

**CALAIS, VT
DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL AND
BUILDOUT ANALYSIS**

**Prepared by CVRPC
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I. Purpose:

This analysis is intended to provide a general overview of Calais' growth and development issues in the context of its existing Plan, its land use bylaws, and CVRPC's development potential and buildout analysis. The latter was prepared in consultation with the Calais Planning Commission using GIS technology. It attempts to identify the location and intensity of future growth based upon physical restrictions, available infrastructure, and both current and alternative zoning density schemes. It is not intended to suggest or predict the exact sites of future homes or businesses.

The report that follows is not intended to be an in-depth critique of Calais' land use regulations or planning policies nor an endorsement of any particular regulatory strategy, but rather a broad-brush look at current trends, existing controls, and future land use scenarios, and planning options.

II. General Description/Current Land Use:

Calais, located in north-central Vermont, is a relatively small rural town. Its population of 1,547 (2006) is spread over 41 square miles of mostly undeveloped land. It shares political boundaries with the towns of East Montpelier, Marshfield, Worcester, Middlesex, Elmore, Cabot and Woodbury.

Calais is part of the physiographic region known as the Vermont Piedmont. The Town's topography is hilly, but not rugged in comparison to many Central Vermont towns. Elevation ranges from about 700 feet along the shore of North Montpelier Pond, to almost 2200 feet on Hobart Mountain in the Northwest corner of Town. Its relatively gentle terrain has been conducive to the formation of agricultural soils, particularly along and east of Route 14 and the Kingsbury Branch. Although farming is on the decline, Calais still possesses a landscape shaped by an agrarian history. It is a patchwork of fields, forests, and small villages (East Calais, North Calais, Adamant, and Maple Corner) very much in keeping with bucolic image of Vermont.

Actual land use breakdowns in Calais are as follows:

Forest Land – 17,737 acres (71% of total land)
Agriculture and Open Land – 4,082 acres (17 % total)
Scrub/brush – 659 acres (3 % total)
Residential – 494 acres (2 % total)
Other Developed Land – 94 acres (.4 % total)
Water and Wetland – 1,641 acres (7 % total)

III. Trends/Growth:

As of 2006, Calais comprised 4.9 % of the land area of the Central Vermont Region, and hosted 2.4 % of its population, 2.3 % of its housing supply, and .3 % of its jobs. Its population density (38 persons/square mile) is considerably below the Washington County average of 84 persons/square mile. While it does host some local economic activity, Calais is primarily a residential or “bedroom” community.

Calais grew rapidly in the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties. In fact, over that period the Town’s population more than doubled (122% increase) with an average of 28 people being added to the rolls each year. However, over recent decades, the Town’s growth has slowed dramatically. In fact, between 1990 and 2006, Calais has added only an estimated 26 people to population (1.6 per year). This makes Calais one of slowest growing municipalities in Central Vermont over this time frame and the Region’s only *rural* town growing this slowly.

Given Calais’ high quality of life and proximity to regional job centers, recent slow growth is puzzling. However, according to CVRPC projections this trend will be short-lived and may already be reversing itself. These projections estimate an increase of 523 people in Calais between 2000 and 2020, for a total population of 2,052. Such a growth rate would put the Town in the top third for growth rate among Central Vermont municipalities. However, the fact that as of 2006 the Town had substantially less growth than was predicted for 2005, may call these numbers into question, to some degree.

It is true in Vermont (and probably nationally), that because of dwindling household sizes, even those municipalities showing little population growth can demonstrate substantial increases in the number of housing units. Calais has been no exception to this rule, adding 70 new units in the 90’s for a total of 616 by 2000. It has done this largely by virtue of an average household size that declined from 2.8 to 2.4 people at a rate above State and Regional averages.

As with population, CVRPC projections predict *acceleration* in the number of housing units in Calais. These figures estimate a total of 962 units by 2020, representing an increase of 306 units between 2005 and 2020 (over 20/year). It is possible that the actual number of units constructed or needed to meet demand will be significantly higher.

