



Fairfield Bylaw Update

Public Outreach Session
February 17, 2025

Agenda

1. Presentation

- Review of Project Goals & Timeline
- Review of Development Constraints Analysis
- Review Potential Zoning Changes

2. Public Comment

- Small Group Discussion
- Small Group Discussion Share-Out
- Straw Poll on Zoning Options



Goal: Ensure alignment of the Town Plan and Land Use Regulations, with a focus on prioritizing protection and ongoing use of agricultural lands.



Municipal Plan

- Guide for accomplishing community aspirations and intentions through public investments, land use regulations (zoning) and actions the town can take.
- Standards for town plans are set by 24 V.S.A. § 4382

Zoning & Subdivision Bylaw

- Implements the vision and goals in the municipal plan with specific standards on uses, form and pattern of development.
- Must have a municipal plan under 24 V.S.A. § 4410

Town Plan Vision



It is the primary and fundamental intention of Fairfield to remain a rural, agricultural town.



Fairfield supports its agricultural economy and looks forward to a future where working lands continue to be in production for diverse forms of agriculture.



Fairfield encourages the development of small-scale enterprises in the village centers of Fairfield and East Fairfield that will offer basic goods and services for town residents, that will provide employment locally and that will enhance the town's rural way of life.



Fairfield values preserving our natural landscape and historic features.

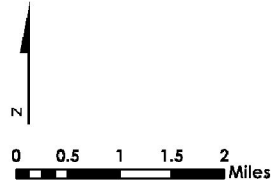
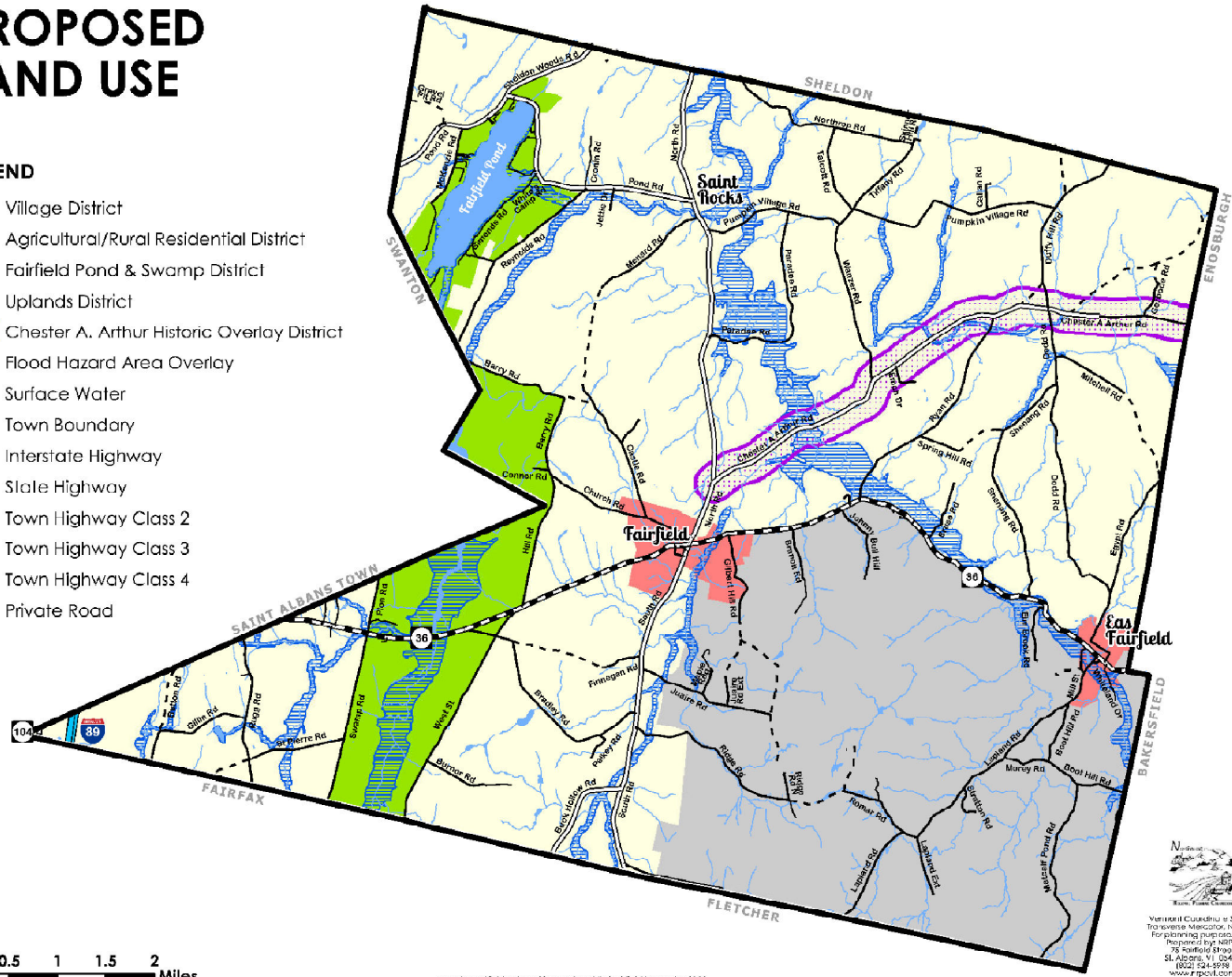


