



To: Fairfax Planning Commission
From: Emily Klofft, Regional Planner
Date: March 13, 2026
Subject: Summary of Public Outreach

The Fairfax Pizza & Planning outreach event was held on February 17th. The event was advertised via a mailed postcard and online. Roughly 35 residents attended in-person, with an additional 10 responding via the online comment form option. Residents were asked to consider the strengths, weaknesses of life in Fairfax, as well as the opportunities and challenges the Town might face in the future. Below is a brief summary of residents' responses. Full notes are attached.

Strengths: What are some of the great things about living in Fairfax?

- Quiet small town life with farms, dirt roads, and no traffic lights.
- Scenic views of Mount Mansfield.
- A strong K-12 school system and community.
- Lots of opportunities for community gathering and recreation: Recreation Department, Community Centers, the Town Forest and the new Garland Park.
- Convenient location to amenities and jobs nearby while staying more affordable than Chittenden County.
- A great collection of small local businesses.

Weaknesses: What would you change about living in Fairfax to make it a better place to live?

- Increased government communication and transparency.
- Reduce high property taxes.
- Improve walkability and bikeability in town, with the need for more crosswalks across VT 104 and sidewalks from Nan's Mobil to Huntville Road
- Protect character of the Village and improve aesthetics of new development.
- More housing that is affordable for all- especially senior and disabled residents on fixed-incomes.
- Concerns about the increase in chain stores, storage units & the sale of the pharmacy.
- Develop an industrial park and/or infrastructure to support clean industrial development that could reduce residential property taxes.
- Desire for more local restaurants and small shops.
- Need for public transportation as there is none currently.
- Desire for additional recreation sites such as tennis/pickleball courts, track & trails.

Opportunities: Think 10-20 years in the future- what new opportunities could Fairfax benefit from?

- Protect and expand green space, including a town green in the Village and a community garden.
- Improve water and wastewater infrastructure that can support residential and a potential industrial park.
- An increased number of small locally owned businesses, including more restaurant options. Capitalize on Fairfax's proximity to many major ski areas with local businesses and short-term rentals.
- A strong Community Center and recreational programming, especially for youth and senior residents.
- Striking a balance between new housing and preserving Fairfax's rural lands. There is a need for more housing options at affordable price points and housing for seniors in the Village.
- Consider local land trust and other options to preserve rural and agricultural land.
- More community-scale renewable solar energy.

Challenges: Think 10-20 years in the future- what new challenges could Fairfax face?

- Differing concerns about zoning regulations- some want to see no future changes to create more stability, some want larger lots and decreased density in the Village and some were concerned about limiting the ability to develop lots.
- Continued increase in property taxes is a major concern, need to ensure that community grows in a way that supports increasing the Grand List while keeping costs low, especially educational costs.
- Increased pressure from larger businesses/chains could drive out smaller local businesses.
- Capacity of water/sewer infrastructure is not well-understood, this will be important for future growth.
- Development pressure on farmland will likely increase, with a need to plan strategies such as land trust to protect farms.
- Ensuring Fairfax remains an attractive community to younger families and the middle and working classes with affordable housing options.
- Addressing police needs and potential crime issues.

Attachment: All Notes from Outreach and Online Form

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Notes from Group Discussion

- Quiet, love views, dirt roads
- Affordable compared to Chittenden County
- Rural feel, charm
- Great place to raise kids. Children stay in one school, family oriented
- Community band
- Halloween gathering
- Recreation department: inclusive and affordable; community center
- Only one flashing traffic light
- Sense of community
- Surrounded by nature: views, in mt Mansfield's arms, especially views when driving
- Town forest, rec path by the river, Garland Park (recently donated land from community member, house also offered, acquisition is on the ballot)
- School is great resource for town as center of life
- Senior housing opportunities
- Local ownership of cornerstone businesses
- Trash & recycling included
- Farmers market
- Open land
- Desirable place to live
- Equal distance/convenient location to other places

Notes Taken at Tables

- No traffic lights

- Good school system
- Roadside trash & recycling included
- Community center
- Farmer's market
- Open land
- Recreation dept./activities
- Desirable place to live
- Equidistant to many other areas
- Band
- Rural
- School PK-12
- Open space
- Not much air traffic
- Rural charm
- School (BFA)
- Senior housing
- Strong local ownership
- Rural charm
- No chain restaurants (McDonalds, Dunkins, etc)
- Fairfax Rescue
- BFA school- K-12
- Adult senior housing
- Post office is great
- J & H Hardware a plus
- School system?
- Road maintenance
- Open spaces: Town Forest. Rec. Path by River, Garland Park
- Community spirit
- Community Center improvements
- The school
- The friendly people
- The businesses
- Good neighborhood
- Covered bridge
- Open space, farms
- Garland Park, Fairfax Falls

