

For Review and Comment

A Recommended Conservation and Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture in Montpelier, Vermont

By The Sabin's Pasture Working Group

June 2008

TO: Montpelier residents, Montpelier City Council
FROM: Sabin's Pasture Working Group
RE: Recommended Conservation and Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture
DATE: June 6, 2008

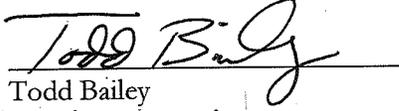
The Sabin's Pasture Working Group met for seven months to develop a plan for Sabin's Pasture that reflects our understanding of the broad range of community values held by Montpelier residents. The Working Group was formed by the Trust for Public Land following their agreement with the landowners, the Aja-Zorzi family, for the purchase of the parcel. Working Group meetings were facilitated by the North Star Group and the Dispute Resolution Center at Woodbury College, and the Trust for Public Land hired Jean Vissering, Landscape Architect, to provide technical assistance to the Working Group.

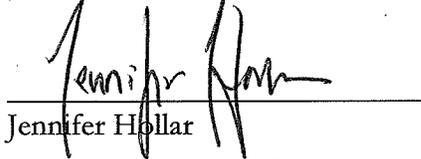
This plan is the product of extensive public discourse on the development and conservation of Sabin's Pasture, including input from many Montpelier residents. After learning about the land in Sabin's Pasture, and hearing strong support in the community for additional parkland and housing development, the Working Group articulated these community values and applied them to the parcel to reach consensus about a plan for the property. Our meetings brought together many diverse and strongly held points of view. The attached Recommended Conservation and Development Plan represents a thoughtful proposal for serving the community good on this important piece of land. Our conclusions represent significant compromises that we recognized as necessary to move this important work forward. We believe that this recommended plan satisfies the community's desire to create affordable housing near our city center and establish a city park on the eastern side of town. Our hope is that we as a community will continue the open and respectful discourse initiated by the Working Group, will understand the foundation that this proposal has been built upon and will support this recommended plan.

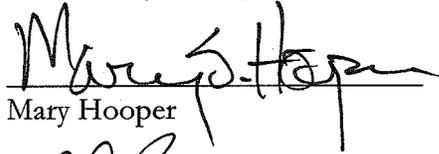
The attached Recommended Conservation and Development Plan does not conclude the process of defining the future of Sabin's Pasture. We would like to hear your feedback. Please attend the public meeting on June 16th or contact the Trust for Public Land or a Working Group member to offer your input.

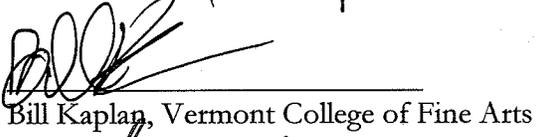
Sincerely,

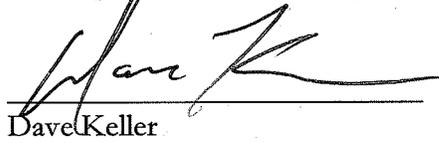
The Sabin's Pasture Working Group


Todd Bailey


Jennifer Hollar

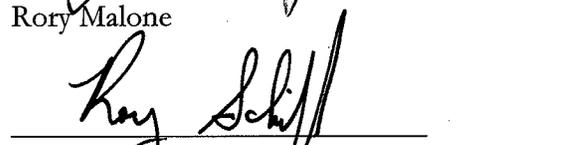

Mary Hooper

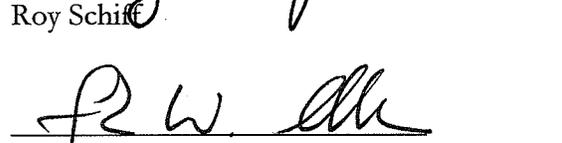

Bill Kaplan, Vermont College of Fine Arts


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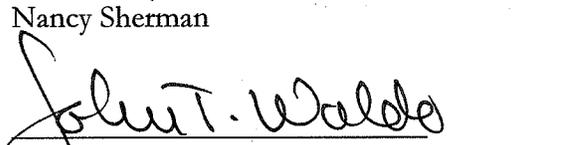

Jim Libby


Rory Malone


Roy Schiff


Leigh Seddon


Nancy Sherman


John Waldo

Acknowledgements

The eleven members of the Sabin's Pasture Working Group wish to acknowledge the extensive public conversation about the future of Sabin's Pasture that preceded this plan. We wish to thank the residents of Montpelier who have actively participated in this process and the landowners who have allowed us the time to complete it.

