Vision - and not simply new buildings scattered across Taft Corners.
The first public space in a town is the space of the street. Too often the automobile has dominated the design and operation of streets, while the comfort and the needs of people were secondary or left unattended.

Great buildings amount to little if they front on a highway or other auto-dominated street.

Based on community input: **Street-Space** focused on people is the organizing principle and foundation for the Taft Corners Form-Based Code.

Wide sidewalks, wide tree lawns for canopy street trees, narrow automobile lanes, and on-street parking will be the fundamental elements of streets within Taft Corners. Residential streets will have deeper, green dooryards for front gardens and ground cover, forming an extra green street environment.
Street-Spaces, Green Streets for People

Radical Change
The current environment of Taft Corners is predominantly against pedestrians and bicyclists - indeed, once you step out of your automobile, the environment is hostile... The Vision Plan calls for a radical change from the current anti-pedestrian environment to a pro-pedestrian environment.

Principles for Street Design in Taft Corners:
The appropriate design of streets is one of the most important elements for a vital urban environment. The following are both general and current state of the practice design principles as well as principles expressed during the public outreach for Taft Corners.

- Designing for continuous free-flowing traffic creates situations where vehicles will travel at speeds greater than desirable for pedestrians.
- With appropriate street designs, drivers self-select slower speeds and less aggressive behavior, a feat typically not achieved through basic speed limit changes or enforcement actions.
- An interconnected street network allows traffic capacity to be diffused and maintained across numerous streets, thereby lowering traffic volumes on each street.
- Differences between “requirements” and “preferences” can be significant—increased lane width and the accompanying increased vehicle speed more often than not decreases the overall safety for pedestrians.
- On-street parking slows passing vehicular traffic and acts as a buffer between moving vehicles and pedestrians.
- Overall function, comfort, safety and aesthetics of a street are more important than efficiency alone.
- In a Town Center, non-vehicular traffic should be provided with every practical advantage so long as safety is not adversely affected.
- Street design should take into consideration what is reasonably and regularly foreseeable, not every situation that is conceivably possible.
- Designing a street to facilitate (rather than accommodate) infrequent users may actually be the wrong design for the frequent users of the space.
- When the street design creates a conflict between the vehicular and non-vehicular user, it should be resolved in favor of the non-vehicular user.
- Emergency vehicle access is important. With an interconnected street network, there will always be at least two routes of access to any lot or parcel.

Proposed Street Types
The street sections on the following pages illustrate the initial proposals for Taft Corners new street environments.
ST-38/70P: This street is intended for the more pedestrian-active streets within the district, such as Wright Avenue. With tree lawns and dooryards which may be paved, these sidewalks can very comfortably accommodate retail (sidewalk cafes, etc.) and commercial frontages.

ST-38/80PD: This street is intended for the quieter, local streets. The extra wide tree lawns and dooryards add an extra layer of green and garden to the Street-Space.
ST-38/80PCT: This street is intended for the primary streets running through Taft Corners and includes one-way cycle tracks (separated/protected bike lanes) on both sides of the street.

ST-29/57P: This configuration is for one-way streets around civic greens. The tree lawn and dooryard configurations will continue per the connecting two-way street sections.
Street-Spaces, Green Streets for People

Curb Extensions for Pedestrian Safety: Extending the sidewalk and raised curb at intersection is critical to pedestrian safety and comfort in crossing a street, and in traffic calming.

Alley 18/24: This provides access to the rear of lots and the interior of the blocks. A right of way of 24 feet with a paved travelway of 18 feet will serve most situations. Alleys are generally not shown on the Illustrative Plan, but will be required for most blocks in Taft Corners.
ST-P2A: (Option A) Intended for **Route 2A** if under the Town’s control as a Class 1 Town Highway, this configuration has a cycle track next to the travel automobile lanes. The allee of trees, cycle tracks, sidewalk and deep dooryards will create a memorable Boulevard.

ST-P2A: (Option B) Intended for **Route 2A** if under the Town’s control as a Class 1 Town Highway, this configuration has a cycle track next to the sidewalk. The allee of trees, cycle tracks, sidewalk and deep dooryards will create a memorable Boulevard.
Williston Road (ST-38/80PCT): This is the Vision Plan configuration for Williston Road - if under the Town’s control as a Class 1 Town Highway. It improves the interconnected bicycle network with one-way Cycle Tracks on both sides of the street.
Street-Spaces, Green Streets for People

This is the Vision Plan bicycle network (within the street/block network), where bicyclists would be completely separated from automobiles, and the multi-use trails (outside the street/block network). These routes would be the best for bicycle commuters and novice bikers. The balance of the Taft Corners streets will be designed for local, slow moving traffic, such that bicyclists would be comfortable, and safe, taking the full lane.