- Combined library + school
- Community Center
- No cannabis shops!
- Fairfax Resue
- Our small businesses
- Quiet dirt roads, views, affordable
- Great people- with options
- Love the many dirt roads
- No traffic lights
- Rural
- It used to be each zoning district had its own purpose or area. If you want neighbors, you live in town, if you don't want neighbors you live in conservation or rural.
- Good people live here
- Quiet for the most part
- Community events
- Quiet, open views
- Affordable in relation to Chittenden County
- Farmland, active agriculture
- No traffic lights
- Quiet/views/affordable compared to Chittenden County
- Like the dirt roads
- Sense of community
- Family is safe

Online Survey Responses

- Small town feel with beautiful landscape
- Country type atmosphere. Country as it should be, not what people from cities move here and the first thing they do is bring what they left from the cities.
- The school, the library, summer camp through parks & rec, our dynamic parks & rec dept , natural areas. Local businesses like J&L hardware, sunflower bakery and steeple market
- Good community center and in recreational path
- I love the quiet, non-human spaces that abound. I love seeing the recreation department blossom. I love the dirt roads even though they eat up our cars; it keeps the traffic a little slower. I love the small businesses that make it work here.
- Family friendly, quiet

- The people. The families, the multiple generations, especially native Fairfax old-timers. Farmers.
- Great rec department- really trying to get folks (all ages) out and support families. Thank you!
- We love the rural nature and quietness. Additionally we love that the town is closed by 8pm.
- Small town feel with convenience to amenities

Weaknesses: What would you change about living in Fairfax to make it a better place to live?

Notes from Group Discussion

- Limited resources for elderly, disabled low-income
- Transparency (voice not heard)
- Constant zoning changes
- Taxes
- Infrastructure needed to attract more new “clean” businesses
- Road safety, lack of walk/bikeability
- Downtown development: want to see more historic preservation, plant more trees
- Lacks good restaurant that serves 3 meals a day, small gift shop, book store: overall more businesses and gathering places
- Danger of no crosswalk at blinking light (in works?)
- Community garden
- Worsening aesthetic of new builds w/o character
- Corporatization (e.g. sale of pharmacy, Dollar general)
- Lack of affordability
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of traffic lights
- More active community center
- No real public library with public parking
- Lack of business
- Storage unit locations
- More recreation: tennis courts, pickleball, basketball
- Lack of senior housing accessibility
- Town forest (bigger sign)

Notes Taken at Tables

- No traffic lights
- Lack of parking
- More active community center
- No real library (public)
- High taxes
- No businesses
- Storage unit locations
- No sidewalks up to Nan's Mobil
- No tennis court, no track space
- No basketball courts
- Lack of senior housing accessibility
- Town Forest/space lack of
- Manage downtown development
- Retain historical buildings
- Plant or keep more trees
- Taxes are too high
- Attract more clean businesses
- Infrastructure improvements to attract business (water/sewer)
- Infrastructure to support aging in place
- Walk/bike-ability of the Town
- Rotary Union Bank
- Sidewalks along 104
- No more storage units
- New buildings need to be more architecturally pleasing or necessarily modern or traditional just make common sense
- Re-engineer Goose Pond Road and pave and make space for sidewalks
- Public transportation
- Worsening aesthetic
- Corporate infiltration
- Water Resources
- Affordability
- Too bad pharmacy is limited and open to public

- Restaurant
- Bowling alley
- Tennis court
- Pickleball court
- No crosswalk at the blinking light
- No sidewalk from Huntville to Nan's
- No restaurant
- Affordable housing
- Nice restaurant
- Better sign for the Fairfax forest- can't find it
- More sidewalks _ crosswalks
- Leveling the NE corner of Ferguson turn onto Huntville- major safety hazard- can't see oncoming cars
- Lack of senior housing
- Limited resources for retired, fixed income, disabled
- No public transport
- Great people – the Town does what they want
- No transparency
- Infrastructure
- More recreation
- Taxes
- Infrastructure development- another water treatment and well
- Have to be able to support growth of more housing
- More transparency
- Cleaner parks, access to outdoor recreation
- Lack of transparency
- More storage units
- Attract more business
- Limited resources for elderly/disabled/income limited
- Voice not heard
- Transparency
- Public transportation
- Constant zoning changes
- Neg impact in planning
- Need more senior housing