In addition, the Working Group would like to acknowledge Neal Rodar of the North Star Group and Jennifer Knauer of the Dispute Resolution Center at Woodbury College who volunteered their time and expertise to assist with this project. Jean Vissering, Landscape Architect, provided significant technical assistance in the preparation of this report and also volunteered to assist the group. The Working Group thanks these professionals for their leadership and participation in this process. Finally, we are very grateful to the Trust for Public Land for affording us this opportunity to create a new neighborhood, a new park, and a stronger community. None of this would have been possible without TPL's leadership and support.

We hope that today and in the future, Montpelier residents will reflect on this effort and understand the lasting benefits that will accrue to the city from appropriate conservation and development of Sabin's Pasture.

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A Recommended Conservation and Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture

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I. Executive Summary

At the request of the Trust for Public Land, the Sabin's Pasture Working Group, consisting of eleven Montpelier residents representing a range of stakeholder groups and public officials, convened in November 2007 to work on a Recommended Conservation and Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture in Montpelier, Vermont. This plan was presented to Montpelier City Council for comment on June 11, 2008.

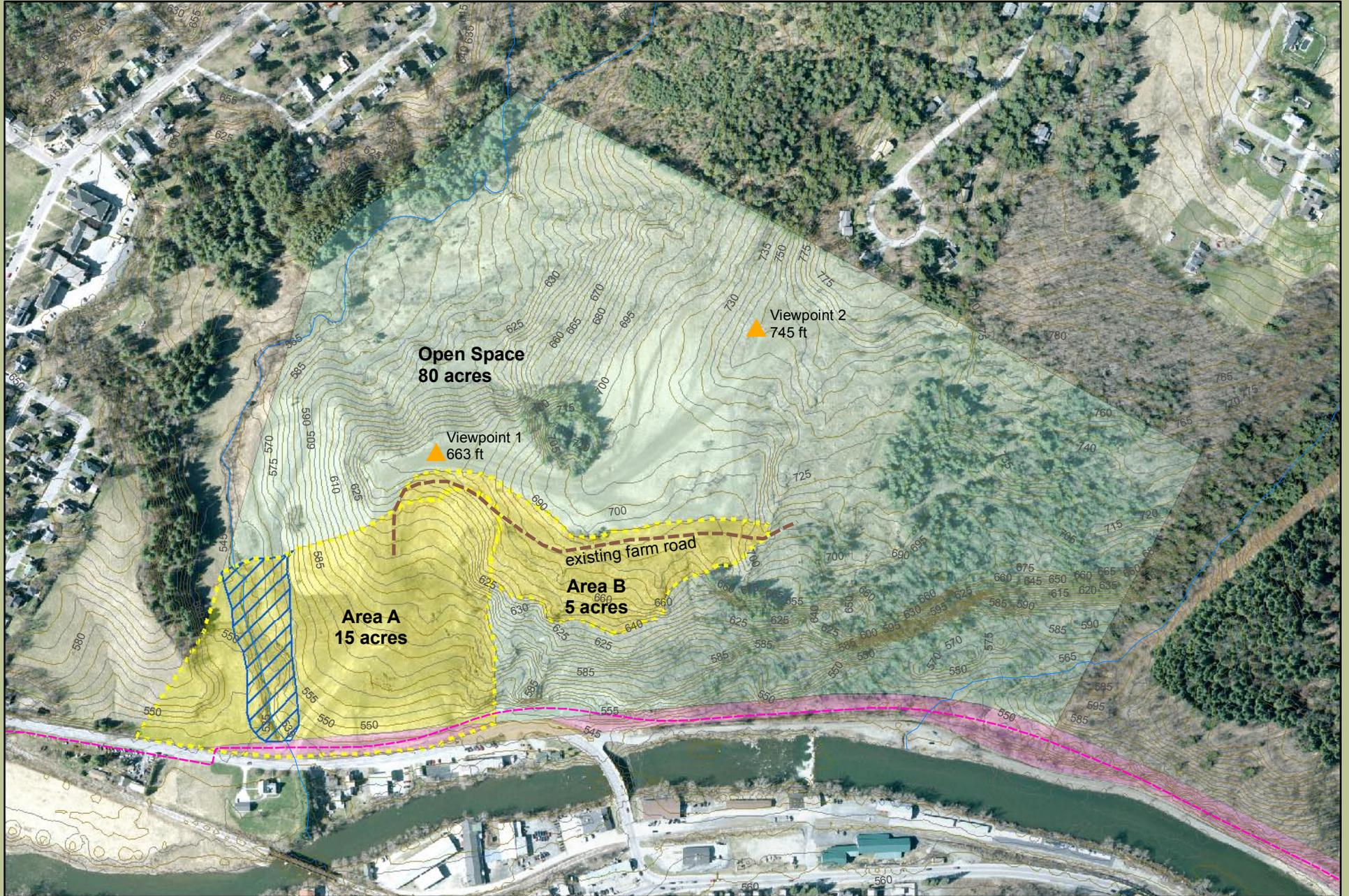
The purpose of this plan is to advise the City of Montpelier and direct the Trust for Public Land (TPL) on a desired mix of conservation and development for the approximately 100-acre parcel. In cooperation with the City of Montpelier, TPL intends to assist in carrying out the Recommended Conservation and Development Plan.