As transit service expands with Taft Corners, new bus routes should use the ST-80PCT streets, which accommodate both buses and bicycles.
**Vision Plan for Taft Corners: Overarching Issues**

**The "Market"**

**Economic Report by Partners for Economic Solutions**

**Demographics support additional phased development:** Williston has a population of almost 9,800 residents living in slightly more than 4,000 households. The average household has 2.4 persons with 60 percent of Williston households having only one or two persons. Both the town and Chittenden County are growing about 1 percent annually. Williston’s median household income of $90,600 is almost 20 percent above that of the county wide median. Taft Corners could support another 100 to 125 housing units annually, so we’d expect that the full build-out of the Vision Plan will be phased over the next 40 to 50 years.

**Local retail is thriving in spite of national challenges:** Taft Corners is a major retail center serving much of Vermont with a dominant cluster of big box stores as well as Maple Tree Place, Taft Corners Shopping Center and other small retail centers. The national retail industry is being challenged by the growth of e-commerce and an oversupply of retail space. Last year with the pandemic, more stores closed nationally than opened. Retail bankruptcies continue along with store closures as major retailers try to reduce their debt loads. To date, Taft Corners’ retail is performing very well with only one vacant big box store. That could change, but the fundamentals are very good.

**Nearby housing growth could support additional retail space:** Because Taft Corners is less well served by restaurants and smaller independent stores, the local population growth could create some mid-term potential for some additional retail space.

**Office potential is limited by the regional surplus of vacant space:** On the office side, while Taft Corners has attracted some significant office users and its location and accessibility allow it to compete effectively, regional office demand is relatively limited. County wide, the office market had filled an average of only 25,500 square feet annually until 2019 and then occupancy declined significantly during the pandemic. It is not yet clear how all the office patterns will shake out as people start to return to work after working from home for so long. But it’s likely that in the near term, demand for new office space will be limited. Some modest amount of office space could be included in the mid-term development, maybe 20,000 square feet in walkable environments.
Housing offers the greatest development opportunities: The greatest opportunities for Taft Corners lie in residential development. Demand has been rationed for many years by the Town’s growth management strategy that limited new housing in Taft Corners to 56 units per year by restricting sewer allocations. Developers have been constrained on how much housing they could build. Existing apartments have waiting lists and the vacancy rate is only 1 percent, well below the 5-percent level of a healthy market.

The current growth allocation policies should be reviewed to support the town center vision: The growth management restrictions seem to be unduly complicating development in Taft Corners and may need to be revised. The uncertainty the growth limits create in knowing whether a large development will have units approved when needed complicates financing and may impede some of the innovative development the Town would like to see in Taft Corners.

Housing variety should serve all types of households: Williston residents represent a spectrum of household sizes and types and housing needs. A diverse housing mix could serve many of those households – empty-nesters and seniors who want to downsize, their children who want to move out and start their own households, young families and everyone in between. Demand is high for rental apartments but also for for-sale housing. Taft Corners development could benefit from allowing a range of housing types from apartment buildings to smaller footprint townhouses, tri-plexes, quad-plexes, cottages, small-lot single-family units and other housing types, concentrating the greater density within walking and bicycling distance of retail and offices.

Compact development is better for the Town’s fiscal health: From the economic and fiscal perspective (as well as the environmental view), compact development offers a number of benefits – higher tax revenues per acre, more efficient use of infrastructure, less new infrastructure to construct and maintain, and more operational efficiencies in serving the same number of households located closer to each other rather than sprawled across the countryside.

The Vision Plan is a smart way to grow and will be good for the Town’s fiscal health.
Excessive parking requirements guarantee auto-dependency and prevent walkabilty.

**Taft Corners is drowning in too much parking - and too little anything else**

The existing environment dedicates excessive land to single-use parking lots that are underutilized even at peak (and non-Covid) shopping times. This wastes land and creates an environment that is hostile to pedestrians and even to patrons arriving by vehicle.
The Vision Plan includes shared parking facilities, on-street parking, and enhanced pedestrian connections between parking locations and destinations. All things that have been "encouraged" but not consistently required by the Town. Having these required/consistently in the new Form-Based Code will help to create a “park-once” environment where patrons arriving by vehicle will literally park one time and walk among many destinations.