According to the Calais Town Plan, much of the residential growth that has occurred in recent decades has taken the form of scattered large lot residential subdivisions along town highways – a pattern viewed as detrimental to both the protection of rural character and the development of affordable housing.

While Calais’ desirability as a bedroom may not yet be having major growth impacts, it is clearly having an effect on the housing market.. According to the 2000 Census, median housing value in Calais ranked somewhat above that of Washington County (\$121,300 vs. \$105,200). Similarly, rents in Calais were slightly higher than average. By 2005, the average price of a single family home in Calais had risen to \$197,320 and by 2006 to \$228,717. This figure represents an increase of 89% in the span of just six years. While it should be noted that “home price” includes only those homes sold in a given year, (18 to 20 respectively for 2005 and 2006 in Calais’ case) the startling difference in both raw numbers and comparison figures between 2000, 2005 and 2006 is noteworthy and would appear to demonstrate that a dramatic increase in

housing prices has occurred in Calais. The fact that income gains have not kept pace may be of concern to advocates of affordable housing.

While employment in Calais is certainly important to those it affects directly, the Town is not an important job center for the Region. As of 2006, 30 employers in Town provided 104 jobs or .3% of the Region's supply. Furthermore, only 21% of Calais' workforce of 803 (2000 Census) are employed within the municipality. The rest commute to an array of destinations, primarily to the "core" area of the Region (i.e., Barre, Montpelier and Berlin) but increasingly, to Chittenden County, as well. Not surprisingly, commuting times and distances for Calais' workforce are above Regional and State averages and have been on a steady incline for several decades.

These "white collar" commuting patterns may be a reflection of the fact that Calais' population is wealthier, older and better educated now than at any time in its history and more so than most communities in the State. Its median household income of \$46,083 (2000 Census) is somewhat higher than Washington County and State of Vermont figures. Calais residents are more "propertied" as well - about 68% of Calais homes are owner occupied, versus 58% for the County and State. Calais' median age of 41 is three years above County and four years above State averages. Approximately 41 % of its population 18 years of age or older hold a bachelors or advance degree, far exceeding County (29%) and State (27%) educational achievement rates.

IV. Land Use Policy:

A. The Municipal Plan:

The Calais Town Plan (2003) expresses the belief that although growth has been stagnant in Calais, changes are coming and the Town must prepare as such:

“Planning assumptions continue to be based on increases in population. Because of Calais’ proximity to regional job centers, continued growth is likely.”

The Plan also recognizes the disconnect between the Town’s ideal land use pattern (*“residential development in or near existing settlements which harmonizes with the physical constraints of land forms and preserves agricultural soils and open space”*) and what has been occurring on the ground (*“The lack of public sewer systems will lead to continued scattered large lot residential subdivision.”*). This is a trend that is in conflict with the central theme of the Calais Town Plan - the preservation of the Town’s rural character. Instrumental to this vision is the protection of the Towns working landscape (and the resources upon which it is dependant), as well as the promotion of its village as a vibrant, mixed use centers. The Plan some strategies to help achieve these dual, complimentary goals including:

- Protect outstanding agricultural soils from permanent conversion
- Amending zoning to allow higher densities in the Villages (where water supply and sewage disposal allows.)

While the Plan also seeks to promote resource protection through greater development design flexibility, it, perhaps counterproductively, concludes that “large scale development” is inconsistent with community character. Furthermore, the Plan does not define the term “large scale.” These concerns will be revisited in Section VI of this report.

B. Land Use Regulations:

Development review in Calais is currently administered under zoning and subdivision regulations. These bylaws, adopted in 2005, are intended to implement the Town Plan and did include provisions for PRD’s and reduced lot sizes in the Village.

The bylaws establish and regulate development according to land use districts as follows:

Rural Residential District (17,854 acres) – According to the Calais Land Use and Development Regulations, the purpose of this district is “to provide for the development of residences and home businesses in ways that minimize impacts on open spaces, ridge lines, wetlands, wildlife habitat, prime woodland and agricultural soils, ecologically sensitive and scenic areas. The minimum lot size in this district is three acres. Although existing development is primarily residential, other uses are permitted.