This plan reflects the Working Group's understanding of the development potential and conservation values of the parcel known as Sabin's Pasture. The foundation of this plan is a set of conservation and development values that have been defined and supported by Montpelier residents. The proposed neighborhood does not infringe on the primary conservation values such as open space protection, park access, wildlife corridors, scenic views, and recreation. The proposed park does not infringe on the primary development values of high-density compact development, traditional New England neighborhood design, affordable housing, and energy efficient residential units.

As shown on Map 1 on the following page and in the Appendix, the Recommended Conservation and Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture consists of establishing:

- A Montpelier Community Park consisting of 80-85 acres that are permanently conserved, including the upper pasture, the sledding hill, Blanchard Brook and associated wetlands, and most of the existing woodlands on the property. This area is shown as Open Space on Map 1.
- A residential neighborhood on 15-20 acres containing between 175 and 225 residential units with a substantial component of affordable housing, high energy efficiency units, and integration with the future bike and pedestrian path directly connecting the neighborhood to downtown Montpelier. Development of the neighborhood will begin in a 15-acre portion of the lower pasture (Area A on Map 1), and will proceed into an additional 5 acres (Area B on Map 1) if the housing goal for the property cannot be met on Area A within a 15-year period.

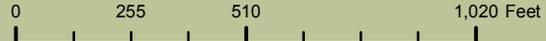
In order to fulfill the vision of this plan, funding must be secured from a variety of sources. These sources may include city funds such as the \$188,000 bond approved by voters in 2004, conservation funds and/or funding created by instruments such as tax increment financing or revenue bonds, federal funds such as Community Development Block Grants, state sources such as the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, proceeds from a sale to a private developer, and philanthropy. The Working Group's role was to devise a plan that reflects the values of our community. We look to the Trust for Public Land and the City of Montpelier for leadership in finding the financial means to achieve the goals outlined in this plan.



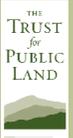
- Proposed Development Area
- Open Space
- Railroad ROW road
- Bike Path & Railroad ROW
- Stream/wetland buffer
- Streams
- 5 ft contours
- 10 foot contours
- Future bike path



Recommended Conservation and Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture Montpelier, VT



Map created by The Trust for Public Land on June 3, 2008. Parcel data and 11/06 aerial photo courtesy of the City of Montpelier. Wetlands data from 2003 Natural Resource inventory of Montpelier by Arrowwood Environmental. Development plan from Jean Vissering.



Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only.

II. Introduction

The approximately 100-acre property known as Sabin's Pasture is one of the largest undeveloped properties within walking distance of Montpelier's downtown. Thanks to the generosity of the private landowners, the Aja-Zorzi family, Montpelier residents for many years enjoyed hiking, skiing, sledding and picnicking on the land, appreciating the spectacular views of Camel's Hump, Vermont College Hall and the Capitol dome.

When the family began to consider selling the land in 2002, proposals for development of a new neighborhood on the property met with considerable local resistance. The landowners were still seeking a buyer in 2006 when the Trust for Public Land, seeing an opportunity for a consensus-based solution that could achieve a conservation outcome and provide for some development on the site, approached the family to discuss a purchase. An agreement between the landowners and TPL was reached in August 2007, providing citizens of Montpelier with a unique opportunity to protect some of the valuable natural resources of this property as a public park and also address central Vermont's need for new housing with an in-town development consistent with Montpelier's commitment to smart growth.