Online Survey Responses

- More sidewalks, more restaurants/cafe's , more team recreational sports for kids like in other towns.
- Nothing. Maybe more industrialization to lessen property taxes.
- More walkability en-route to the school. Maybe flashing walk way lights. Would love local places to rent skis and go cross country skiing.
- "Develop.
- Industrial park to take care of the heavy tax burden that landowners have to pay the best place would be the bellows farm
- Downhill to the sewer plant and they would pay for additions to the plant to access the X104 and 104A"
- "I'd love to see the center of town have the opportunity to develop and welcome more small businesses and apartment housing.
- More infrastructure to support this including sidewalks, crosswalks, updated wastewater, etc. Kids should be able to walk to school without getting run down trying to cross Main St.
- I wish there was more control over traffic speed on the back roads; it feels hazardous trying to take walks with my kids and pets."
- A restaurant
- Cut back on the "protesting" on town property every Saturday. Is this advocacy group paying the town for ongoing use of public property? Lower property taxes. Improve the academic outcomes at our school.
- "Slow down traffic on 104. It's unpleasant to live near it. If there are two or more houses near each other, can't we have residential area speed limits? It's probably the reason we will move eventually. It's not safe and not pleasant. People live there!
- Also BFA needs after school options for elementary kids. Please!
- I also wish Adam's market near the reservoir was good. We need something up here and if they served coffee and breakfast, they could catch commuter business.
- More rural trails and spaces. It would be great if we could open up a dedicated outdoor recreation area for mountain biking, TRAIL RUNNING, NORDIC SKIING, maybe even sledding.
- Complete sidewalks from town hall to post office!. Also more police presence.

Opportunities: Think 10-20 years in the future- what new opportunities could Fairfax benefit from?

Notes from Group Discussion

- Solid infrastructure, specifically water/wastewater
- Green space
- More economic activity in town
- Local land trust
- More green/renewable energy sources (portable solar)
- More spaces for youth to match fairfax's growth
- More diversity of housing choice to prevent "overhousing"
- More social gathering areas
- Medical facilities
- Future grant/federal funding opportunities
- Community garden
- Local business ownership
- More senior assisted living opportunities
- Look into opportunities for ski rentals/short-term rentals due to location
- Industrial development to attract larger employers
- More green space
- Smart growth: high density units
- Parking
- Mixed-use opportunities
- Rescue
- Getting student board represented in town

Notes Taken at Tables

- New businesses
- Little restaurants
- Hiking trails- advertise more
- Save or create green spaces
- Community Center
- Smart growth (high density units)
- Town Green
- Town Center
- Mixed use opportunities
- Parking
- Incentive for portable solar (if passes @state)
- More places for youth
- Maintain/improve the community center to match Fairfax's growth
- Diverse housing choices to allow downsizing and avoid overhousing issue
- Expand recreation/entertainment opportunities

- More social gathering areas
- Improved parking
- Medical facilities/center
- Paving grant/federal funding chances
- Large businesses
- Industrial areas
- Sidewalks along 104, 104A, Fletcher Rd
- Public transportation from St. Albans -> Smuggs, Stowe, Burlington, Airport, Plattsburgh Airport on a realistic schedule
- Apartment buildings (non-Handy)
- More housing options
- More renewable energy
- Local business owners
- More senior assisted living
- Community Center
- Ski rentals
- Industrial development
- Local business ownership
- Senior assisted living
- No more storage units
- Safe road crossings
- More recreational activities for the elderly
- Continue work on community Center -> Community garden
- Use more renewable energy sources (solar, wind)
- Slower speed for safety of kids getting on school buses and elderly crossing road
- Rec place for elderly to gather
- Community garden
- Community solar farms
- Better infrastructure
- An understanding of well/water generation capacity in permitting new houses
- Hydro power?
- A town green.
- Being one of the few rural areas left in the state.
- Zoning changes
- Preserve farms, farmers, land
- Restaurants
- Local business ownership

- Having infrastructure that is solid (water, sewer, police, part of public transport system)
- Encouraging the preservation of green space
- Saloon in Town or bar
- More economic activity in Town
- Increase local food production
- Restaurants in Town
- Recreation (courts, parks)
- Improve Falls access
- Create land trust to help preservation of open land
- A better infrastructure

Online Survey Responses

- More housing, more commercial space for small business, restaurants, cafe's.....please no more storage units or dollar general type stores
- "Lessen property taxes. No new opportunities. No on housing problem. If you want to keep small town feel, than we don't need city problem with homeless, etc. No such thing as free housing. None. And I'd hate like heck to see those big apartment buildings here in Fairfax."
- See my answers above. Keep it local! Invest in small business. Invest in our school and library.
- "An industrial park and industry welcome more business's and home entrepreneurs purchasing land for possible school growth as the current land is 2 small and too big to control 3 principles is ridiculous for that school. Deck brown did it all with a thousand students"
- "An upgraded wastewater system in town so that we can develop a larger tax base. I think some strong zoning laws (about which I know very little) would be amazing to preserve the areas where folks want to live out in the country, but development could happen closer to town center.
- Childcare?! A town-run center could really help attract people to live here."
- More businesses. Especially profitable small businesses bringing revenue into the community. Support families, they are the heart every community. Especially middle class families and families struggling for resources...the deck feels stacked against them these days.
- "More promotion of land use for sports and recreation. Other towns promote xc ski and snowshoeing and folks stop in local stores etc.

