April 26, 2022

Williston Selectboard
Williston Committee Members, Citizens, Landowners, and Stakeholders

Dear Williston Colleagues,

I write today to present the proposed Form-Based Code for Taft Corners, a major evolutionary step in how Williston plans for, coordinates, and regulates the design, placement, and intensity of new development in its Growth Center at Taft Corners.

The Williston Planning Commission, citizen participants, stakeholders, consultant team, and Town staff have been hard at work over the past two years on the documents in your hands today. Together, they have developed a renewed vision for Taft Corners and a draft Code to realize it. Following two years of public meetings, an intensive design charrette process, five months of Code development, and three public hearings, the Planning Commission voted on March 15 to transmit this draft Code to the Selectboard.

This new Form-Based Code is truly a master plan for Taft Corners. In addition to site design standards and revised architectural requirements, it will create a coordinated layout for attractive new buildings, parks and natural areas connected by green, livable streets and pedestrian and bicycle ways. The draft Code achieves this using several different zoning tools: the Regulating Plan, Building Form Standards, Architectural Standards, Street Specifications, and Official Map.

These elements, transmitted for your consideration, represent the most assertive and comprehensive set of tools available to a municipality in Vermont, applied to Williston’s longstanding goal: that Taft Corners become “a design-conscious downtown with a strong pedestrian orientation.”

There will be more work to come. The parks and green spaces envisioned by the Code will require careful planning by the Town to be realized. The Code also calls for new and different streets. Williston’s Planning Office has scheduled work to present updates to the Public Works Standards Specifications to reflect the new streets called for in the Code. For future amendments to the street layouts, the Code creates a framework for collaboration between stakeholders and the Town and puts the Selectboard in a leadership role in that process. Finally, while the allowed building forms and streamlined permitting process proposed in the Code “set the table” for more abundant and affordable homes in Williston, we are committed to performing a Housing Needs Assessment to consider requiring affordable dwellings in all new projects (Inclusionary Zoning).

On May 3 and May 17, we hope to discuss how the various components of the draft will work together to achieve the community’s vision and the Town’s longstanding goals for Taft Corners. The Williston staff, consultant team led by Geoffrey Ferrell, and Planning Commission look forward to this dialogue.

It has been a pleasure working with everybody involved in this project. My experience doing so gives me great confidence that Williston can achieve its vision for Taft Corners.

Kind Regards,

Matt Boulanger, AICP
Planning Director