

Sabin's Pasture Working Group Notes from 03/24/08

5:30 PM – 7:30 PM, held at Kellogg Hubbard Library, 135 Main Street, Montpelier VT.

Present: Todd Bailey, Jennifer Hollar, Mary Hooper, Dave Keller, Jennifer Knauer, Rodger Krussman, Jim Libby, Rory Malone, Neal Rodar, Leigh Seddon, Roy Schiff, Nancy Sherman, Jean Vissering, John Waldo, and 3 members of the public.

1. Review Plans for getting input from constituent groups and the public on draft report.

Rodger facilitated a discussion among Working Group Members. It was agreed that, moving forward, the current "Working Draft: Sabin's Pasture: Recommended Development and Conservation Goals and Objectives" will be posted on the City website. Jean's name will be taken off the cover page; the Working Draft represents the Working Group's recommendations.

2. Seek Volunteers for a communication/public outreach subcommittee.

Todd Bailey, Mary Hooper, Rodger Krussman, Rory Malone, Neal Rodar.

3. Update on Developer Input on draft recommended plan: this will be part of Jean's report. This was not reviewed at the meeting.

4. Confirm upcoming meeting dates: April 14th and April 28th, 2008 at Kellogg-Hubbard Library.

Continue Review of Draft Recommended Development and Conservation Goals and Objectives

Facilitator: Jean Vissering, Landscape Architect.

Jean Vissering facilitated continued review of the Draft Recommended Conservation and Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture, focusing attention on discussion of "Potential Benefits" and "Potential Costs," pages 11-12. Comments from members of the Working Group are summarized, below.

Jean presented two maps of "Draft Potential Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture." She noted that the Lower Pasture (9.19 acres) was an area that the working group generally agreed to be developable, according to several principles identified in the Draft Recommended Plan. Upper Areas A, B and C are differentiated in the maps to show that there could be variations when considering how/if this area should be developed.

Working Group general comment:

- Noted general concern with level of specificity in the report. Is the level of specificity appropriate to the task? If the recommendations are too specific, it may make it difficult for various groups to accomplish their stated goals as they begin to work on the Sabin's Pasture Lands.

Working Group comments regarding Potential Benefits of Development:

- Development of the Upper Areas offers opportunity for road access/continuous development to the east, should those areas be developed in the future.

Working Group comments regarding Potential Costs of Development:

- Development in the upper area impacts surrounding neighborhoods as well as the Lower Pasture.
- The group never considered how far to the east the development of the Upper Areas should ideally extend, though it did consider the pros and cons of development to the north and south of the road. The group may want to consider the east-west axis also, to determine if development of the western side (both north and south of the road) first is a viable and/or preferable option.

Following the review of potential benefits and costs, Jean asked the group to consider how it might develop a proposal/recommendation that would be beneficial to the public. It was noted by several in the group that there are many questions that the group will not be able to answer before it fashions a recommendation (questions such as economic feasibility, future community needs for housing and for open space, etc.). This discussion asked, generally, how does the group feel about recommending developing part of the Upper Areas?

Questions posed to each member:

- 1. What would you ideally like to see in the recommended plan?**
- 2. Under what conditions would you be able to consider development in the upper areas? (ie. time, space configuration, types of housing, etc.)**
- 3. For those who favor development of the upper area, under what conditions would you consider leaving this portion of the property as open space?**

Individual Working Group Comments, in response to Questions 1 and 2:

- Recommending development of Upper Area A is acceptable. Upper Area B would be acceptable if there were not any cars—pedestrian only—and if it were west of the ridge.
- Ideal would be to recommend development of the whole property. Support development of Upper Areas because it is wise to keep the area open to possible development as driven by demonstrated need (i.e. to get funding, or if there is a demonstrated need by the city for housing).
- Limit development to Lower Pasture. Would consider recommending developing Upper Areas only if needed to serve this project in moving forward.

- Keep options open, however, create certain mandatory benchmarks to be in place in order for Upper Areas to be considered for development.
- No development is ideal, but development of the Lower Pasture is acceptable. Development of the Upper Areas would infringe on Open Space values. Would only consider recommending some development of Upper Area A (SW corner) if it were necessary for group consensus.
- Most important thing is that the developed area include a certain number of housing units (~200) and is a high quality neighborhood. If density of the Lower Pasture is maximized to avoid development of Upper Areas this could lower the quality of housing and design of the neighborhood.
- Would rather see development expand to Upper Areas than to crowd too many units in the Lower Pasture.
- Ideal is ~250 new units of housing, with a focus on trying to include as many units as possible in the Lower Pasture. Consider recommending benchmarks to include community value for housing (rather than need), and also a second access road into the community to be met before development would proceed into Upper Areas. Perhaps also consider some residential use that no-one has envisioned yet (i.e. one member's idea of pedestrian access only).
- Limit area available for development in the near term to the Lower Pasture. Consider a legal document (conservation easement or other restriction) that would allow for a defined area of the Upper Areas to be available for future development if certain criteria were met to justify the need.
- Preference is for no development of Sabin's Pasture. But development of Lower Pasture (~150 units) is acceptable, if this is what it takes to make the project work. The neighborhood would have to be a nice place to live (not compromised by super-high density). One condition: all the Working Group members to take a walking tour before making further recommendations—see the visual impacts of where development in Upper Areas.
- Limit development to Lower Pasture. There is other developable land for affordable housing—the housing needs of Montpelier don't need to be balanced on this piece of property. OK with the concept of an easement allowing future development of western portion of Upper Area if it met with affordability criteria.
- Ideally development would be limited to the Lower Pasture. We should ensure that the recommended plan provides an accessible natural experience for residents. Allowing for the possibility of opening defined portions of the Upper Areas to development in the future makes sense. The delay will allow the community to reassess as the properties adjacent to Sabin's change.
- Important to make Sabin's available for development because of its location close to downtown. (Easier to walk to work and other amenities—future need to conserve fuel)

Next Steps for the Working Group:

- Redefine areas on the map
- Define potential easements, terms (time), what the benchmarks might be.
- Incorporate comments to draft report
- Convene communication/outreach subcommittee