The Trust for Public Land convened a group of community leaders and stakeholders to recommend a mix of conservation and development, and the nature of that conservation and development, that would best meet community needs. Between November 2007 and June 2008, the Sabin's Pasture Working Group met regularly to develop a recommendation for Sabin's Pasture. Working Group meetings were facilitated by the Dispute Resolution Center at Woodbury College and the North Star Group. Working Group members sought input from engineers, natural resource professionals, affordable housing advocates, public officials, conservation advocates and additional stakeholders in Montpelier on the resources and values that should be taken into consideration in the plan for the future of this property. In January 2008, TPL hired Jean Vissering, Landscape Architect, to focus the discussion by examining a number of development and conservation options reflecting both site and regulatory considerations including slopes, soil conditions, natural features, and current zoning requirements. Upon completion of this work, Jean Vissering continued to provide technical assistance to the Working Group in assembling this plan.

III. Community Goals & Values

The following is an inventory of community goals and values compiled by the Working Group. These goals and values include those presented by Montpelier residents at past public meetings about Sabin's Pasture. The goals and values are not listed in order of priority.

- **Open Space Protection**
A substantial portion of the property should be permanently protected as a public park emphasizing low impact recreational uses such as walking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding, and protection of wildlife habitat and corridors. Contiguous open space that is not interrupted by roads or other development is preferable.
- **Park Access**
Residents of the east side of the city who now commonly drive to access the city's parks should be able to enjoy a public park within walking distance of their homes. Protection of Sabin's Pasture would create a park in an area of Montpelier currently underserved by parks (See Maps 2a & 2b).
- **Compact Development**
The overall development footprint should be compact to retain maximum available open space and reduce environmental impacts and storm water runoff. Use of higher densities, the efficient use of interior and exterior space, minimal roadway widths, reduced parking, and other techniques should be encouraged.
- **Neighborhood Design**
Densities, building design, and patterns of buildings and open space should reflect traditional neighborhoods found in Montpelier. These patterns include: attention to the orientation of buildings to each other and to the street; the inclusion of sidewalks; the size, materials, and detailing of structures; and the mixture of uses that are typical of downtown neighborhoods.
- **Affordable Housing**
A range of housing types and pricing levels should be encouraged and should include a substantial component of affordable housing¹.
- **Energy Efficiency**
Energy efficiency should be an important consideration in all aspects of property development from the design of building units to encouraging alternative forms of transportation. Buildings should be built to very high energy efficiency standards and be healthy places to live. There should be a careful analysis of initial cost and annual savings for such investments to promote the lowest life-cycle energy cost for buildings and make them affordable to live in and maintain. South-facing slopes provide opportunities to take advantage of passive and active solar energy.

¹ Affordable housing is defined as follows: the cost (principal, taxes and insurance) shall not exceed 30% of 100% of County median income, adjusted for household size (or the percentage used by Vermont Housing Finance Agency for energy efficient mortgage programs). Affordable rental units are defined as: the cost of rent plus utilities shall not exceed 30% of 60% of median income.

- **Environmental Impacts**
Design and location of development should minimize impacts to important and sensitive resources, and minimize storm water runoff and water and air pollution.
- **Scenic Resources**
Developed areas should retain valued scenic resources to the greatest extent possible as seen from both on-site and off-site. Valued views include distant mountains, open meadows, the quarry, Blanchard Brook and the woodlands on the eastern side of the property. Strong consideration should be given to the design of the Barre Street streetscape and to retaining views of open space from Barre Street and other off-site locations.
- **Alternative Transportation**
Access to alternative transportation networks should be considered when siting new development. The property's proximity to downtown Montpelier and potentially to recreation and alternative transportation networks makes it an ideal site for smart growth development.
- **Trail Linkages**
An effort should be made to create a network of recreational trails in Montpelier that connects neighborhoods to Sabin's Pasture and other parks and conserved lands and links to the East Montpelier Trail system at U-32 (See Map 3).
- **Surrounding Neighborhoods**
Development will affect surrounding neighborhoods. Traffic, noise, and pollution should be minimized. Safe pedestrian access should be encouraged.

IV. Property Description & Existing Conditions

A. Site Analysis

Site conditions are illustrated on Map 4 and described briefly below. These conditions present both challenges and opportunities. All acreage figures in this report are based on parcel data and are approximate.

- **Slopes and Topography**

At least one-quarter of the site is very steep (slopes of 20% or more), with relatively few areas on the property with slopes less than 10%. Flatter slopes are concentrated on the higher elevation areas. Topography divides the property into several distinct areas including the upper pasture and lower pasture.