Fairfield is a vibrant and welcoming community.

PROPOSED LAND USE

LEGEND

- Village District
- Agricultural/Rural Residential District
- Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
- Uplands District
- Chester A. Arthur Historic Overlay District
- Flood Hazard Area Overlay
- Surface Water
- Town Boundary
- Interstate Highway
- State Highway
- Town Highway Class 2
- Town Highway Class 3
- Town Highway Class 4
- Private Road



Location: J:\GIS\Projects\County\Franklin\Fairfield\Townplan2020



 Vermont Geographic Information System

 For planning purposes only.

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 February, 2020

Agricultural District Purpose Statement

In agriculture lies the economic, social, historic, aesthetic and scenic character of the town and the fundamental strength and stability of the local and regional economy. Agricultural land represents a vulnerable and irreplaceable resource which must not be wasted; once it is developed it will likely be lost forever.

The purpose of the Agricultural District is **to provide for and protect agricultural, forestry and compatible residential, commercial, and recreational uses. Lower development densities and clustered development are encouraged so as to preserve the rural character and protect the agricultural resources of these areas.**

Though residential development is an appropriate use for these areas, and very likely will take place, measures should be taken to ensure that minimum lot sizes are large enough to accommodate a septic system.

Current Zoning Regulations- Agricultural District

- 1 acre minimum lot size
- Conservation Resources protected during subdivision
 - Farmland, prime and statewide agricultural soils: Structures must be located on field/pasture edge if feasible or on the least fertile soils
 - Steep slopes: No development on slopes >25%, no structures on slopes 15-25%
- Planned Unit Development
 - Optional form of subdivision that allows clustering of lots, with 60% of the parent parcel conserved.

2018-2020 Zoning Bylaw Update Changes

- Standards for Agricultural District
 - Single-unit homes moved from conditional use approval to permitted use
 - No change in minimum lot size (1 acre) or frontage (200 ft), front setback reduced from 70' to 50'
- Planned Unit Development Standards (PUD)
 - Added more detailed standards
- Other Changes
 - Added site plan review
 - Removed requirement for frontage on an existing town or state road (Class I-3)



