

Economic Health and Heritage Committee – 7 Jan 2013 Report to the Cazenovia Village Board

Formed by a resolution of the Village Board in March 2012, the Economic Health & Heritage Committee (EHH) has met monthly for nine months to review the current planning and zoning for the Village Edge South (VES) zone. Each of the meetings has been open to the public and recent meetings in particular have included a good dialogue between the committee and interested members of the public.

The group has reached consensus on a number of issues and feels that the next logical step will be to begin drawing upon outside expertise and professional assistance to develop the detailed language and procedures that will ultimately be needed. Before shifting to this phase, the committee feels it is important for the Village Board of Trustees to acknowledge its work to date and authorize the more formal process of developing specific recommendations for language which could be used to update the VES section of the Comprehensive Plan and ultimately the zoning and regulations applicable to VES.

Overview: The bucolic setting and character of the existing agricultural lands included in VES present a popular image at the Village edge, however the property is sited in a logical area for development. Appropriate development of VES has the potential to be a positive undertaking for the Village and surrounding community. EHH feels that any development of VES must be compatible with Cazenovia's distinctive rural upstate town and village character while at the same time offering beneficial economic enhancement opportunities. The adoption of clear standards which articulate the community's goals for this zone will offer potential developers clear guidance as to what is expected/desired and what is not. Development of the VES area should strive for excellence in planning, design and implementation.

The following is a brief summary of the observations, findings and recommendations of the committee as of December 2012:

1. Changes to the zoning currently in place are strongly recommended. The current regulations could allow undesirable development to occur and are not optimum for either historic/aesthetic preservation or setting the conditions for economic growth.
2. Current regulations do not encourage the visionary planning for the area which is desired. Construction in the zone should be guided by strong site plan review and architectural review authority combined with specific design standards as references. Other communities that have successfully employed this approach such as Saratoga and Pittsford should be used as resources with appropriate references that fit the Cazenovia community and VES selected from the numerous existing options. The Village's existing Historic Preservation/ Architectural Review Committee has been identified as a potential resource for implementation. Experimentation with this approach on the limited scale of the VES zone may produce a model for later incorporation on a Village-wide basis.

3. A significant flaw with the existing regulations is the building footprint cap of 3,500 square feet. This cap may produce negative unintended consequences regarding the manner in which the zone is developed and it precludes many uses which could be beneficial to the Village. The committee recommends adopting a formula allowing larger building sizes with proportional increases in lot size and open space as a trade-off. It is recommended that the regulations be modified to allow for 3,500 square feet of building size per acre developed up to a maximum footprint. A maximum footprint in the range of 20,000-25,000 square feet is suggested.
4. An enhanced conservation analysis process should be put in place to help preserve and optimize the area's numerous desirable natural features. The Town of Cazenovia has already adopted legislation which would be an appropriate starting point. Specific site design parameters should be established for the zone such as preservation of green space, requirement of side and rear parking areas and vegetative buffering. Retention of open space along Route 20 with a managed view and vista across the site to the southwest is desired as part of this process.
5. VES should be viewed as two distinct zones versus one as it is currently. The area is naturally divided by the wooded water course that runs east-west through the approximate center of the property. The northern portion, which borders Route 20 and has a variety of commercial uses to the west, north and east and a natural buffer to the south, would be appropriate for a wider spectrum of potential uses. The southern portion is bordered on the west and south by current or proposed residential areas and should be restricted to uses compatible with that scenario. Existing commercial property in the Town east of the VES zone is included within the "hard edge" described by the Comprehensive Plan and should be included in the review process for potential redevelopment as a future component of the northern sector of VES.
6. Form over function should be a guiding principle to maximize economic development options while preserving character and Village gateway aesthetics. Uses with significant economic benefit such as a modern multi-story hotel could also be an attractive addition to the Village edge with appropriate architecture and site design characteristics. Preservation of the existing historic downtown retail community has also been identified as an important goal. A survey of downtown merchants revealed considerable openness to retail uses in VES. A dominant theme was that retail in this zone should only be allowed for uses that could not be located in the historic business district. One strategy to achieve this goal would be the designation of a *minimum* footprint size for VES retail uses to steer smaller boutique-style shops into existing downtown storefronts. Language precluding strip-mall style construction should also be included. Appropriate additional retail opportunities within the community may reduce "leakage" and actually increase local shopping.
7. Opportunities to plan the whole zone or significant portions thereof comprehensively should be pursued. Collaboration between the Village, landowners and potential developers to identify and plan for roads, aquifer recharge/conservation areas, view sheds and prime areas for development/redevelopment will produce benefits for the community.

8. Protection of the aquifer is a paramount concern for this zone. Existing safeguards combined with consideration of engineered solutions which increase options while maintaining or enhancing current conditions will lead to optimum use and safety.

If authorized by the Village Board, the committee would begin the process of researching the best way to achieve the recommendations above and creating detailed language and recommendations to amend the VES section of the Comprehensive Plan. The EHH would seek to consult with regional planning professionals to develop the most effective outcome. Those recommendations would be subject to public input and approval by the Village Board. The final phase would be to develop revisions to the VES section of the Village Code based on the revised Comprehensive Plan which would also be subject to public input and ultimate approval by the Village Board.

Respectfully submitted for consideration on 18 December 2012,

The Village of Cazenovia Economic Health and Heritage Committee

Kurt Wheeler – Village Board of Trustees
William Hall – (Former Member) Planning Board
Phil Byrnes – Zoning Board of Appeals
Ted Bartlett – Historic Preservation Committee
Karen Eldridge – Historic Cazenovia Business District
Bill Zupan – Cazenovia Town Board
Don Ferlow – Cazenovia Advisory Conservation Commission
Dave Connor – Village Economic Development Committee