A significant portion of the Town lies within this zoning district. Most of the building permit activity for the past decade has occurred in this district.

Village District (660 acres) – The Bylaws state that “This district has been created to support the role of our villages as the foci of social, residential and economic activity in Calais. Villages should accommodate relatively high-density residential development as well as businesses and public buildings sized to provide services to the Calais community and environs, compatible with the needs of the town. Lot sizes should be as small as possible, provided that sewage and water needs can be accommodated. Buildings should be built at a scale and orientation that is compatible with existing development in the Village. The district has no minimum lot size requirement, but does mandate frontage (125 feet) and setback requirements (including a 40 foot front setback) that effectively make the limit just over ¼ acre (11,250 s.f.)

Although this zone applies to all the village areas, East Calais, a mixed use area with commercial, public and residential uses is the Town’s functional center.

Resource Recreation District: (1,936 acres) - This district has a ten acre minimum lot size. The purpose of this district is “to protect the natural resource values of those lands in Calais which are essentially undeveloped, unsuitable for development and/or host significant ecological, recreational or scenic resources. Only low density residential, limited outdoor recreation, conservation and forestry uses are allowed.

Shoreland District: (1,401 acres) - This district includes lands within 800 feet of water bodies over 20 acres. It is the intent of the district to protect the ecological, recreational and aesthetics values of the water bodies and shoreland areas and prevent their overdevelopment. Geometric requirements include three acre lot sizes, 300 feet of frontage on roads and shorelines and 150 foot setbacks from water.

Upland Overlay District: (2,853 acres) - The purpose of this district, which includes all areas over 1,5000 feet elevation above mean sea level within the Town of Calais, is to protect sensitive upland areas from the adverse effects of inappropriate or high density development. These areas are generally characterized by steep slopes, rock outcrops and shallow soils, and include important headwater and aquifer recharge areas, large tracts of unbroken habitat, valuable timber and recreation land, and scenic hills and ridgelines, They are also generally remote from public services and facilities and as a result are difficult and costly to access. Minimum lot size is 25 acres and development must be sited to avoid impacts to the extent feasible for all conditional uses, which includes single family homes.

The Bylaws also contain two true “overlay” districts. The Kent’s Corner-Old West Church Overlay District subjects development in the Kent’s Corners area to design control guidelines intended to preserve the zone’s historic character. The Flood Hazard Area Overlay District regulates flood prone lands along Kingsbury Branch according to the standards of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Subdivision: Calais also administers subdivision regulations intended to “guide community settlement patterns and to ensure the efficient extension of services and facilities as land is developed.”

V. GIS Analysis:

A. Development Potential

CVRPC's GIS Department conducted a spatial analysis of Calais's development potential using regulatory densities and boundaries (both existing and hypothetical), in addition to development constraints, as a basis for assigning future growth potential ratings and building points to lands within the Town. It did so under four distinct scenarios, as directed by the Calais Planning Commission. The purpose of this exercise was to examine the potential building pattern promoted/enabled by the Town's current regulations and investigate the utility of alternate development models that might better serve the settlement pattern goals of Vermont's Planning Statute, Chapter 117, as well as the Town vision expressed in the Calais Town Plan.

Scenario 1: Existing Regulations Model

The first step in this scenario was to develop a list of development constraints/factors to determine the general capability of land to support development. Factors considered included: slope, flood hazard, wetlands, deeryards, prime agricultural soils, septic suitability (soils), and stream buffers. These factors were then weighted according to their perceived potential impact. These weights were used to develop a map assigning the "development potential" of lands in Calais according to five categories: **Built Lands, Conserved/Minimal Development Potential, Low Development Potential, Moderate Development Potential, and High Development Potential (Map 1)**. These distinctions are not intended to suggest specific densities, only relative suitability for development.