This can be achieved by the regulations. Parking requirements must be disconnected from hyper-specific individual uses and set for the overall place/environment. This means reducing or eliminating reserved-parking minimums and thinking of all parking as a shared resource.

Parking (off-street) must be shielded from the Street-Space; behind the buildings or, as in the example to the right, in context-appropriate parking structures that preserve an active street frontage.

**Storm-Water Management**

The current practice of pushing storm-water management entirely onto individual lot owners is a guarantee of a smaller tax base and a bigger environmental footprint. It ultimately forces an auto-dependent environment.

*Storm-water needs to be handled communally (like water or sewer), whether as a Town utility, or via shared responsibility among owners.*

By approaching storm-water management on the larger, community scale, it can be dealt with in a more scientific, biological, and efficient manner. "Following the science" will be easier in a holistic and larger scale system than with dozens of balkanized individual systems that are seen as an 'overhead’ operating expense.

The Taft Corners Vision Plan has been designed to complement a biological storm-water treatment approach, using the preserved natural areas in concert with wetlands and streams (for pre-treatment, etc). Further, placing the responsibility and burden on the private sector, small entrepreneurs are forced out and development is only feasible for major corporations/ big players, eliminating opportunities for smaller entrepreneurs.

Storm-water ponds can be positive partners with natural areas (aesthetically and functionally) but they have no good place in a Town Center or downtown environment.
Building Height and Affordable Housing:
If Williston indeed wants housing that its children can afford in the town in the near future, Williston will need a certain intensity of building mass in order to get it. By increasing the number of housing units in a compact development pattern, Williston will improve the opportunities for low to moderate income housing. Providing housing for Williston’s young adults as they move out of their family homes will depend on increasing the supply of housing available at rents that they can afford. Housing affordability is impacted by development costs, including land costs. A key approach to reducing land costs per unit is increasing the density so that more units share the land cost.

Many communities have found that developers are willing to make available a share of their units for lower rents in exchange for the right to build more units – a practice referred to as “inclusionary zoning”. Zoning that restricts residential structures to two or three stories precludes use of that valuable tool. Allowing four to five stories provides support for inclusion of affordable units in new mixed-income apartment buildings.

Building Height and the Environment: Four story building is a more sustainable/efficient use of land and energy, more compact, less stormwater runoff per capita, and is a more efficient use of construction/material resources, etc, etc.

Building Height and the Tax Base: Increased height will significantly enhance the municipal tax base - at minimal cost to the Town's operations budget. The extra units will be using the same land, streets, utilities, fire and safety services. Increased height will generate revenues that can be used to address storm-water in a holistic manner--storm-water dept./system and a storm-water master plan.

Building Height and Getting Good Things Built: According to one Vermont Architect/Developer: "Limiting building heights to 3 stories will prevent most development as a result of current development costs (per square foot). Even with "tax credit" projects, we are finding that development cost vs. return on investment does not pencil out in 2 or 3 story projects."
Building Height

Building Height and the Vision Plan
The Vision Plan does not specify building height - that will be regulated by the Form-Based Code. The specific height parameters will be determined in the drafting of the Form-Based Code.

Environments That Were Very Highly Rated by the 163 Citizens Who Participated In the Visual Preference Survey -

Heights will be regulated, by specific location, in the Form-Based Code.
Act 250

Act 250 is a state permitting process "for reviewing and managing the environmental, social and fiscal consequences of major subdivisions and developments in Vermont." Act 250 was enacted in 1970 in a reaction to significant development pressures in the State, including at Taft Corners. The law’s intent is to protect Vermont’s environment and foster sustainable development. The law was enacted at a time when local development regulations in Vermont were generally weak and the State lacked a robust permitting system.

The history of development of Taft Corners is interwoven with the history of Act 250. One of Vermont’s most controversial historic development projects, the Pyramid Mall, was proposed for Taft Corners and was famously denied an Act 250 permit. That project evolved into the existing Maple Tree Place. Other projects, like Taft Corners Park and Blair Park, were similarly controversial and are among the largest commercial projects ever permitted in the history of Act 250.