Development Constraints Analysis

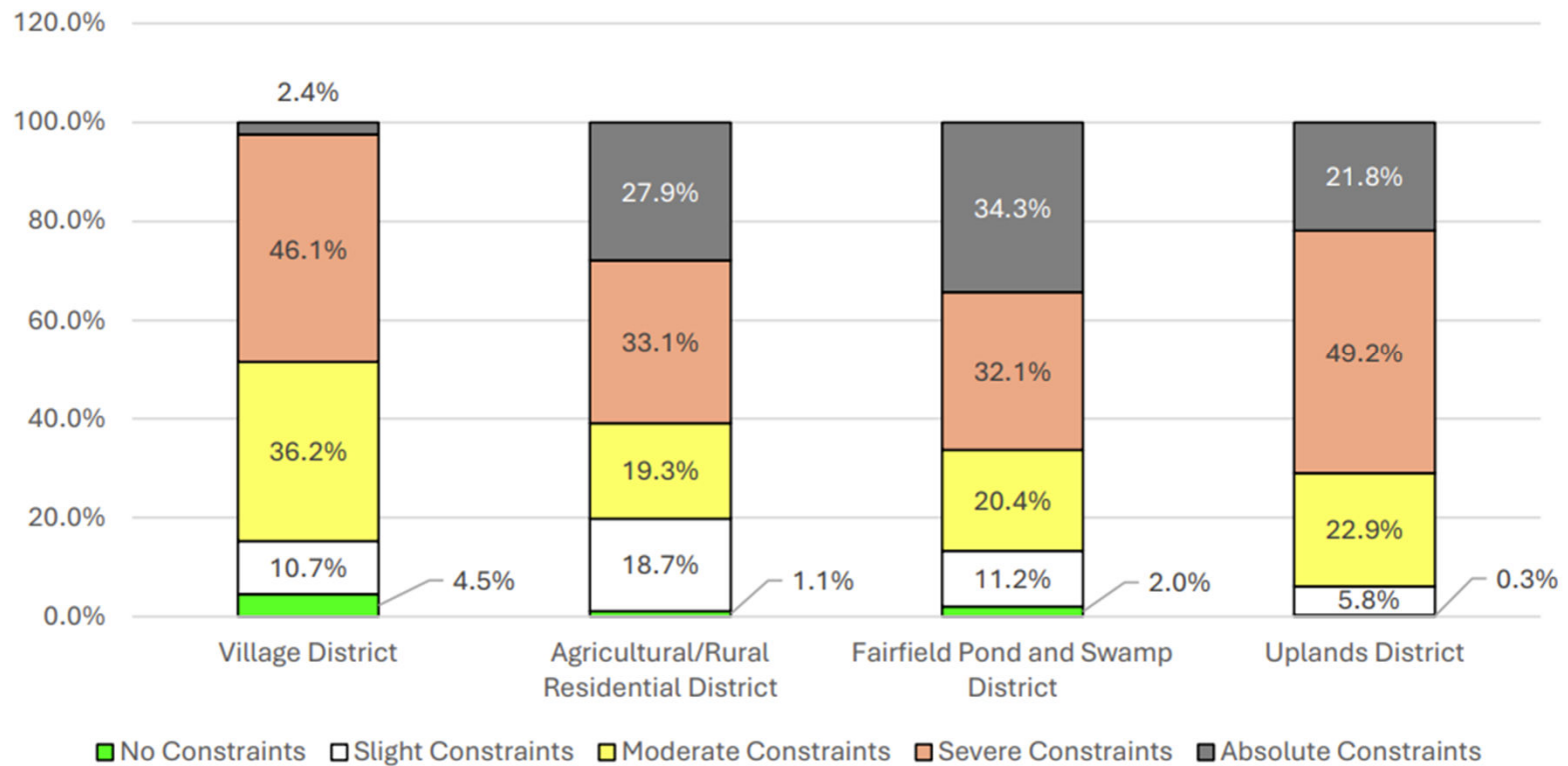


Purpose: Reference tool to understand locations of potentially sensitive areas.



Process: Identify and score various resources such as wetlands, agricultural soils and steep slopes.

Development Constraints by Current Zoning District



Prime & Statewide Agricultural Soils	37.5%
Public & Conserved Land	24.1%
Slopes 15-25%	21.9%
Vermont Significant Wetlands (Class I & Class II) + 50 ft. buffer	12.4%
100 Year Floodplain	6.6%
Lake Champlain Basin Lidar-Informed Flood Inundation Layer	5.2%
Slopes >25%	4.6%
River Corridors	4.4%
Source Water Protection Areas	0.2%
<i>Note: Some areas may have more than 1 constraint</i>	



Severe and
Absolute
Development
Constraints in the
Agricultural/Rural
Residential
District