CVRPC then prepared another map (**Map 2**) to display a distribution of potential new residential building points under current zoning and parcel configurations with the development constraints identified in Map 1.

Results:

- According to the land capability portion of the analysis, the Town's land area breaks down as follows:
 - **Built** – 688 acres (2.7 % total)
 - **Conserved/Minimal Development Potential** – 6,922 acres (28 % total);
 - **Low Development Potential** – 5,321 acres (21.5 % total);
 - **Moderate Development Potential** – 2,699 acres (10.9% total), and
 - **High Development Potential** – 9,075 acres (36.7 % total).
- Calais' full buildout, under current zoning and without development constraints, could result in 2075 new residential building units (2,887 total units). With constraints factored in, the number drops to 1252 new units (2064 total units).
- Town-wide, the largest percentage of land in any category is in the "High Development Potential" grouping (35%).

- Almost 11,800 acres, totaling almost half of available land, is rated in the “High Potential” or Medium Potential” categories. These can be considered “buildable” lands.
- The Rural Residential District contains 62% of existing units, 78% of potential new units and 71% of potential total units – this despite 3 acre zoning.
- The Rural Residential District also contains 73% of all land in Calais rated as having “High Development Potential” and 89% of land rated “Moderate”.
- The Village District contains about 14% of the Town’s existing units, but only 11 % of future new units, and 12% of total future units.
- Only 3 % of Calais’ land area is zoned for densities of less than three acres. Only 1.5 % is so zoned and developable.
- Despite these statistics, existing district density allowances reflect land capability reasonable well. The Village District exhibits the highest percentage of “buildable” land (as defined above) (52%), followed by the Rural Residential District (53%). The remaining districts are all 42% “buildable”, or less.

Scenario 2: Alternative 1.

This scenario assumes the following changes to Calais’ existing zoning regulations:

- The expansion of existing village zones by 500 feet in all directions (at a density one acre and 125 feet of road frontage per unit).
- The creation of a new 1438 acre residential district (hereafter referred to as RR2) inside of a 1000 foot buffer around Village zones (2 acres/200’ frontage per unit) .
- The creation of a new 351 acre Village zone (1 acre, 125 foot frontage) in the vicinity of Gray Road and Lightning Ridge Road.
- Changing density and road frontage requirements in the Rural Residential zone from 3 acres and 300 feet to 5 acres and 500 feet.
- Development Potential (as per Map 1) is factored into Buildout

The results of the buildout are displayed on **Map 3**.

Results:

- As restructured, the percentage of “buildable” land (i.e., “High” or “moderate” potential) breaks down as follows, by zone, in descending order: **New Village District** (66%, 231 acres), **Village District (Existing)**(57%, 376 acres), **New Residential District (henceforth referred to as RR2)** (51% , 751 acres), **Rural Residential District** (50%, 7741 acres), **Extended Village District** (46%, 269 acres), **Resource Recreation District** (42%, 2515 acres), **Upland Overlay District** (42%, 1197 acres), **Shoreland District** (27%, 269 acres).

- This alternative displays the potential for 974 new units and a total of 1,786 total units under buildout conditions. This represents a decrease of 278 units compared to buildout under current zoning.
- Under this scenario 1,412 acres of land changes from 3 acre to 2 acre zoning and 15,125 changes from 3 acre to 5 acre zoning.
- Potential *new* units in Village Districts *increases* from 11% to 28% of total in comparison to current zoning. Percentage of *all* units in this zone under buildout *increases* from 12% to 24%.
- Potential *new* units in the Rural Residential District *decreases* from 78% to 46% of total in comparison to current zoning. Percentage of *all* units in this zone under buildout *decreases* from 71% to 49%.
- The **New Village** accommodates 8% of new units.
- The **RR2** zone hosts 11% of new units.
- The percentage of units in or within 1,500 of current Village Zones is 23% currently. Under this alternative 39% of future units and 32% of all units under full buildout would occur within this ring.