- **Soils**

Soils on the property are generally well drained outside of wetland areas (Vershire-Dummerston and Glover-Vershire complex soils cover the majority of the site with Cabot silt loam along the wetlands associated with Blanchard Brook). Soils tend to be moderately deep to bedrock within the open former pasture areas but abundant ledge is present in most of the rest of the site.

- **Streams and Wetlands**

Blanchard Brook runs along the western edge of the property. Approximately 4.5 acres of Class 3 wetlands extend along the brook, with a small isolated perched wetland on a rise in the southwest corner of the property. The more northerly portions of the brook have extensive wetlands along both sides. Blanchard Brook is diverted into a culvert about 50 feet north of Barre Street.

- **Vegetation**

Vegetation varies considerably on the property. Approximately two-thirds of the property was recently logged and brush is beginning to grow back in some areas. Wetland plant species occur along Blanchard Brook. A forest remnant remains around the quarry with abundant white pine and hemlock. Woodlands on the eastern one-third of the property are composed of mixed hardwoods and a significant component of white pine and hemlock. These areas are likely to provide wintering habitat for deer. Patches of wild onion are known to exist on east-facing slopes.

- **Existing Recreational Use and Scenic Resources**

In the past, the landowners have allowed public access to the property for recreational use. There are well-worn trails around the property extending from Vermont College of Fine Arts and continuing east toward the U-32 trail system. The upper pasture, the sledding hill, and the quarry were common destinations.

- **Neighboring Properties**

The property abuts an 18-acre parcel owned by Vermont College of Fine Arts to the west and the 1450-acre Elks Club property to the east. Sabin Street runs just northwest of the Vermont College property. To the south lies an abandoned railroad right-of-way owned by the State of Vermont. This corridor is in the process of being transferred to the City of Montpelier for construction of the Central Vermont Bike Path (see below). Barre Street and Old Country Club Road run south

of this right-of-way. To the north the property abuts several private properties on Towne Hill Road, Spring Hollow Lane, and Greenock Avenue.

- **Potential Access**

Access for development of the property is currently available from Barre Street. Blanchard Brook and steep terrain limit the location of potential access points. Potential connections to neighboring properties are possible.

- **Zoning**

The property lies within three zoning districts. A strip of land approximately 300 feet from Barre Street (7 acres) is zoned High Density Residential (HDR). Another 9 acres to the north of this is zoned Medium Density Residential (MDR). The remainder of the property, about 84 acres, is zoned Low Density Residential (LDR). Based on the current zoning, not taking into account any density bonuses, the property could support up to 158 single-family units or 388 units including a mix of single-family, two-family and multi-family units. Some mixed neighborhood uses are permitted within the HDR zone (See Map 5). The recommended plan is intended to comply with current zoning. Recommendations in this plan that differ from what is permitted under current zoning regulations are identified. These include parking requirements (1.5 spaces/unit for residential uses); minimum 100-foot outside diameter on cul-de-sac streets.

- **Central Vermont Bike Path**

The City of Montpelier is working with the State of Vermont to acquire the abandoned right-of-way along Barre Street to construct the Central Vermont Bike Path. It will link Montpelier to Barre City and be a portion of the Cross-Vermont Trail, a multi-use recreation path that will extend from Lake Champlain in Burlington to the Village of Wells River on the Connecticut River.

- **Slate Quarry**

An old slate quarry, dating from the late 1800s and used to supply black roofing slate, is a cultural and natural feature of the property. It is located at the center of the property.

B. Assets and Challenges of the Property

Assets of the property include the following:

- Open meadows are a disappearing resource within Montpelier and are one of the distinctive characteristics of this property. The higher elevation meadows offer beautiful views especially looking west toward Camel's Hump, the Worcester Range, the spires of College Hall, and the gold dome of the Statehouse. There are also limited views of lower mountains and hills to the east.
- Open meadows along the steep slopes to the west and southwest have provided a popular sledding and skiing hill.
- Blanchard Brook is a healthy stream corridor and tributary of the Winooski River. The brook and its associated wetlands provide wildlife and fisheries habitat, water quality protection and flood and erosion control.
- Woodlands dominate the eastern portion of the property providing habitat diversity. The property is part of a larger block of open land providing up to 500 acres of contiguous wildlife habitat.