Almost all land in Taft Corners developed since 1970 is subject to an Act 250 permit. This is due the jurisdictional triggers for Act 250 and the significant changes in land use in Taft Corners (agriculture to industrial, commercial, and residential uses) during the past 50 years. Any changes to lands subject to Act 250, however minor, now require an Act 250 permit and fee. In the experience of the Town, and many property owners consulted with during the development of the Vision Plan, the constant minor Act 250 permits required to develop in Taft Corners provide little to no environmental benefits (since most land is no longer greenfield), duplicate review of issues previously reviewed by the Town or other state permits, and add time and costs to development.

Blair Park (4C0388) – 82 separate permit applications since 1980
Taft Corners Park (4C0696) – 69 separate permit applications since 1986
Finney Crossing (4C0887) - 22 separate permit applications since 2007
Maple Tree Place – 17 separate permit applications since 1988
**Vision Plan for Taft Corners: Overarching Issues**

**Act 250**

Since the passage of Act 250, Taft Corners has evolved from primarily agricultural uses to a suburban built form. The Vision Plan, implemented through a future form-based code, will further evolve the built form in Taft Corners into a compact, walkable urban village. The Vision Plan and accompanying form-based code, coupled with strong State environmental regulations developed since 1970 (e.g. wetlands permits, stormwater permits, wastewater permits, air quality permits, etc.), sufficiently regulate all issues currently regulated in the 10 Act 250 Criteria in 10 V.S.A. 6086.

This reality necessitates Williston to adopt the following policy positions to encourage the “unlocking” Taft Corners for coordinated development:

- All future development within the designated Growth Center should be exempted from Act 250 jurisdiction.
- All existing Act 250 permits (and their conditions) within the designated Growth Center should be released. Williston does not advocate for the release of other state permits associated with these Act 250 permits (such as wetlands permits, stormwater permits, wastewater permits, etc).

Williston only advocates for these positions if it adopts a form-based code that implements this Vision Plan.

Enacting these policies requires significant changes to Vermont statute via the Vermont legislature. In the past two legislative sessions, similar policies have been discussed by the legislature for designated downtowns and villages, but have not passed.

Removal of Act 250 jurisdiction within Taft Corners is not anticipated to have negative environmental consequences based on the continued jurisdiction of state permitting programs, continued local environmental regulations, and the Vision Plan’s consideration of future natural areas and parks. Removal of Act 250 jurisdiction within Taft Corners will streamline the permitting process for landowners, reduce permitting costs, and eliminate issues of potential conflict between the Act 250 District Commission and the Town during the permitting of development.

Applying Act 250 to the individual developers in a piecemeal fashion would unravel the Taft Corners Vision Plan and its synergistic, walkable and ultimately sustainable development pattern - and undermine Act 250’s very reason for being.
Illustrative Plan: Step 2070?

The above illustrative plan looks far into the future, extrapolating the trajectory of development under the Vision Plan fifty plus years out and showing a full build-out. It reflects realities of market demand and typical population increases historically experienced in Williston. These new areas would likely be among the last to develop, although there are many factors which will affect phasing and order of development, not the least of which are individual property owner situations, and changing market conditions.

The scale of Taft Corners underlines the importance of controls on phasing, discussed in the next section, in order to create the built environment envisioned by the Vision Plan.
Phasing (avoiding scattershot development and Place-Dilution)

The Vision Plan is fundamentally about "placemaking" - the creation of immersive environments. Coordinating development is the only way to build the place envisioned. As few as four buildings can begin to form a place--a street space--if they are aligned and facing across a street. In an area as large as Taft Corners, twenty buildings randomly scattered would have little if any, synergy, and not lead to a sense of place.

The concept of phasing development is straight-forward, but the mechanisms to do so are not. They require tough choices and political will. The large land area of Taft Corners includes many landowners and, even where the land might be owned by one entity, the process of managing the development is complicated, and involves restrictions on the private sector. A mix of incentives and disincentives, as well as a few outright prohibitions is likely necessary. There seems to be some consensus that Trader Lane and Wright Avenue should be the Stage/Step/Phase One focus.

Questions about how limited the Step One area(s) should be are serious. Would it only be the frontages along Trader Lane and Wright Avenue? Or would Williston Road frontages and Cottonwood Crossing (to a determined distance/point off Williston Road) be included? What about the Essex Alliance Church property - which is currently proceeding toward being developed under the old rules. Would a portion of it be included (if only to make sure it is developed within the Vision Plan rules)?

