

Green Living

“The activist is not the man who says the river is dirty. The activist is the man who cleans up the river.”
- Ross Perot

East End Development Opportunities Explored

By Sally Miller
For Sustainable Woodstock

For much of the last seven years, the Sustainable Woodstock East End Action Group has focused on the developing a riverfront park on the former “jungle” property. With the relocation of the snow dump underway and park improvements ongoing, the EEAG has returned to its original goal of improving the East End. Starting in late 2015, they convened meetings with East End property owners and community stakeholders to revisit the 2000 East End master plan. This year, with a \$12,000 grant from the Woodstock Economic Development Commission, they hired real estate investment consultants White + Burke of Bur-

along the Ottauquechee River. This area was once home to a dozen commercial enterprises, but it has been an underutilized resource for decades. If properly developed, it is a potential source of economic vitality bringing Woodstock visitors and jobs and tax revenue, in addition to aesthetic improvements. The goal of the EEAG is to attract

Do Just One Thing...

Join the East End Action Group on Thursday, Dec. 15 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at Mon Vert Café to explore the East End Development Opportunities report.

major investment to develop the area with highest and best use of properties rather than jumbled and incompatible piecemeal initiatives that have yet to be realized.

Viewed as a whole, the East End is complex. It comprises varied topography, historical land uses, and multiple landowners of disparate-sized parcels. In the past two decades, potential developers

lington to produce a comprehensive information package to help move forward development and pave the way for thoughtful and appropriate improvements that are compatible with local economic realities as well as community needs and desires.

The East End is an important gateway to the town’s historic village and has tremendous potential for adaptive reuse of historic structures and construction of new projects. Its many attributes and opportunities to support new growth and investment include its location along busy US Route 4, available public infrastructure and utilities and frontage

have been further deterred by a myriad of “unknowns” including zoning restrictions, easements, and environmental concerns. To address these complexities the East End Economic Opportunities document provides, in one convenient spot, information that will allow a potential investor/developer to more easily evaluate the functional and economic feasibility of a development project in the East End. It includes mapping of properties currently on the market, zoning constraints, traffic and utility data, historic resources and an environmental overview along with links to other resources.



Sarit Melmed-Werner from Plymouth Artisan Cheese talks about her experience with producing value-added products in Vermont. Photo Provided

The Town of Woodstock and Sustainable Woodstock are committed to working collaboratively with developers to find creative solutions to address any challenges that may be present or arise during the development process. The EEAG recently had a very successful launch party for the East End Development Opportunities package. The purpose of the evening was to give interested parties an opportunity to network and come away with new ideas. At four stations where local residents pitched their ideas for potential projects, a variety of options for development were explored. With over 40

people in attendance, the energy and excitement in the room demonstrated great community support for making positive change in the East End. The EEAG will follow up with making connections and providing other venues for input.

Mary MacVey, who has been a member of the East End Action Group from the start says, “The EEAG’s efforts to move the snow dump away from the river and cre-

ate a park in its place have paid off doubly. Not only is there significant environmental benefit but also an economic boost: we’re seeing the greatest interest and activity in developing the East End in 20 years. Visible progress is exciting!” Community input is an important aspect of the development process, and residents are encouraged to review the East End Economic Opportunities report on the Sustainable Woodstock web-

site at sustainablewoodstock.org. Additionally the EEAG will be convening several events to talk about possibilities. Our December Green Drinks will be the first public unveiling of the report. Join us at Mon Vert Café on Thursday, Dec. 15 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. for light refreshments and conversation. For more information contact the EEAG at eastend@sustainablewoodstock.org or 457-2911. Join the East End Action Group on Thursday, Dec. 15 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at Mon Vert Café to explore the East End Development Opportunities report.



You Decide: Should Hydroponics be Labeled Organic?

By Elle O’Casey
For Sustainable Woodstock

The word hydroponics is derived from two Greek words “hydro” meaning water and “ponic” meaning labor. The water does the work in place of soil. While it may seem like hydroponic gardening is a relatively new concept, the practice has actually been around for thousands of years in various forms. Scholars point to the earliest examples in China and ancient Babylon.

Hydroponic farming relies on a trifecta of water, food and oxygen. While there is no soil involved, most systems use clay pellets, vermiculite, rockwool or coconut husks to support the root system. In hydroponic farming, the nutrients are delivered straight to the plant’s roots via mineral solutions dissolved in water.

Renewed interest in hydroponics began in the 1600s but it wasn’t until the early 1900s that the practice took root when a University of California researcher grew tomato vines more than 25 feet high in his yard using mineral solutions instead of soil. In 1937, he termed the practice “hydroponics.”

Do Just One Thing...

Catch up on the organic hydroponics debate and decide for yourself.

One early hydroponics success story happened on Wake Island, an atoll in the Pacific Ocean. The island, frequently used as a Pan American Airlines refueling stop, was the site of an early hydroponic farm. The vegetables were then used in meals for passengers onboard Pan American flights.

Hydroponic farming has expanded greatly in recent years. Growers have discovered the yield is much greater, due in part to the fact that nutrients are delivered straight to the roots of hydroponic plants eliminating the need for plants to go search-



In the early 1900s, a University of California researcher grew tomato vines more than 25 feet high using mineral solutions instead of soil. Andy Thomas Photo

ing underground for the necessary nutrients. This results in hydroponic plants requiring much smaller root systems, thereby sending more energy into leaf growth, translating to rapid plant growth.

Without going into too much detail, here is a quick snapshot at the three most popular hydroponic planting methods.

- Flotation: This system involves plants growing with their roots dangling in water. An air pump circulates oxygen, water and nutrients to ensure constant nutrient delivery and ample oxygen flow.
- Nutrient Film. This system involves plants’ roots growing with aerated water flowing constantly over their root systems. A shallow

flow of water carrying dissolved nutrients passes over the bare roots of the plants in a series of channels.

- Ebb and Flow: This system involves periodically flooding the roots with nutrient-rich water and subsequently allowing a period of time for the root system to drain.

While the past few weeks have been flooded with election stories

and commentaries, another story has been quietly brewing. According to NPR, the National Organic Standards Board will soon decide whether hydroponically grown foods can be labeled “certified organic.” Several local farms and many national organic leaders have come out against the proposed labeling arguing that “soil is the foundation of organic farming, and that hydroponics is not organic.”(NOFA-VT) Other farmers disagree, stating that hydroponics allows plants to be fed liquid fertilizers from organic material, adding that hydroponics helps produce more food and reduces the impact on the land. At last month’s “Rally in the Valley” on Cedar Circle Farm in East Thetford, hundreds of farmers gathered from near and far to voice their concerns to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), opposed to the proposed “organic” labeling of hydroponics. The board met for their biannual meeting last week in St. Louis but no decision has been announced yet.

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