- Creation of a public park on the property can relieve recreational pressure on Hubbard Park and enhance park access for neighborhoods in the eastern portions of Montpelier.
- The potential exists to formalize a network of recreational trail corridors through the property connecting neighborhoods in the vicinity of College Street, Towne Hill Road, and Barre Street with existing and proposed trail networks in Hubbard Park, East Montpelier and at U-32 Junior/Senior High School. Links between these trails and the Central Vermont Bike Path could create excellent recreational loops.
- The property's location along the proposed Central Vermont Bike Path provides opportunities for reduced dependence on the automobile.
- The overall importance of the property has led the City of Montpelier to consider ways to facilitate development and conservation efforts. Among the options is for the City to provide infrastructure such as roads and some utilities in order to direct growth and enhance the potential for affordable housing units.

Challenges of the property include the following:

- Access to the property for development is available only from a small area on Barre Street.
- Steep slopes and ledgy soils in many areas both limit development and add potential expense and technical challenges in encouraging high-density smart growth development that would maximize open space conservation.
- Determining financially-viable development opportunities that respect community values will be challenging especially given the natural limitations of the property and the diverse development needs in the community.
- Hazards associated with the quarry may be difficult for property managers to address.
- Current location of the bike path right-of-way limits the potential for development fronting on Barre Street.

V. Recommended Conservation & Development Criteria

In making its recommendations to the Montpelier City Council and the general public, the Working Group recognizes that the property's location along Barre Street close to downtown makes it an ideal site for compact neighborhood development that can help meet the need for housing in general and affordable housing in particular within Montpelier. The property also offers an opportunity to provide conserved open space accessible to downtown and other neighborhoods. Finding an appropriate balance between land conservation and residential development will involve a number of factors including the fair market value of the areas recommended for development, the financial resources available for conservation, the long-term housing needs in Montpelier, and unforeseen physical difficulties associated with development. Nevertheless, the Working Group has conducted relatively detailed studies of the property's development potential and its resources, and makes the following recommendations. These recommendations are reflective of the Community Goals & Values in Section III.

A. General Conservation and Development Criteria

The Working Group recommends that conservation and development of the site incorporate the following elements:

- The permanent conservation area should include at a minimum: the sledding hill; Blanchard Brook and associated wetlands and buffer areas; all or most of the upper pasture; and all or most of the existing woodlands on the eastern side of the property.
- Protection of a continuous wildlife corridor is desirable. The width of the corridor should be maximized. The minimum corridor width should be 400 feet and considerably wider in most areas.
- Road access to developed areas from Towne Hill Road should be discouraged in order to maintain an intact corridor for wildlife along the northern portions of the property.
- Multiple access points to recreational trails on the property from surrounding neighborhoods should be encouraged, and should include small parking areas.
- Housing development is appropriate in the lower pasture.
- Development densities on the lower pasture should be maximized. The highest densities are likely to be most appropriate close to Barre Street.
- Mixed uses including neighborhood commercial and office uses are desirable, however, housing should be the primary focus of development.
- A minimum of 25% of residential units should qualify as affordable housing. A mixture of types of units should be encouraged with consideration given to including both homeownership and rental units based upon regional market conditions and housing needs. The ratio of rental to ownership units should reflect the ratio in the community at large.
- Development densities and patterns should be appropriate and consistent with development in other downtown neighborhoods in Montpelier.
- To the greatest extent possible, development should incorporate smart growth and sustainable development concepts.

- The Central Vermont Bike Path should be integrated into the design of the neighborhood, and additional ways to enhance and encourage use of this alternative transportation infrastructure should be considered.
- Development should be attractive to look at from on-site and off-site viewing areas and respect the character and streetscape of Barre Street.
- Some views into the conserved area from Barre Street and from other neighborhoods should be retained.
- The use of the conserved area should be passive recreational uses focusing on the natural environment and distant views rather than on organized games and sports.
- Blanchard Brook should be protected with consideration given to restoring the southern portion that is now piped (in culvert) underground to a natural streambed.
- Connections to neighboring properties should be sought as the property is developed and conserved.

B. Specific Conservation and Development Criteria

In addition to the above recommendations, the Working Group recommends that consideration be given to the following more specific criteria.

