

Montpelier Country Club Road Site
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – SPRING 2023

Question: The survey asks the question “How would you rank your support for the Recreation and Community Facility to be located on the Country Club Road site?” What does “facility” mean?

Answer: The facility means the Recreation and Community building itself. The question intends to ask the community to rank support of the new Center to be located on the Country Club Road site.

Question: What is the process for decision-making? (Timeline – setting expectations about development)

Answer: In the spring stage, the City is asking for input on the survey (closing May 12, 2023) and the feedback from the public meetings plus these findings will be presented to City Council on May 24. The City Council will make a decision on the concept plan at that meeting and the consultant team will present the final Actionable Master Plan to the public and Council on June 28. This will conclude Phase 1 of the Country Club Road Master Planning process. The next steps recommended in this plan will take time and the process of building a partnership will be very dependent on the partner, the market conditions, and the scope of the development phase. The creation of new housing units is likely still several years away. Given the very pressing housing crisis and range of recreational needs in the community, it is imperative that the City proceed with intention, but also expediency.

Question: What will the Actionable Master Plan include?

Action: This “Actionable Master Plan” is a living document that will be used to guide the City in its next steps to advance the community’s goals for the site. The concept plan that will be incorporated sets a vision for the balance and scale of the uses on the property. The document itself is to be referenced to incorporate and recognize the community’s goals and to be used by the City and future consultants in next steps with due diligence, planning, and partnerships.

- **The document will include:**
 - **A summary of the process of the Phase 1 due diligence, community conversations, and concept planning**
 - **Recommendations such as advancing the Recreation and Community Zone process; continuing work on re-zoning; exploring a Growth Center designation expansion and pursuing a TIF District designation; forming a working group with Abenaki representatives and City stakeholders to find areas for Abenaki celebration, education, and recognition; exploration of transit solutions; further design and permitting due diligence; and creating subdivision plans.**
 - **Some of these steps will be concurrent, while some are consecutive, so the next work will occur in phases by a variety of team members and City stakeholders.**

Question: How does the Master Plan affect my tax bill?

Answer: At this phase of Master Planning, the money being spent in conducting due diligence is considered an economic development cost and is not associated with the \$2 million bond the community approved in support of the acquisition. The creation of a Master Plan does not encumber the City to any further capital improvements or bonding. Any expenditure on capital improvements that would impact residents' tax bills would require another City-wide vote.

Question: This property isn't currently zoned for housing. How will this all be feasible?

Answer: Zoning Districts can be changed through an amendment process. The Planning Department and Planning Commission generally make at least one set of zoning amendments every year and most have at least one district change. The Planning Department staff are currently putting together this year's revisions and will wait for the conclusion of this Master Plan process to make zoning district changes at CCR that would allow the project to be implemented. For example, the lower areas could be either Mixed Use Residential or Riverfront (like Barre Street) depending on final plans. The upper residential areas may be Residential 3000 (like Loomis Street) or Residential 6000 (like College Street). Once a zoning district proposal is agreed upon, it should take about 2-3 months to go through all the hearings and make those changes official.

Question: Why not stop the road in the flat section of the property and increase density of housing at the bottom of the site, leaving the upper part for recreation and open space?

Answer: The community feedback during the winter stage identified housing as a preferred use in most of the buildable areas. We also heard that a second egress to the site, either over to Sabin's Pasture or up to Town Hill Road, was desired because it would provide better accessibility to the downtown. Feedback and survey results from the winter stage of this process supported housing development in the upper part of the property to minimize the visual impact upon first entering the site. That being said, if a private partner housing developer can achieve higher density while mitigating the visual impact and achieving the other goals of the Actionable Master Plan, the City would consider this as an alternative to the concept selected and included in this first phase.

Question: Why do the three concepts provide between 184-292 units?

Answer: During the winter stage of this process, the community most favorably supported Test Sketch C, which had a balance of this range of housing density and recreational uses on the site. It's essential to remember that the concept plan is simply a vision and illustrative part of the Master Plan. The final land plan will be established when a development partner or partners are selected, and proposals are reviewed by City Council.

Question: How did the team arrive at the estimated costs for the housing infrastructure?

Answer: The estimates for the infrastructure to support the housing development within the City's property boundary include sidewalks, trails, water and sewer lines, and roads, including a possible

connector road to an abutting property. The sources of these estimates varied by type of construction – some came from the design team’s database and some came from the City’s Department of Public Works.

Question: [Tax Increment Financing \(TIF\)](#) seems to be a large possible funding source. What is the likelihood of the City getting a State designation?

Answer: The process of getting a TIF District is lengthy and rigorous. There is no guarantee that Montpelier could get a new TIF District designation from the Vermont Economic Progress Council (VEPC). That said, with appropriate planning and with a suite of viable private development projects that require significant public infrastructure to be feasible, there is a good likelihood that a district encompassing this property could meet the criteria. A precursor to this designation is appropriate zoning and the expansion of the Growth Center designation. While many factors would be out of the City’s control in obtaining this designation, Montpelier is an important place to incentivize growth and there is great potential in applying this economic development tool in this community.

Question: You say that the housing will be built by a developer. What kind of development partner could the City choose?

Answer: Because the City is not in the business of developing housing itself, the consultants’ recommendation will be to create subdividable lots for the housing and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to form a public-private partnership. This could be formed with one or more entities – private developers, non-profit developers, institutions, or organizations such as Downstreet Housing & Community Development, for example. Who will be the most viable or aligned partner for the City at the time will be a decision to be made by the City Council at the time.

Question: What kind of market analysis has been done for this level of housing?

Answer: There has been no formal housing market analysis during this phase. However, the VT Housing Finance Agency found that 30,000-40,000 new housing units are needed statewide to close the housing gap. Applying a straight per capita formula, Montpelier would need 300-400 units to affordably and appropriately house its residents. That is a minimum, given that Montpelier is also the State capital and a regional growth area. A more specific assessment of the market will be done by the development partner when making a proposal for development at this site, which will address the needs that are particular to the community at that particular time.

Question: What kind of due diligence has been done for the feasibility and constructability of the site?

Answer: The City first commissioned Stone Environmental to complete a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment which was completed in April of 2022. The Phase I ESA identified two recognized environmental conditions; two aboveground storage tanks (gasoline/diesel) and historical use of herbicides and pesticides. The recommendations were to monitor the tanks and conduct additional soil analysis. In the fall of 2022, the City’s consultant team led by VHB environmental scientists, evaluated the natural resources (including wetlands, streams, rare plant species, and natural communities). VHB also conducted a traffic assessment, evaluating access, traffic volumes, the

intersection, and transit. An Archaeological Resources Assessment by Crown Consulting identified six sites within the property boundaries that are not proposed to be impacted by any of the concept plans proposed. The existing building was evaluated by Black River Design to determine its possible reuse for recreational and community uses, which is being considered in the parallel process for the Recreation and Community Zone programming.