

VILLAGE BUSINESS RESIDENTIAL ZONE (VRBZ) UPDATE

An Update from the Falls Village Planning & Zoning Commission

September 14, 2026

Dear Falls Village Residents:

The Falls Village Planning & Zoning Commission is providing this update regarding the proposed **Village Business Residential Zone (VRBZ)** and the Commission's recent decision to take a closer look at the proposed expansion of the district.

The Commission has been reviewing the VRBZ concept to update the Village's zoning regulations and better reflect the existing mix of residential, commercial, civic, and small business uses within the Village. The proposal was also intended to support the goals of the **2024–2034 Plan of Conservation and Development**, including village revitalization, housing opportunities, economic activity, adaptive reuse, and a mix of uses appropriate to the Village Center.

Why the Commission Is Reconsidering the Proposed Expansion

Since the initial VRBZ proposal was developed, the State of Connecticut enacted **Public Act 25-1, An Act Concerning Housing Growth**. The legislation significantly changes the State's approach to housing planning and zoning and includes new requirements and opportunities affecting municipalities and local zoning regulations.

Among other provisions, the legislation establishes a new framework for municipal and regional housing-growth planning and creates new statutory provisions addressing housing development in certain commercial, residential, and mixed-use areas.

The Commission believes it is important to understand how these new State requirements may interact with any changes to Falls Village's zoning regulations before expanding the geographic boundaries of the VRBZ.

In particular, expanding the VRBZ could create a larger area in which certain provisions of the new State housing legislation could apply. Some of those consequences may be broader than what the Commission originally contemplated when the VRBZ proposal was developed.

The Commission does not want to unintentionally create development opportunities or regulatory requirements that are inconsistent with the community's objectives for the Village Center, the capacity of existing infrastructure, or the intent of the local zoning regulations.

For that reason, the Commission is taking a more measured approach to the proposed expansion.

What This Means for the VRBZ

The Commission is not abandoning the VRBZ concept.

Rather, the Commission is pulling back from the broader geographic expansion that was previously being considered while it evaluates the interaction between the proposed regulations and the requirements of Public Act 25-1.

The Commission's objective remains to develop planning and zoning tools that:

- Recognize and support the existing Village Center;
- Allow appropriate residential and small business uses;
- Encourage the productive reuse of existing buildings;
- Provide appropriate opportunities for housing;
- Support local businesses and economic activity;
- Maintain appropriate standards for development; and
- Avoid unintentionally triggering State housing provisions in areas or circumstances where they were not contemplated by the Commission or the community.

Exploring a Local Historic District

As the Commission steps back from the broader VRBZ expansion, another potential focus is the establishment of a local historic district within the Village Center.

A local historic district could provide a different tool for recognizing and protecting the historic buildings, streetscape, and architectural resources that contribute to the identity and continuity of Falls Village.

This approach would allow the Commission and community to consider how the Village Center's historic resources can be preserved while still supporting appropriate reinvestment, adaptive reuse, businesses, and residential uses.

At this point, the Commission is exploring the concept and has not made a final determination to establish a local historic district. Any such proposal would require additional study, public discussion, and consideration of the statutory process and requirements applicable to local historic districts.

The potential historic-district approach is therefore being considered as part of a broader conversation about how Falls Village can protect its existing Village Center while allowing it to remain an active and economically viable part of the community.

Why This Additional Review Is Important

Public Act 25-1 represents a significant change in Connecticut's housing and zoning framework. The Commission believes Falls Village should take the time necessary to understand the legislation and its implications before making a substantial change to the geographic scope of the VRBZ.

Rather than moving forward with a larger zoning district and subsequently discovering unintended consequences, the Commission believes it is prudent to pause, evaluate, and refine the approach.

Next Steps

The Planning & Zoning Commission will continue its review of the VRBZ proposal and Public Act 25-1 before moving forward with any broader expansion of the district.

The Commission's current approach is to retain the concept of a Village Business Residential Zone while reconsidering the scope of the proposed expansion.

At the same time, the Commission may explore whether a local historic district within the Village Center could provide an appropriate additional tool for preserving the Village's historic resources while supporting continued residential, commercial, and community activity.

Residents will have additional opportunities to review and comment on any revised proposal or new initiative before the Commission takes formal action.

The Commission appreciates the community's continued interest and participation in this process. The goal is to develop planning and zoning tools that are thoughtful, locally appropriate, consistent with State law, and capable of supporting Falls Village over the long term while avoiding unintended consequences from changes in State housing policy.

Falls Village Planning & Zoning Commission