Buildings

- High densities and efficient use of land are encouraged, especially near Barre Street and the lower pasture. Zero lot line and small lot line configurations are encouraged with duplexes and multi-family units to maximize density.
- Mixed uses are encouraged with some neighborhood commercial and office space near Barre Street and primarily residential uses moving up the slope. Commercial uses located on the ground floor with office above and residential uses on top floors could be an appropriate mix.
- Building heights are envisioned as predominantly three stories near Barre Street, with two or one-and-a-half stories near the top of the hill. Varied building heights especially along Barre Street can help alleviate the sense of an impenetrable wall of buildings. Portions of some buildings could reach as high as four stories² if designed with consideration to the character of the Barre Street neighborhood and off-site views.
- Building heights and locations should not block distant views from the important viewpoints as shown on Map 1 such as the top of the sledding hill and the upper pasture.
- Building shapes, forms, materials and orientations should reflect traditional Vermont architectural and patterns such as those found in surrounding neighborhoods along Barre Street and around Vermont College of Fine Arts. A variety of building shapes, sizes, and street setbacks are encouraged to reflect the existing eclectic development pattern in Montpelier's neighborhoods
- Design of the neighborhood should include unifying features that link buildings to each other and to the city as a whole. Techniques that can be used include orientation of buildings to streets (parallel or perpendicular); orientation to slopes; organization of buildings that creates useable open spaces in between. Roof

² Zoning permits buildings up to 45' high in the HDR district.

overhangs and design and location of windows can harmonize buildings and connect them with traditional Montpelier neighborhoods.

- Building orientations should take advantage of south- and southwest-facing exposure for passive or active solar power and heating. Opportunities for taking advantage of solar orientation should be balanced with the need to provide the variety of building orientations that is typically found in Montpelier neighborhoods.
- To accommodate slopes on the property, some buildings may need to be built into the slope with entries from below on the first floor and entry from above at the second floor level.
- Energy efficient building design should be considered along with other design features to take advantage of the natural features of the site.

Conservation Area/Park

- Portions of the property should be designated as a public park.
- One or two bridges may be developed over Blanchard Brook for recreational use.
- A small parking area may be developed on-site as a park entry area along with limited signage.
- Portions of the former meadows should be mowed periodically to retain views. Some former woodlands should be allowed to re-vegetate naturally.

Roadways and Parking

- Roads and especially parking areas should be located to take advantage of more modest slopes for greater safety and to avoid excessive runoff.
- Minimum street widths should be encouraged both for efficient use of space and to minimize storm water runoff. This would include the overall radius of cul-de sacs. Street widths could be further reduced by making some streets one-way.
- Parking areas located along roads and/or under buildings can minimize the need for separate parking lots thus decreasing the amount of paving.
- On-street parking should be considered along Barre Street and along interior roads.
- Consider the potential for integrating development with neighboring properties. Although there are currently no plans for development of neighboring properties, the potential exists for coordination that could provide mutual benefits.

Pedestrian Networks

- The neighborhood should be pedestrian-friendly with sidewalks provided for safety and convenience. Permeable materials should be considered.
- The park should be integrated with the neighborhood through a series of connecting sidewalks/trails to provide access for both visitors and residents.
- Common plazas and greens can be included as part of the pedestrian network, especially within the neighborhood.

Park Access and Recreation Networks

- Flexibility is required in the location of the Central Vermont Bike Path in order for it to be integrated in the proposed neighborhood and park. Strong consideration

should be given to locating the path through the neighborhood in order to maximize development potential along Barre Street.

- Consider parking for the Central Vermont Bike Path near the intersection of Barre Street and Old Country Club Road in order to reduce the need for parking on the property.
- The extension of paved bike trails into the park should be balanced with safety and wildlife concerns.

Interior Open Space/Greens and Storm Water Retention

- In addition to conserving a significant area of contiguous open space on the property, consideration should be given to creating small useable green spaces within the neighborhood. These could be formal greens and small open spaces where storm water can be directed and allowed to percolate into the soil.
- Green spaces can be designed to allow views into the site from Barre Street and to provide a sense that the park and neighborhood are interwoven. The intersection of Blanchard Brook with Barre Street may provide a logical place where a “window” can be provided into the property.
- Green roofs and permeable pavers should be considered to reduce storm water runoff exacerbated by the steep slopes and recommended densities.
- Plantings and natural areas within both the neighborhood areas and the conserved area can help slow water runoff and provide summer shade.
- Slopes greater than 20% should be re-vegetated, further reducing runoff.

Blanchard Brook & Wetlands

- A minimum 25-foot buffer is required around all wetland areas. Wider buffer areas should be provided where possible.

Plantings

- A mixture of deciduous and evergreen plantings should screen and soften views of the neighborhood both from the park and from off-site.
- Native species should be used for all peripheral plantings in order to provide an appearance of a natural transition between the neighborhood and the park.
- Species native to New England and/or common to Vermont should be used for plantings within the neighborhood to provide a resilient plant community that is tolerant of the more urban conditions that may exist on the property in the future.
- Invasive species should not be used.