- More community. Do we have disaster response plans? Mutual aid is what would get us through.
- More food options
- Energy infrastructure that benefits the entire town. Ideas include a SMR with net output exported to adjoining towns to greatly reduce cost to town residents, investment in solar panels on town properties to benefit town or power municipal buildings. A dedicated outdoor town square similar to Westford.
- Shopping and restaurant diversity. We have enough pizza restaurants. Bring back Erica's Diner

Challenges: Think 10-20 years in the future- what new challenges could Fairfax face?

Notes from Group Discussion

- Zoning stability
- Continual sprawl
- Continued tax increases, property costs
- Re-zone village area: lots are too small
- Loss of farmland, preserving natural beauty
- Infrastructure to support net growth
- Actionable plan
- Managed budgets and accountability
- Unstable federal funding, esp. from FEMA
- Aging infrastructure, road erosion coupled with more traffic in and out
- Need dedicated police department
- Pedestrian safety
- Affordable housing
- Communication with state
- Trying to keep chain businesses away/promote small businesses
- Water resources: bottleneck for development, esp. in village
- Public transportation
- Growth centers: 128 area across the river, want to see it grow more
- Fairness to farmers when preserving agricultural land: can't preserve farms without preserving farmers' incomes, oftentimes land value is retirement plan or only income guarantee
- More public input on zoning?
- Land trusts to purchase land from farmers?
- Making town center attractive to outsiders/visitors

- Getting more people involved in town planning processes, especially younger people with children

Notes Taken at Tables

- Affordable housing
- Lack of infrastructure
- Public transportation
- Save agricultural land
- Growth Centers 128 area (across river) (*3 dwellings per acre?)
- Resistance to change, “progress”
- Parking?
- No trains or subway
- Loss of farmland, preserving Fairfax natural beauty
- Infrastructure to support growth -> need actionable plan
- Property tax -> keeping them low, ->focus on well managed budgets with restrictive line items
- Unpredictability of Federal funding esp. FEMA funding
- Erosion around Maple/Hunt Street from Mill Brook?
- 104 bridge- solution w/ State?
- More traffic coming into/out of Fairfax
- Police Department
- The need for public transportation
- No real crosswalks present- needed
- Need public transportation
- Need sidewalks
- More housing options, apartment bldg.
- More renewable energy
- Keeping chains away
- Unified vision
- Garbage mass built housing
- Climate change
- Affordability
- Water resources
- Taxes
- Keeping chains stores out
- Water restrictions
- No solar fields
- Infrastructure

- Keeping open spaces
- Place for a dance hall
- Missing Eric's + the old pharmacy
- Think about how society is changing- self-driving cars?
- Increasing taxes
- Continued tax raises
- Rezoning all districts to even smaller lots :(
- Infrastructure
- Traffic
- Police
- Fire
- Taxes
- Zoning stability now could lessen challenges.
- Continued sprawl
- Continual tax increases.
- Continual property cost increases.
- Rezone the village area- larger lots
- Pedestrian safety
- Taxes
- Public land vs public interest
- Land Trust

Online Survey Responses

- More growth would be good for the town but balancing the rural nature of the town with development is tricky. I do think that we need to grow the tax base of the town as property taxes are unsustainable at 10% increases per year. It would also be great if we could boost the test scores of the school to better our reputation and make the taxes more worth it. Right now I feel pretty dismayed with our town....it feels as though we are paying a lot in taxes but not getting much on return. We have to drive to other towns to do activities we like to do as a family. We are always leaving Fairfax to shop and eat out, have fun....it would be nice to have a few more options for things to do that other towns offer
- More taxes and more expansion in school. If everyone in the US is experiencing student decline, how is it that Fairfax is not, (36 million dollar additions and repairs. Needless a lot of it.)
- Increased population - housing/school expansion. Though that increases tax revenue. Rise in housing costs
- "We're facing it now.

- Overpopulation by renters and builders lake Gabe handy Which makes the school And property, 2 small and too costly."
- "I understand that a lot of people here don't want Fairfax to grow or change. But these same people don't want their taxes to keep going up (none of us do). We can't have both; we need to increase our tax base before we all have to leave the state.
- I worry that our beautiful new school will be empty if we don't continue to be an attractive place for young families to live. We need to spend the money now in infrastructure so that we can welcome folks with open arms."
- Too many new houses being built without the roadways to support
- I worry that the progressive mindset could take over Fairfax and ruin it with ever increasing taxes and horrible policies that make life impossible for middle class or financially struggling families.
- Fewer families, aging tax base, stagnant commerce, VT solitude keeping us disconnected
- Wastewater treatment will need to be overhauled at current expansion. Rte 104 bypass potentially or alternate to reduce heavy traffic.
- Increase in crime and school budget.