Potential "levers" to get development where the Vision Plan wants it, might include:

- Provide infrastructure (build Trader Lane and/or Wright Avenue). The regulations will (if they do not already) require direct street frontage as a condition of development.
- Provide sewer capacity (here and not elsewhere in Taft Corners). This might expand to include other Town services/permits. At the extreme this could be too extreme, but within Taft Corners 'draconian' might be the right setting.
- Dis-incentivise development outside of the Step One Area(s). Largely the inverse of the above.

Under current regulations and economy, future development in Taft Corners is likely to continue to sprawl, using valuable land inefficiently and developing without a good mix of uses, connections or a walkable environment - antithetical to the Vision. So it is important to actively manage development throughout the Town.
Rated Visual Preference Exercise Sets

APPENDIX
This is one of two information gathering exercises that were posted on MyTaftCorners.com. Participants were asked to place green 'I like' dots on environments they like, and red 'don't like' dots on environments they do not like.
Rated Visual Preference Exercise Sets

Q10. Image Set 10 (4th exercise)

Q11. Image Set 11 (5th exercise)

Q12. Image Set 12 (6th exercise)
APPENDIX

Rated Visual Preference Exercise Sets

Q14. Image Set 14 (illumination)

Q6. Image Set 6 (tree alignment)

Q13. Image Set 13 (tree alignment)
The Visual Preference Exercise allowed participants to leave written comments in addition to their image ratings.

20 minute neighborhoods would be a healthy vision. Walkable, with small scale transit. Make it so that someone can work, shop and recreate in a human-scale environment.

All of these scenes are multistory buildings in much denser cities. Would vastly prefer limiting building height and overall density. More green, more space for things like snow removal and parking. Further apart than anything pictured here without becoming a strip mall.

Bike paths and sidewalks for walking. More trees!!!!

Build up, not out. Stop the ugly architecture that is the norm in Williston and Chittenden County. It really is bad! Add dormers, bays, enclaves. The stuff being built is brutal. Also, don’t allow Catamount golf to be developed. Make it a mult municipality golf course. Ten years from now, people will be shocked that we turned this special open space into more housing. Having future developments help pay could make this sustainable.

Can we get village” planners into this discussion in place of the “urban” planners?

Consider underground parking garages as an option

Consider ways to pull together the complete disparate design to unify the look of the neighborhood. Also there is no real green space, community garden, trees, play area. Has no feeling of a neighborhood right now.

Current buildings and public space at Finney Crossing is terrible. Reminds me of communist block buildings. The grounds need a big upgrade. Healthy living building is ok but needs landscaping

electric and solar roof / green roof parking, mandatory tree plantings per % and not "decoration" trees = weebly village"

Fix the roads so traffic flows efficiently

For every new retail space that goes up, there needs to be equal green space. Also sidewalks, paths need to feel less disjointed and more connected and safe.

Get rid of the brutalist architecture

Hide parking, storefronts should be accessed from walking areas and not directly from parking lots, fewer box stores. Consistent design elements look nice but with a variety of styling so that there is continuity without looking cookie cutter.

I’d love to have a downtown area that feels warm and makes me think of inclusiveness, welcome, community, instead of commerce and strip malls

I’d love to see more sidewalks/ bike paths connecting all of Williston. Foot bridges may be an option... Less banks more family oriented activates.

I hope that the future of Tafts corners will help Williston retain a small town feel as opposed to a small city. There should be regulations. In terms of building heights and the look for new development and also materials that can be used in the architecture. Less ugly building with flat roofs and bad architecture.

Increasing walkability with more locally owned stores and restaurants would make a big difference. Thank you

I really dislike the exponential growth that is happening in Taft Corners. I understand it is the growth” zone but really why the need for constant and excessive growth? I would like to see green space walking paths bike paths family friendly areas such as playgrounds with lots of trees natural playgrounds splash pad. POOL! community center. Let’s improve our basic amenities before we start building thousands of apartments to fill with people that will make our roads busier and our schools more full.

I think it would be good to have working artisan venues where consumers and craftspeople, artists and artisans could interact. It could have retail areas and demonstration areas. It thus could be a destination for all ages. Local schools could possibly integrate this into curriculum.

