

Good morning,

I would like to share our struggles with our 7-acre parcel lying largely in wetlands, smack dab in the middle of what we refer to in Essex as the Golden Triangle. Our town has identified it as the sweet spot for residential development. However, the lack of statutory engineering mitigating environmental guardrails has developers filling in local wetlands without consequences over the years. Our sweet spot parcel is now turning into a wild duck sanctuary. We noted eight Wood Ducks outback this morning from my kitchen window. We had a heron land along with Canada Geese, American Bittern, and Mallards. This is my husband's childhood home so he is well acquainted with our land's history connected to surrounding development and severe mature tree loss.

A few years back, we explored working with Chittenden Housing Trust to develop affordable housing on our land as we support affordable housing development locally. CHT declined citing expenses due to our expanding wetlands as the reason.

We have watched our land turn into a sizable waterway as recent unfettered clearcutting in neighboring wetlands coupled with an over 800' impervious road built years prior and additional impervious surface seems to have triggered the added flooding. The long road seems like it should have triggered an Act 250 conditional use permit to mitigate wetland waters but the state and our Essex staff report none on file that they can find. The documented delineation indicates segments of their long road running through Class II wetlands and emails show the state indicated the need for Act 250 mitigation should their development move forward. This indicates an issue with oversight at state and local level in our experience.

We recently stumbled across an Army Corp of Engineers' October 2025 report online indicating a high water table on the neighboring parcel. There must have been a wetland delineation performed next door and the high water table is no surprise to us. We wonder if our neighbor is looking to build more apartments though our staff reports there are no current proposed plans that they are aware of.

Our neighbor's new apartments would have been a welcome addition to our town's portfolio if the unintended consequences didn't limit more future development and if they were affordable and for sale instead of just high priced rentals.

I wonder if things like requiring delineations for active wetland parcels, restricting basements in wetland overlay districts, requiring roof runoff catchment systems to mitigate ever increasing climate change intensive rains, reinforced oversights for clearcutting, banning steep slope builds in unsuitable soils utilizing soil overlays, and building out regional inspection systems to ease the pressure of staff developer relationships locally might help move balanced development forward? Perhaps figuring out better ways to fund arterial connective roads as that also seems to be a bottlenecking issue for development. Would also love to restrict distributive warehouse builds to an interstate regional radius as it has caused major quality of life issues for residential. Perhaps requiring soil sound berms for abutting industrial to residential development?

Mature trees appear to be a critical factor in mitigating additional stormwater due to development and increasing rain intensities. White pines drink 10 gallons of water per diameter inch on average per week. They also cool and filter air, provide crucial ecosystem habitat and knit the soil together to keep their siblings upright.

I would love out of state geotech engineers consulted for regulations as I suspect that we have not explored modern engineering mitigations enough to balance out competing interests and development needs. I think that there are ways to avoid harming future development in our fragile 21st century era of climate change.

Please forgive any grammatical or spelling errors as I am working and writing this in a rush. That said, I feel it is important to share diverse experiences as I believe that with the right engineering, there are solutions for finding statutory balances for development while protecting our bread and butter environments.

Hope the pictures provide some context for our experience. Happy to answer any questions with our experience if that helps.

Thank you for all you do,  
Lorraine Zaloom  
74 Center Rd  
Essex VT 05452  
802.662.5595

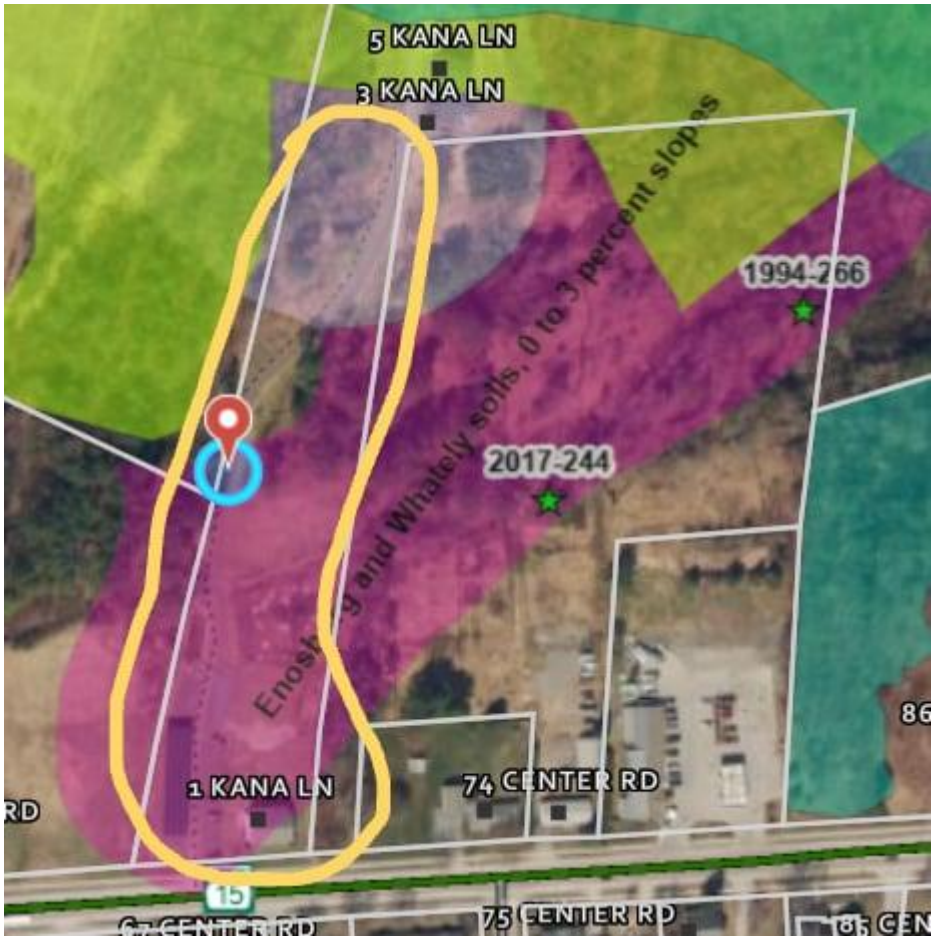


June 20, 2021



May 7, 2022





## **Low Impact Development?**



74 Center Road backyard 6.26.16



74 Center Road backyard 3.30.26