Scenario 3: Alternative 2

This scenario assumes the following changes to Calais' existing zoning regulations:

- The expansion of existing village zones by 500 feet in all directions (at a density one acre and 125 feet of road frontage per unit).
- The creation of a new 1960 acre residential district inside of a one quarter mile buffer around Village zones (2 acres/200' frontage per unit).
- The creation of a new 351 acre Village zone (1 acre, 125 foot frontage) in the vicinity of Gray Road and Lightning Ridge Road.
- Changing density and road frontage requirements in the Rural Residential zone from 3 acres and 300 feet to 5 acres and 500 feet.
- Development Potential (as per Map 1) is factored into Buildout

The results of the buildout are displayed on **Map 4**.

Results:

- The percentage of buildable land by zone is essentially unchanged from Alternative 1.

- This alternative displays the potential for 997 new units and a total of 1810 total units under buildout conditions. This represents a decrease of 255 units compared to buildout under current zoning but an increase of 24 units over Alternative 1.
- Under this scenario 1,926 acres of land changes from 3 acre to 2 acre zoning and 14,611 changes from 3 acre to 5 acre zoning.
- Potential *new* units in Village Districts *increases* from 11% to 28% of total in comparison to current zoning. Percentage of *all* units in this zone under buildout *increases* from 12% to 24%.
- Potential *new* units in the Rural Residential District *decreases* from 78% to 43% of total in comparison to current zoning. Percentage of *all* units in this zone under buildout *decreases* from 71% to 47%.
- The **New Village** accommodates 6% of new units.
- The **RR2** zone hosts 15% of new units.
- The percentage of units in or within one quarter mile of current Village Zones is 24 % currently. Under this alternative 42 % of future units and 35% of all units under full buildout would occur within this ring.

Scenario 4: Alternative 3

This scenario assumes the following changes to Calais' existing zoning regulations:

- The expansion of existing village zones by 500 feet in all directions (at a density one acre and 125 feet of road frontage per unit).
- The creation of a new 4572 acre residential district inside of a one half mile buffer around Village zones (2 acres/200' frontage per unit) .
- The creation of a new 351 acre Village zone (1 acre, 125 foot frontage) in the vicinity of Gray Road and Lightning Ridge Road.
- Changing density and road frontage requirements in the Rural Residential zone from 3 acres and 300 feet to 5 acres and 500 feet.
- Development Potential (as per Map 1) is factored into Buildout.

The results of the buildout are displayed on **Map 5**.

Results:

- The percentage of buildable land by zone is essentially unchanged from Alternatives 1 and 2.

- This alternative displays the potential for 1121 new units and a total of 1933 total units under buildout conditions. This represents a decrease of 131 units compared to buildout under current zoning, but increase of 124 and 147 units when compared to Alternative 1 and 2, respectively.
- Under this scenario 4,491 acres of land changes from 3 acre to 2 acre zoning and 12,045 changes from 3 acre to 5 acre zoning.
- Potential *new* units in Village Districts **increases** from 11% to 25% of total in comparison to current zoning. Percentage of *all* units in this zone under buildout **increases** from 12% to 22%.
- Potential *new* units in the Rural Residential District **decreases** from 78% to 32% of total in comparison to current zoning. Percentage of *all* units in this zone under buildout **decreases** from 71% to 37%.
- The **New Village** accommodates 5% of new units.
- The **RR2** zone hosts 30% of new units.
- The percentage of units in or within one half mile of current Village Zones is 32 % currently. Under this alternative 55 % of future units and 45% of all units under full buildout would occur within this ring.

B. Village “Sampling”

In addition to running the various buildout models described above, CVRPC used GIS to “sample” parcel data in Calais’ Village areas. This was done in order to compare the Town’s land use regulations against existing conditions in support of the following Town Plan objectives:

- *“Buildings in the Village District should be built at a scale and orientation that is compatible with current development...”*
- *“ The Village should contain a relatively high density of residential development as well as business and public buildings sized to provide services to the Calais Community.”*

The results of this “sampling will be discussed in the following section of this report.