I think the barn door has already closed on making this area more walkable and visually appealing. I was part of the 1990’s citizen’s group opposing an inclosed mall and later Vermont’s first Walmart. Our organization had a seat at the table for the planning of the area that is now Maple Tree Place. I think it overly dominated by big box and chain stores. A few local restaurants. How to we get more local businesses, would they be able to afford the rent? That is needed to give a sense of place to the area. As far as the other side of 2A goes I think the barn door has closed. I struggle to come up with any ideas that could significantly give a Williston village/town feel without it being just gratuitous. City Centers I like are Burlington VT, Brunswick ME, West Hartford CT and Paso Robles CA

I think walkability and public green space should be priorities. Utility lines should all be underground. Our glorious views of the Green Mountains should be preserved, and the development should be to scale- not dense, tall buildings.

It should be denser and more walkable. Work to eliminate parking lots. Build closer to the road. Use brick, stone, and glass for buildings, and ban flat, dull roofs. Basically, make it more urban while keeping the architecture in touch with the location. We don’t need another disgusting red and yellow building like the one that was just built in Finney Crossing.

It, is okay to stay small. Building should have a coherent look, traditional and classy- forget the modern junk. Set the buildings back from the street and keep the heights down. Go more upscale please
It’s unfortunate that this planning currently underway was not undertaken 20 years ago. The lack of pedestrian access and architectural coordination in the Starbucks/Aspen Dental complex is disappointing, especially considering the somewhat better design & accessibility of the core of Maple Tree Place. Your idea of accessibility and architectural cohesion is a good one, just a bit too late. The complex on the northeast corner would be best served if it was torn down and replaced. I worked in the area for ten years and have little interest in visiting it for pleasure (or shopping).

I would like to see Taft Corners shift away from its big-box, car-oriented, sprawling identity. A shift towards sustainable development, walkability, and vibrant public spaces would be a huge plus for the entire region.

Keep as much open space as possible. Playgrounds and maybe a town pool!!!

lots of trees and green space. Benches, tables, gardens. No building over 3 stories. Safe for pedestrians. mixed income housing, but none institution look” Porched balconies columns bay windows”

More bike and pedestrian infrastructure please to help connect housing to work and entertainment.


More green space is helpful. Local biz. Host events and encourage community activities in these spaces.

More green (trees, shrubs, fields, etc) and more walking friendly options.

More sidewalks and bike lanes, more trees.

Much of what has been built at Taft Corners could be Anywhere, USA. The Hamlet and row houses have a New England vibe, but the big blocky sterile apartment buildings in front are incongruous with that sense of place. Would like to see the aesthetics of future development more in line with Vermont/New England tradition. No more banks or cookie cutter apartment buildings are needed. No more banks please........

No more flat roof housing; no more multi-tenant commercial bldgs; aesthetically pleasing outdoor residential neighborhoods - no more storing outside in visually public areas; keep downtown Williston quaint!

Phase out big box anything. Tone down retail and design for more service oriented business. Create an environment that people are enticed to get of their cars to move about.

Please commercialize it within the planned area...Make it awesome. Then the rest of the town can stay more rural. Bring all the awesome box stores in.

Please keeps building height limited, focus on wide walkways with green space and trees, have variation in building design avoiding anything boxy and sterile looking.

Please no more ugly apartment buildings. All restaurants should have cute outside seating areas and lots of trees. Parking should be hidden behind stores. Rules snout outside, Äjustage,Ä on decks to keep area looking neat and nice. It’s okay to be densely populated just not like a big mish-mash of design. No flat roofs.

Please please improve the Design Review process in Taft Corners. It’s going to be very hard to improve the area now because of the hodgepodge that currently exists.

Please please require playgrounds, walking paths, water features and trees in all development.

Please stop approving the box style apartments at Finney Crossing. They created uninviting urban canyons, completely out of character for the community and town. Metal artwork on the outside of an oversize box, does not mitigate the fact it is a box. In future Finney Crossing development along Williston Road, please have the buildings more in the style of Healthy Living. Also, just as 99 restaurant has trees on the corner of 2 and 2A, place trees on the other side, from Friendly’s, past Shaw’s.

Please try to preserve as much greenery as possible.

Prefer no big box” 3 to 4 story housing units. More Vermont town based sizing with more individual units as opposed to run on structures holding many businesses. Built to convey a feeling of history as if all building were not built at the same time but evolved over many years generations. Readapting some of the older building and completely redoing some older utilitarian buildings from the 60’s and 70’s to allow a better and higher quality blend.”