Current Use	75.6%
>1,000' Distance from Class 1, 2 or 3 Roads	47.2%
Severe Septic Soils (Class IV)	43.5%
Marginally Suited Septic Soils (Class III)	31.6%
High Priority Wildlife Habitat Blocks	28.2%
Elevation > 1,000'	3.5%
<i>Note: Some areas may have more than 1 constraint</i>	



Minor and Moderate
Development
Constraints in the
Agricultural/Rural
Residential District

Fairfield Constraints Analysis

LEGEND

Constraints

- No Constraints
- Slight Constraints
- Moderate Constraints
- Severe Constraints
- Absolute Constraints

Zoning Districts

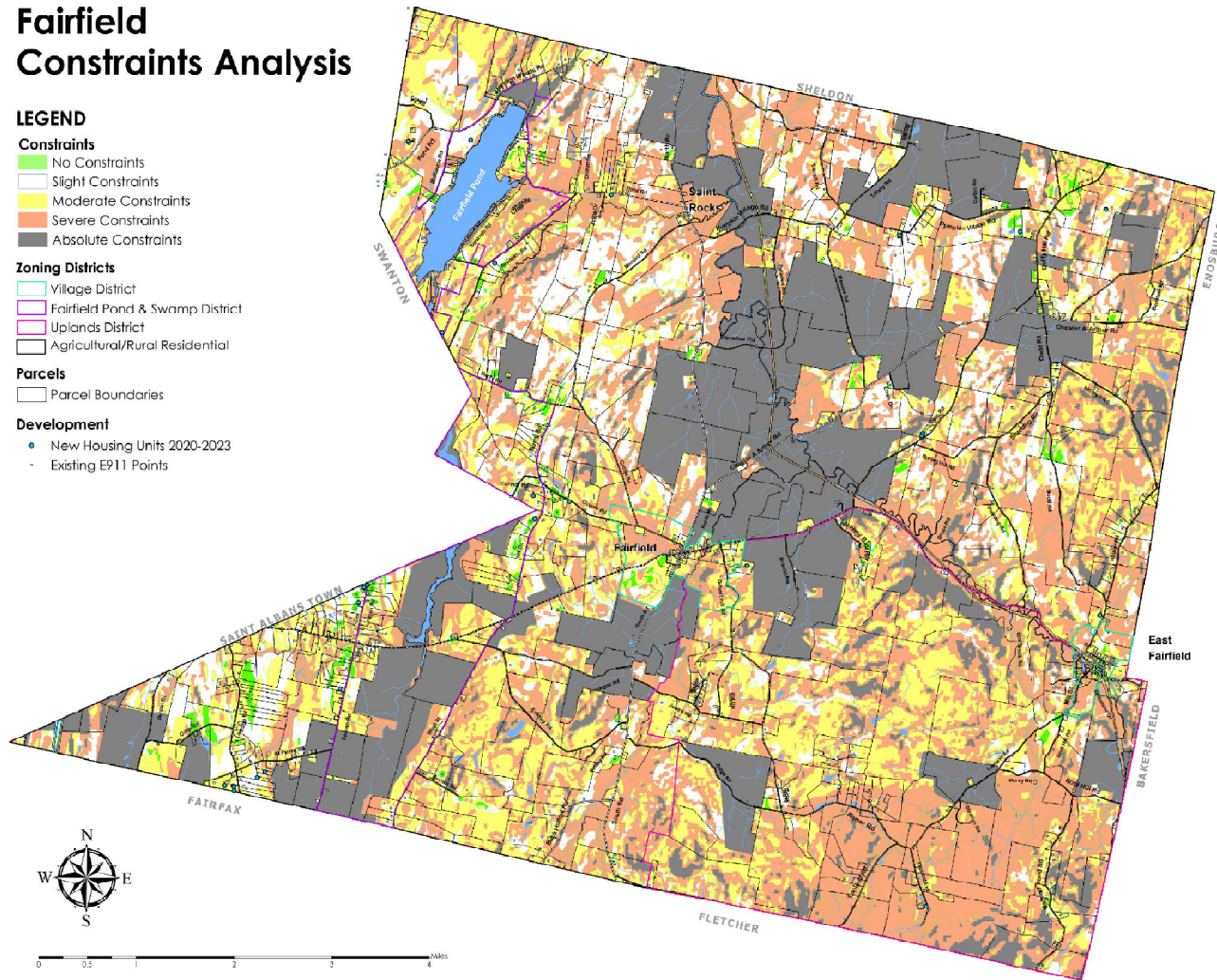
- Village District
- Fairfield Pond & Swamp District
- Uplands District
- Agricultural/Rural Residential