VI. Conclusions

A. Overview

Calais appears to have significant remaining development potential. Almost 12,000 acres within Town boundaries (almost one half of the total land area) has been rated as having either “High” or “Medium” development potential. Furthermore, under current zoning, CVRPC’s GIS analysis estimates that 1252 new residential units could be built, even with the identified constraints. Even under the most limiting alternative examined, 974 units could still be built. While such numbers may seem far off, even and far fetched, it should be remembered that the number of housing units in Calais nearly tripled (from 213 to 616) over a 30 year span between 1970 and 2000. Another tripling of current units would approach or exceed the buildout projections contained in this study.

While Calais’s landscape still generally reflects the historic settlement patterns, the Town acknowledges that it is experiencing scattered residential growth which threatens to undermine community character. Alarming, the buildout modeling predicts an exacerbation of this trend absent any regulatory changes or large scale conservation efforts. It predicts little growth for Calais’ Villages, while 78 % of future development is allocated to the Rural Resource zone. Accordingly, it is important for the Town to address issues of residential sprawl, incremental large lot development, resource protection and village vitality. This study may useful first step in this effort insofar as it depicts the direction in which existing regulations may be taking the community, demonstrates how various parts of Town may be impacted by future growth, and examines alternate development strategies. Though it is impossible to know the future in any precise way, it is probable that Calais’ growth will continue for many years to come. The challenge for the community is how to respond to change in a way that affords citizens the highest quality of life possible and responds to human needs and environmental imperatives.

B. Findings and Considerations

1. Development Patterns/Implementation of Alternatives:

The Alternative Zoning Models explored in this study do appear to accomplish the goal of shifting future development closer to the Village and away from more remote (and perhaps environmentally sensitive) parcels, in accordance with both the goal of Vermont’s State Planning law (Chapter 117) and the vision for the community expressed in the Town Plan. As discussed in the GIS Section of this report, this shift from the current paradigm is significant.

A few reminders:

- The percentage of total housing units after buildout in the RR zone drops from 71% under current zoning to 49% under Alternative 1, 47% under Alternative 2, and 37% under Alternative 3.
- The percentage of total housing units after buildout in the Village zone increases from 11% under current zoning to 24% under Alternative 1, 24% under Alternative 2, and 22% under Alternative 3.

- Under all three Alternatives, the percentage of units in proximity to Village Zones increases dramatically. However, direct comparison is difficult due to different sized buffers for the RR2 zone in each case.

In the context of the Town Plan, Vermont law, and modern land use planning theory, these results should be viewed in a positive light. That is to say the Alternatives appear to promote vibrant villages, affordable housing, efficiency of services and the protection of rural resources. However, it should also be noted that each alternative results in a lower number of total housing units compared to current zoning, and that each alternative could reduce the development potential of some properties. (In the RR District, acres with reduced density range from 15,125 in Alternative 1 to 12,045 in Alternative 3.)

If local politics becomes an obstacle to the implementation of the alternatives as presented here, the Town may wish to consider implementing other aspects of the Alternatives while keeping three acre zoning in the RR District and pursuing other regulatory and non-regulatory conservation measures on resources lands. Some strategies in that regard could be:

LESA/Community Land Fund:

The protection of agricultural land is a recurring theme in the Calais Town Plan. Calais' neighboring community of East Montpelier has been extremely successful in pursuing a non-regulatory approach to farmland preservation. They began their program by conducting a town-wide *Land Evaluation and Site Assessment* (LESA) study. This was followed by the establishment of a local land conservation fund. The *Land Fund Committee* uses LESA to evaluate and target acquisitions and easements. To date, over 2000 acres of agricultural land has been protected with support from this local program (See **Appendix A**). Calais may wish to review the East Montpelier model to see if it could fit the Town's own conservation needs.

Planned Residential Developments (PRD's):

The Calais Town Plan promotes "clustered housing" and creative site design to avoid important resources. While Calais' land use regulations allow PRD development, more could be done to promote this form of development.