Put a much parking underground as possible. Finney Crossing residential is UGLY!!! Integrate the retail/office and residential - don’t separate like Maple tree did with the residential - make it a liveable space.

So pleased we are having community input regarding town growth and development. I am very concerned about both the rate of growth and the quality and type of growth. How do we retain a small town feel if continue to grow as we have been ? The trend towards modern four story building design does not seem to fit a Vermont aesthetic. Space for farmers market, summer concerts and an outdoor ice skating rink in the winter.

Tafts Corners MUST be more pedestrian and cyclist friendly and encourage alternative methods of commuting to and from Burlington and Essex.

Thank you for this exercise. I hope it it used in future planning. The big box stores and parking lots are ugly. It’s not really safe or pleasant to walk anywhere because of all the noise and traffic, and because the sidewalks aren’t always continuous. There seems to be
Think roads for cars! Too much traffic and congestion.

This area has a long history of architecture that was mainly created during a sort period when our towns were initially built. There was a variety of styles but were predicated on a pedestrian and horse-drawn pace in a rural and semi-rural setting - lots of trees, grass and landscaping. The architecture was of a small scale with plenty of detail that spoke to the human being moving at the pace spoken about. I would like the buildings we are trying to figure out how to build to be part of that continuum. To not create a new style from whole cloth for those are the buildings we treasure and work so hard to preserve. I am a retired architect and one of the lessons I learned was that I could propose the most outrageous form if it incorporated the language of the buildings we love around us and was designed with their scale and entourage that makes us feel so comfortable.

This exercise seems too little, too late. The space has already been developed, and in the opinion of my family and extended family, destroyed. The design/layout/appearance of the area is all egregious and out of character with the town of Williston and State of Vermont. Based on what’s already there, it’s very clear that the only priority is attracting commerce to the area with little consideration to proper utilization of space, traffic flow, appearance, and respect for those of us who live in Williston. New buildings are too close to the road and obstruct the views of the hills and mountains. Stores are spread out too far, so that you can’t walk from one to the next, making traffic congestion a problem. It’s simply a place to buy stuff and pass through. It’s very disappointing to watch this area develop in such a poor manner. Those in charge of this process should really be ashamed of what they have done to this once beautiful area.

We need trees and green space everywhere, and the buildings and parking should be as unique as Williston itself.

What about a recreation center? Something like a hockey rink, basketball arena, tennis, racquetball, indoor turf. It would be great to have a community facility that can have bigger events (such as a hockey tournament) that can draw in some out of state/town folks to see what we have to offer. We’ve got stores and hotels, let’s bring them to the area for something to enjoy!

Williston is a small town community. I prefer to keep it this way. Large monstrosities in construction are better suited for larger cities. I dislike what recent construction I have seen in Williston. It is crowded, dense and visually unattractive. I am hoping future construction will show the natural beauty of our community, with high end contemporary class in the architectural design of the buildings.

Williston needs more greenery, public parks, and walkable areas. I prefer retail buildings with parking areas behind them so the roads aren’t lined with acres of asphalt, similar to the new Healthy Living space. Stop allowing projects like the eyesore at Finney Crossing.

You’re never going to turn all of Taft Corners from Walmart to the town offices in to downtown Houston, but you might make islands of your vision, by attempting something like Coconut Point in Estero FL like C...
Breakout Room Maps
These are the maps used by each group of citizens in the Breakout Room Hands-On Exercise. They serve as records of the citizens' discussions and aspirations for the future of Taft Corners.
Group Two Map

Taft Corners Vision Plan

A9

August 2021
APPENDIX

Breakout Room Maps

Group Three Map

Taft Corners Vision Plan August 2021
BREAKOUT ROOM MAPS

Group Four Map

Main Ideas:

1. Make Maple Tree Place More Vibrant (more events, types of gathering spaces, community center, housing within close proximity)
2. Increase Diversity of Housing Stock
3. Include Marginalized Residents in this Process and Future Planning
4. Shift from Car-centric to Ped/Bike/Transit at Taft Corners
APPENDIX

Breakout Room Maps

3 BIG IDEAS
Maple Tree Place - Connect across 2A
Maple Tree Place - housing across from existing
Increase green spaces
Create entryways on parking lots to draw people in
Panera Bread block has good building
street relationship
Work-In-Progress: Community Polling Real-Time Comments

What is the MOST important thing you heard or saw tonight?