Parcels

- Parcel Boundaries

Development

- New Housing Units 2020-2023
- Existing EP11 Points



Vermont Coordinate System
 Transverse Mercator, NAD 83
 For planning purposes only.
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 September 2024





Potential Zoning Changes

Focus is on changes
that address density of
development

Balance need to protect
agricultural lands and
landowners' ability to
utilize/develop their
land



Zoning
Options to
Discuss

Increasing minimum lot size

Increasing minimum lot size
for major subdivisions

Separating minimum lot size
from density

Conservation subdivision

Increasing Minimum Lot Size

- Current minimum lot size in Agricultural District = 1 acre
- Large lot sizes 25+ acres may be enrolled in current use
- Smaller 2-10 acre lots may preserve open space and rural character but may not be large enough to ensure continued use for some kinds of agriculture
- Increasing lot sizes may reduce the potential for conflict between agricultural uses and residential traffic
- Lot size impacts affordability
- Larger minimum lot sizes reduce the number of lots landowners may subdivide

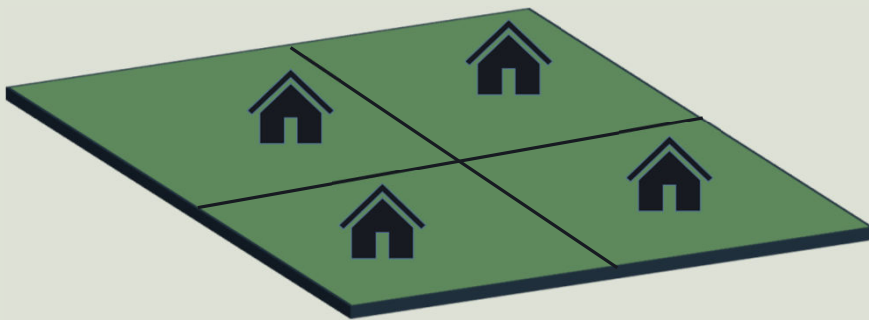
Increasing Minimum Lot Size- Major Subdivisions (Dual Lot Size)

- Under current bylaws major subdivision is 3 lots or more
- Require larger lot sizes only for major subdivisions
 - Minor (two-lot) subdivisions would include provisions prohibiting further subdivision within a set time frame
- Compared to an overall increase in minimum lot size the dual lot size would allow for easier subdivision of a small number of lots for sale or family use
- May lead to fragmentation of working lands over time as no land is conserved

