

# VILLAGE PLAN / CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

## VILLAGE PLAN ALTERNATIVE

### What is the Village Plan Alternative?

The Village Plan Alternative is a planning tool that promotes compact development with a mix of land uses, including residential, small-scale commercial, recreation and conservation. These mixed uses are in close proximity to one another within a neighborhood. It is designed to implement the specific provisions of RSA 674:21.VI (a) to allow for the creation of new villages with mixed-used development that is scaled to the smaller populations and lower density of New Hampshire towns.

The Village Plan Alternative (VPA) was designed to respond to the economic, environmental and social consequences of conventional zoning that tends to isolate places of work, home, and recreation, producing a sprawling development pattern. The VPA addresses these consequences by promoting the smart growth principles of compact, mixed-use development, preserving the working landscape, and protecting environmental resources.

The VPA is based on the best examples of village design and Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND), scaled to a rural setting. A VPA development should be designed at the human scale and provide for pedestrian access, clear delineations of public and private spaces, and connections between residential and small-scale retail areas.



Buildings shall relate to scale and design to the surrounding buildings and the human environment- *Village Design Model Ordinance, Rockingham Planning Commission*

### Requirements of the Village Plan Alternative

There are two key requirements of the Village Plan Alternative per RSA 674:21:

- 1 The entire density permitted by existing land use regulations must be located within 20 percent or less of the total parcel available for development.
- 2 The village plan alternative must comply with existing subdivision regulations relating to emergency access, fire prevention, and public health and safety. However, lot size, setbacks, dimensional requirements for frontage and setbacks, density regulations, and lot size regulations shall not apply.

**Optional requirement:** Although not a requirement under RSA 674:21, an application made under the village plan alternative ordinance can be given expedited review. Expedited review was required under the original VPA legislation but was removed in a subsequent amendment. Expedited review could be used as an incentive to encourage developers to design their projects utilizing village design principles. The locations and extent of areas in a town zoned for the Village Plan Alternative should be set forth in the Master Plan, based on the considerations given in the above sections.

## CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

### What is Context Sensitive Solutions?

The NH Department of Transportation defines **Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)** as “a collaborative interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility for all users.” CSS is a process in which communities play a critical role in shaping transportation projects. Community stakeholders help to define problems, create vision statements, and provide input in determining the ultimate solution that best suits their community.

Place Making is the first step in the CSS process and is useful in helping communities define the character, problems, and opportunities of a particular location. It can also be valuable in identifying ideas for projects and discovering new opportunities for collaboration and problem solving. In addition, Place Making exercises provide an excellent means of receiving and synthesizing input from a large group of community stakeholders.

The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) and Tom Warne & Associates assisted the State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation in implementing this new planning technique. PPS defines CSS by the following:

*“The central tenet of CSS is that communities should not be molded to the requirements of motor vehicle traffic alone-- transportation should preserve the scenic, historic, and environmental resources of the places it serves.”*

### Helpful Resources

For more information on Context Sensitive Solutions and Place Making, visit the following websites:

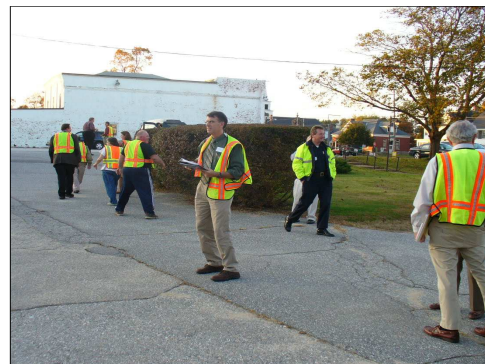
- ◆ **Project for Public Spaces:** [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)
- ◆ **Context Sensitive Solutions:** [www.contextsensitivesolutions.org](http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org)
- ◆ **Federal Highway Administration:**

The Town of Pelham worked with NH DOT and utilized CSS to rethink traffic flow in the Town Center. A series of workshops were held to guide NH DOT transportation solutions to alleviate congestion through Pelham’s town center. Using Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) to solicit public input for transportation projects is a fairly new concept. CSS seeks to balance economic, transportation, environmental, scenic, aesthetic, and human factors.

Participants conducted a place audit which identified that a lack of a sense of place in the downtown area was the most commonly cited problem. In response, there were suggestions to develop gateway features, such as signs and monuments, install decorative lighting, and highlight historic features. Traffic congestion and inadequate bike/pedestrian facilities were also identified in a majority of groups.



Meeting participants take to the street to identify opportunities in Pelham’s downtown.



CSS gives stakeholders a key role in transportation planning