

**Sabin's Pasture Working Group Meeting Notes**

12/17/07 5:30 PM-7:15PM

Woodbury College, 660 Elm Street

Present: Todd Bailey, Katherine Cooper, Jennifer Hollar, Mary Hooper, Dave Keller, Rodger Krussman, Jim Libby, Rory Malone, Neal Rodar, Roy Schiff, Leigh Seddon, Nancy Sherman, John Waldo

**5:45-6:15 Impact of Potential Growth Center designation for Montpelier and Sabin's Pasture** – Gwendolyn Hallsmith, Montpelier Planning Director.

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing is a goal for Montpelier.
- Montpelier has surplus capacity (water, sewer, schools). Absorbing growth where capacity exists gives the City more of a tax base to support our schools, and can make housing more affordable by reducing infrastructure costs that are passed on to home buyers.
- City has received a grant to determine if Montpelier is interested in applying for Growth Center designation. If the City does decide to seek designation, the City would have an opportunity to use tax increment financing (TIFs) to fund infrastructure development on properties within the designated Growth Center without raising the municipal or school tax rate.
- Next Steps for consideration of Growth Center:
  1. Work with Regional Planning Association on growth projections for the City
  2. Determine where infill development could go
  3. Determine what kinds of housing would be needed to accommodate projected growth
  4. Determine the boundary of the Growth Center to accommodate projected growth
- If Sabin's Pasture were part of the Growth Center, then this could allow the City to fund the infrastructure on the property without raising tax rates. This could allow us to build a neighborhood with the types of housing and other uses that best suit the needs of the community.

**6:15-6:50 Vision for Sabin's Pasture** - Neal Rodar led discussion on how Working Group members would like to see the future of Sabin's Pasture. Comments categorized below.

Overall vision:

- An attractive neighborhood and new park that are integrated with each other and with surrounding neighborhoods.
- A third city park for Montpelier with access through a new neighborhood that is connected to existing development along Barre Street.
- A solution that allows Montpelier to grow. The plan for Sabin's Pasture maximizes density allowed under zoning and maximizes conservation to create housing that serves the area's needs now and into the future.

- Sabin's Pasture is developed and conserved in a way that supports the quality of life in Montpelier and Central Vermont. By developing Sabin's Pasture in a reasonable way, development pressure on outlying areas has been reduced.
- Dense development along Barre Street is low enough so that it does not impact the views from the new city park behind it. Important views include the views from the upper pasture and from the top of the sledding hill.
- The bike path is an artery that connects the neighborhood and the park to the Barre Street neighborhood and downtown.
- Development plans meet current needs and allow flexibility for development in the future as the need grows and changes. The plans maintain an open mind toward the needs of the future.
- The plan for Sabin's Pasture has sparked a conversation about potential infill development in Montpelier to maintain existing density.

Vision of the developed area:

- A smart growth neighborhood that is dense, pedestrian-friendly, takes advantage of existing infrastructure, and includes a mix of housing alternatives.
- A neighborhood with a mix of housing types to allow older empty nesters to down-size and young families to afford to live here.
- A neighborhood that is developed using green development principles.
- A neighborhood that is physically linked to existing development on Barre Street.
- A highly developed area along Barre Street that is inviting and relates aesthetically to existing development.
- The housing is both affordable and green.
- A mix of commercial and residential development on both sides of Barre Street that is creative and not cookie-cutter.
- A neighborhood that is consistent aesthetically with what is in town now.
- In addition to housing, the development includes studio space for artists and other live/work spaces.

Vision of the protected area:

- The protected area is a third city park for Montpelier – another jewel in the city's park system to add to Hubbard Park and North Branch Park.
- The new park is a gateway to new and existing recreational trails in Montpelier and East Montpelier (biking, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing) that link city parks and area open spaces and increase access to parks for area residents. The park provides potential for links to future conserved land.
- The new park includes the sledding hill, quarry, upper pasture, knoll, and stream. Unique habitats and species are protected in the park.
- The protected area is a wild park – open for skiing, sledding, walking but otherwise a natural place.
- The existing woods are preserved as part of the park.
- Access is provided from several points, including the new development, to make the park accessible to the entire community.

- The new park is open for a variety of recreational uses to serve the needs of the community.
- The new park provides a link to wildlife corridors to the east.
- The whole property is protected as a wild park, a quiet sanctuary away from traffic and noise.

**6:50-7:15 Discussion & Plans for upcoming meetings**

1. Group acknowledged that while specific visions for the pasture vary and compromise will be required, there is much common ground.
2. Some members voiced concern that the student presentations at the enVision Montpelier stakeholder meeting 12/11 allowed for a limited amount of housing units and/or a small development area, and gave the impression that TPL supported a more aggressive conservation outcome than had come out of the public process so far. TPL reiterated that the student projects were not intended as TPL-endorsed plans for the future, and that TPL is seeking input from the community and recommendations from the Working Group about the mix of conservation and development.
3. Plans for next meetings
  - 1/14 – Group will discuss more specifically and begin to map out what mix of conservation and development they think would best suit the community's needs and take into account public input to date.
  - Potential location change to City Hall – Mary Hooper to check into availability.