Separating Minimum Lot Size from Density

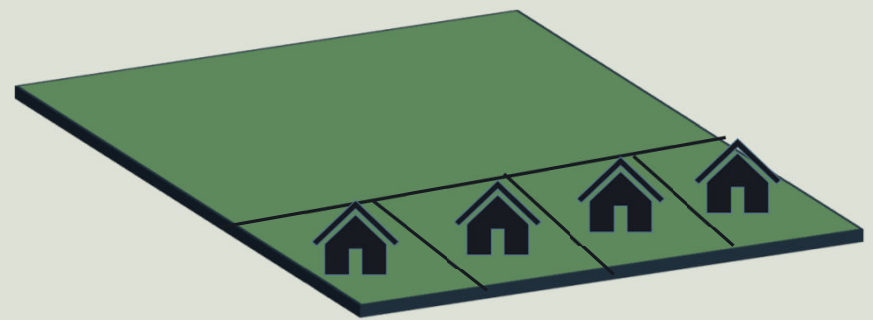
Large Lot Zoning

- 20 acre lot
- 5 acre minimum lot size
- 4 developed lots



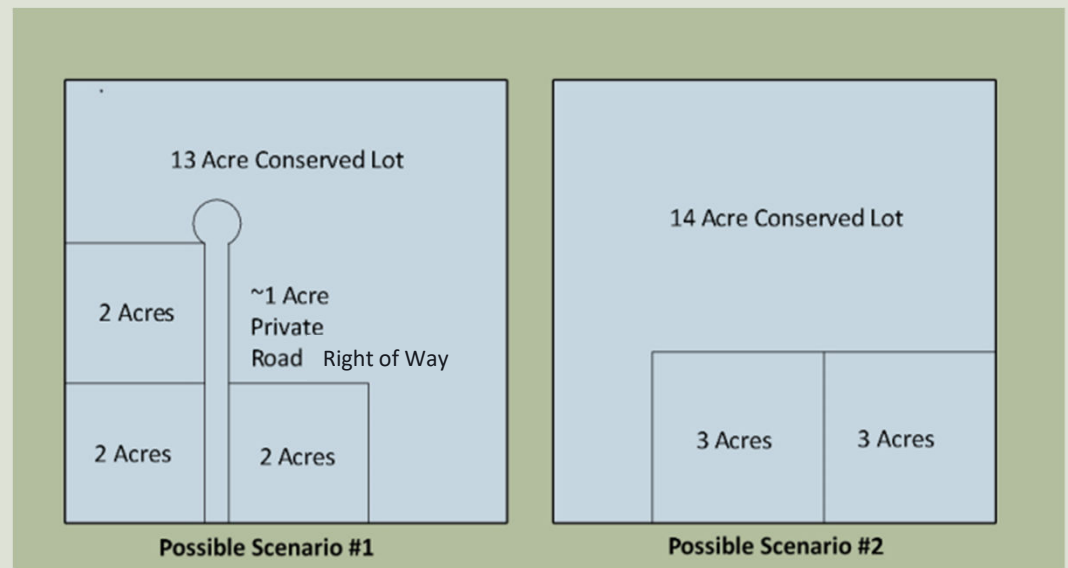
Separating Lot Size for Density Zoning

- 20 acre lot
- Density of 1 unit/5 acres
- 1 acre minimum lot size
- 4 developed lots, 16 acres undeveloped



Conservation Subdivision

- May apply only to subdivisions above a set number of lots
- Requires a percentage of any developed lot be conserved
- May require protected resources to be within the conserved area



Zoning Option	Applies To?	Encourages/Requires Preservation of Undeveloped Lot?
Increasing Minimum Lot Size	All Lots	No
Increasing Minimum Lot Size- Major Subdivisions Only	Major Subdivisions	No
Separating Minimum Lot Size from Density	All Lots	Yes (Encourages)
Conservation Subdivision	Major Subdivisions	Yes (Requires)

Small Group Discussion

- What, if any, are your major concerns with the current zoning bylaws?
 - Are there areas where the current regulations do not align with the Town Plan?
- Aside from overall density of development, are there other specific areas of concern the Planning Commission should consider?
- Which of the zoning tools discussed so far would you support? Which would you not?
- Do you have any additional concerns that have not been addressed so far?

Straw Poll: Should density be the same for all subdivisions *or* should larger subdivisions require a lower density?

[Poll Results]

- Larger subdivisions should require lower density
- Density should be the same for all sizes of subdivision
- Larger subdivision should require higher density
- No opinion
- Need additional information

Straw Poll: What should the minimum lot size in the Agricultural District be for two-lot subdivisions?

[Poll Results]

- Less than 1 acre
- 1 acre
- 2-5 acres
- 6-9 acres
- 10-14 acres
- 15-24 acres
- 25+ acres
- No opinion
- Need more information

Straw Poll: What should the minimum lot size in Agricultural District be for major subdivisions?

[Poll Results]

- Less than 1 acre
- 1 acre
- 2-5 acres
- 6-9 acres
- 10-14 acres
- 15-24 acres
- 25+ acres
- No opinion
- Need more information

Straw Poll: Should the zoning regulations require clustering of development to protect larger areas of agricultural land *or* require a larger minimum lot size to preserve the appearance of open space?

[Poll Results]

- The zoning regulations require clustering of development to protect larger areas of agricultural land
- The zoning regulations should require a larger minimum lot size to preserve the appearance of open space
- No opinion
- Need more information