VI. Conclusion – A Recommended Conservation & Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture

The Recommended Conservation and Development Plan for Sabin's Pasture (see Map 1) consists of establishing:

- A Montpelier Community Park consisting of 80-85 acres that are permanently conserved, including the upper pasture, the sledding hill, Blanchard Brook and associated wetlands, and most of the existing woodlands on the property; and
- A residential neighborhood on 15-20 acres containing between 175 and 225 residential units with a substantial component of affordable housing, high energy efficiency units, and integration with the future bike and pedestrian path directly connecting the neighborhood to downtown Montpelier. Development of the neighborhood will begin in a 15-acre portion of the lower pasture (Area A on Map 1). Development will proceed into an additional 5 acres (Area B on Map 1) if the housing goal for the property cannot be met on Area A within a 15 -year period.

This plan is a compromise between conservation and development. Site layout exercises and thorough discussions by the Working Group led to the realization that the major values associated with both components could be preserved with a joint plan of conservation and development.

An 80-85 Acre Park

The Working Group recommends that 80-85 acres of the property be placed in permanent conservation, available for public use forever, owned by the City of Montpelier as a city park. The area identified as Open Space on Map 1 upholds all of the conservation values identified by the community and the Working Group. The park creates access to public open space on the eastern side of town, enhances a trail corridor, protects the sledding hill and other valued recreational opportunities, maintains a wildlife corridor, preserves desirable views, and protects natural features unique to the site such as the slate quarry and wetlands.

The Working Group envisions a natural park with established trails as the primary means of recreation, and no road crossings or large park infrastructure such as playing fields or structures. The City of Montpelier's Parks Commission will lead management and stewardship decisions for the park, and future plans will incorporate parking and cycling and pedestrian access to and through it.

A 15-20 Acre Neighborhood Development

The Working Group recommends a residential neighborhood that will be pedestrian-friendly and energy efficient. The housing development should strictly adhere to the Conservation and Development Criteria found in this Recommended Plan and be consistent with the Montpelier Master Plan. The Working Group recommends a dense neighborhood development that is built in a manner that enhances the character of Barre Street, incorporates design features common to small New England towns, is comprised of a mix of

housing types including a minimum of 25% affordable housing units, and provides a desirable place to live and work for people of a range of ages and income levels. The proposed bike path should be integrated with the new neighborhood, connecting it to recreation paths to East Montpelier and Barre and offering direct bike access to downtown Montpelier.

The Working Group recommends that the development team for the new neighborhood be chosen by the City in accordance with a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) that explicitly incorporates the Conservation and Development Criteria in this Recommended Plan. The development team should have a clear understanding of the Conservation and Development Criteria so that as the project progresses the values identified in this report will be fully represented.

Development Scenarios

The Working Group has identified two areas that are suitable for housing development, Area A (15 acres) and Area B (5 acres) as shown on Map 1. The Working Group recommends that the City allow the development of between 175 and 225 residential units on these areas, proceeding as described in the following three scenarios:

Scenario 1

The Working Group recommends that the City allow the development of between 175 and 225 residential units on Area A. If physical and market conditions allow for the development of a neighborhood of this recommended density on Area A, Area B will be permanently conserved and added to the adjacent park land.

Scenario 2

If, after a 15-year period, the recommended number of residential units cannot be built on Area A, the City would have the ability to permit development in Area B to meet the recommended total number of units on Areas A and B under the following conditions:

- Area B would only be available for development 15 years after the date of occupancy of the of the first residential unit on Area A;
- Development on the eastern part of Area B will be sited and designed so that it does not have an “undue adverse impact” on a pedestrian’s views to the southeast and south from the viewpoints identified in this Recommended Plan;
- The preferred location for residential development is south of the current location of the farm road and on the western portion of Area B;
- Development will commence on the western part of Area B and move eastward, but only to the degree necessary to meet the recommended number of residential units.

Scenario 3

A majority of city voters could decide to add Area B to the conservation lands after the 15-year period has passed, regardless of the number of units that have been built on Area A. After such a vote, the City Council shall extinguish all development rights on Area B and add Area B to the conservation lands.

VII. Appendix

Map 1 - Recommended Conservation and Development Plan

Maps 2a & 2b - Distance to parks maps

Map 3 - Locus map with existing protected land and trails in Montpelier & E. Montpelier

Map 4 - Site Analysis by Jean Vissering, Landscape Architect.

Map 5 – Montpelier zoning map 8/30/06