Recent amendments to Chapter 117 allow municipalities to *require* PRD design for development based on either the location (i.e. host district) or the size of a proposed development. In addition, the legislative changes have removed the previous limit on density bonuses, enabling municipalities to provide greater incentive to developers to create affordable housing, preserve valuable open space, or achieve other local goals. The newly enabled "mandatory cluster" requirement may be an interesting option for the Town's residential zones and could be accompanied by a "sliding scale" density bonus system awarding greater density to developments which are closer in proximity to existing settlements/neighborhoods (and/or accessed by improved roads). Calais may also wish to re-examine its Town Plan policy discouraging "large scale development" (an undefined term) to determine if it may actually have the unintended consequence of inhibiting creative subdivisions town wide or traditional neighborhood design in the Village. In addition, the bylaw requirement that PRD projects contain at least four lots seems to unnecessarily restrict the use of creative design techniques for smaller subdivisions (Question: How many 4 lot plus subdivisions does Calais get a year?)

Agricultural Overlay District:

The Town of Warren has had good results with its *Meadowland Overlay District* in guiding development proposals on important agricultural parcels in such a way that houses can be built while agricultural values/soils are preserved. An excerpt from this bylaw is presented in Appendix B.

2. Village Issues:

As previously mentioned, the Calais Town Plan expresses concern that new development in Village areas be of similar scale and form to what is currently there. CVRPC's parcel "sampling" exercise produced some interesting data on current conditions in these locations.

a) Density:

GIS Sampling Results:

- In East Calais, 47 parcels were sampled. While the mean parcel size was .48 acres, 68% of all parcels were under .5 acres and 28% were under .25 acres.
- In Adamant, the mean parcel size was .6 acres, but 56% of lots were under .5 acres.
- In North Calais the mean was 1.2 acres while 60% of lots were under 1 acre. None were less than .75 acres.
- In Maple Corner, the mean was 1.6 acres and the smallest lot was .9 acres.

Discussion:

Recent amendments to Calais' zoning have effectively reduced allowable lot sizes in the Village Zone to just over .25 acres (where water and sewage disposal allow). These results suggest that it would be hard to argue that this change would not be in keeping with community character – at least in East Calais and Adamant. However, as the Town Plan makes clear, the lack of a public sewage system is an impediment to the realization of such density. The separation distances required between water sources and on-site sewage disposal systems makes anything under 1 acre problematic – at least outside of East Calais, where a public water system exists – and even there, site conditions are likely to preclude anything less than .5 acres.

Given these realities, Calais may wish to explore the merits/feasibility of a decentralized sewage system(s). Available technologies can allow for a communal collection and treatment where conventional sewage plants are not a viable option. The Village of Warren provides an excellent example of a decentralized system in the context of a small Vermont settlement. Appendix C provides more information on this approach.

b) Frontage:

Calais zoning requires 125 feet of road frontage per lot in the Village Zone.

GIS Sampling Results:

- The average road frontage for existing lots in East Calais is 153 feet, however, 40% of parcels do not conform to the 125 foot standard. Among these non-conforming lots, the average frontage is 64 feet.
- About one third of the lots in Adamant were non-conforming
- The standard seems reasonable in other Village Zones.

Discussion:

The 125 foot road frontage requirement does not appear to allow the continuation of traditional development patterns in East Calais and Adamant, and as such, should be reviewed.

Setbacks:

Calais' land use regulations require a front yard setback (40 feet) in *every* zoning district. Although was not possible to "sample" existing setbacks, CVRPC suspects that many village homes do not comply with this standard and that is excessive to engender "a scale and orientation that is compatible with current development in the Village Zone. The Town may wish to conduct a "windshield survey" of existing Village setbacks and consider reducing the 40 foot standard if it appears inconsistent with traditional development patterns.

Location:

The area identified for the New Village in Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 appears to be well positioned. About two thirds of this zone is "buildable" according to the development potential analysis. This is the highest percentage of "buildable" land in any existing or proposed zone.

Maps and Appendices