- park once
- Housing
- progressive renderings!
- Disconnect
- Walkable street
- Wright Ave & Trader Ln
- Reduce parking save and add green
- Lots more housing
- storm water treatment is a priority
- Walkability and green space
- That Parking and storm water should be handled community
- Thoughtful cohesive development PREFERABLE to hither skelter developers plans
- Walkability
- A lot of development.
- I did NOT see any reference to a community center.
- Livable
- The goal seems to create a city downtown.
- Places for children
- Like more walkable and more green space
- street scape and utilization
- Need to identify Williston values
- Bike lanes for all bikers
- Aesthetically pleasing structures.
- a vision like Paris!
- Attractive to the eye. The town viewing past is the best. The trails are so important.
- trails
- I like the lookout tower in the bur oak forest!
- The friendly walkable downtown.
- The Taft Corners district has the potential to become more walkable and residential!
- Variety of new open spaces
- Green spaces
- How to deal with traffic with new roads and traffic-calming
- Wonderful work!
- Reduction of parking, more trees and walkability.
- The density focused on Taft Corners - but having that density include walkable spaces with green space/infrastructure.
Map Exercise: Strengths and Weaknesses.

Citizens Mapping Strengths and Weaknesses

A link on the MyTaftCorners.com website connected participants to the Mapping Strengths and Weaknesses exercise. People were asked to place green 'like' dots and/or red 'dislike' dots on a high-resolution aerial photograph of Taft Corners (there was also an option to leave comments). The aerial photo, the accumulated 'likes' and 'dislikes' of the exercise, as well as the comments, can be seen by going to https://covingtonferrell.mysocialpinpoint.com/mytaftcorners-ms#/marker/209519.
Understanding the Context: Analytical Maps of Taft Corners

Key
- Growth Center Boundary
- Building Footprints
- Building Footprints Outside the GCB
- Waterbodies

Taft Corners Plan and Form-base Code • FIGURE-GROUND MAP
02.04.2021
Understanding the Context: Analytical Maps of Taft Corners

Key
- Growth Center Boundary
- Natural Features
- Watershed Protection
- Tree Canopy
- Wildlife Corridor
- Parks
- Building Footprints
- Streets

Taft Corners Vision Plan August 2021
Understanding the Context: Analytical Maps of Taft Corners

Key
- Growth Center Boundary
- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Allen Brook Development
- BSREP II Cypress Mt
- Chazy
- Essex Alliance Church
- Lewis Family Partnership
- Rieley
- Bailey Properties
- Snyder Residential Developments
- Taft Corners Properties
- Town of Williston
- Vermont State Colleges
- Village Associates

Taft Corners Plan and Form-base Code • OWNERSHIP OF MULTIPLE PROPERTIES
02.09.2021
APPENDIX

Understanding the Context: Analytical Maps of Taft Corners

Key
- Growth Center Boundary
- Parcels
- Existing Sidewalk
- Existing Multi-use Path
- Trail Easement
- Tier 1 - Proposed Sidewalk
- Tier 1 - Proposed Multi-use Path
- Tier 1 - Proposed Grid Streets
- Tier 2 - Proposed Multi-use Path
- Tier 2 - Trail
- Tier 2 - Revised Corridors
Understanding the Context: Analytical Maps of Taft Corners

Key
- Growth Center Boundary
- Parcels
- Electric Transmission Line
- Gas Line
Understanding the Context: Analytical Maps of Taft Corners
Understanding the Context: Analytical Maps of Taft Corners

Key
- Growth Center Boundary
- Blocks
- Blocks Outside the GCB
- Waterbodies

Taft Corners Plan and Form-base Code • BLOCK STRUCTURE MAP
02.09.2021

Taft Corners Vision Plan A21 August 2021
**Character Areas**

This map sets out the gross level characteristics of the study area. The green areas are lands that will remain natural, undeveloped areas such as parks and wetlands. The purple area is a fully developed subdivision that will be unaffected by the plan. Blue signifies an area with an existing mix of residential (apartments, single-family attached and detached) with some commercial and retail. The melon colored area is for medium to high intensity mixed-use buildings. (The Flex designation refers to flexibility in the allowed uses.) The orange area is the core of the Town Center, and is intended to have the most intense level of mixed-use downtown type buildings. The grey areas along I-89 are reserved for the big-box and auto-dependent retail businesses that will surely remain. These characters will inform the drafting of the Form-Based Code.