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Vision and Goals

Community Vision

Sturbridge is a community that cherishes its small town character, its vast open spaces, and water resources that provide residents and visitors with scenic vistas and recreational opportunities. This rural character is the Town's core value as expressed by the many viewsheds, the places where people gather, the open spaces, and the historical and cultural resources that residents and visitors hold dear. It is further defined by the design of its development and transportation system. Sturbridge believes that its character has both an inward and an outward purpose because it is what keeps people living in the community, but it also promotes the Town to businesses and visitors alike. It protects the living spaces of its residents as well as important natural, historic, and cultural areas. Through its actions thus far and ongoing implementation of the goals of the 2010 Master Plan, the Town will continue to thrive and build further upon these assets.

Land Use and Community Design Goals

- Encourage the proper balance between residential, commercial and industrial development to ensure the Town continues to prosper while protecting the historic, environmental and rural character of the community.
- Improve the architectural quality and streetscape of the Main Street (Routes 20 and 131) business areas to make it more attractive to businesses, residents, visitors and tourists.
- Promote growth that is environmentally sustainable and capable of withstanding economic downturns.
- Identify design values the Town considers important in preserving the historic character of its corridors.

Housing Goals

- Provide high-quality affordable housing in attractive neighborhoods through development of flexible zoning bylaws, regulations and programs.
- Develop a plan designed to guide the Town toward meeting the 10% goal for housing affordability under Chapter 40B.
- Provide opportunities for existing Sturbridge residents to make improvements and repairs to their existing homes, while at the same time, increasing the affordable housing stock in the community.
- Ensure that housing choices are available to meet the needs of current and future generations Sturbridge.

Economic Development Goals

- Foster economic sustainability by focusing on growth and expansion of existing businesses.
- Take a more pro-active approach to marketing the town's assets in order to promote additional business growth.
- Promote economic development from a regional perspective.
- Prepare corridor improvement plan to encourage redevelopment of Route 20.
- Revise zoning regulations to create opportunities along Route 131 and the Special Use District.

Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources Goals

- Provide better public access to water resources.
- Preserve water resources through stormwater management and lakefront zoning protection.
- Integrate natural, historic and archaeological resource identification, documentation, and evaluation into local planning.
- Develop and strengthen local planning and protection measures for natural and historic resources.

- Incorporate specific historic preservation objectives in community revitalization and economic development efforts.
- Create and enhance cultural opportunities in Sturbridge.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

- Continue to preserve significant parcels of presently undeveloped land, implement completion of town's trail system, and strengthen proactive regulation protecting street trees to maintain the natural and historical heritage of Sturbridge.
- Protect existing open land and expand both passive and active recreation facilities.
- Provide adequate resources for the management, maintenance and development of existing and planned open spaces and recreational facilities.
- Maintain town character, for example, by conservation of watershed and riverfront parcels along the Quinebaug River; and preservation of historic assets of the town including the Town Common.

Transportation Goals

- Develop an identity and sense of arrival into Sturbridge through the creation of distinct gateways and streetscaping - especially given the number of tourists coming to the area; prioritize Route 20 through the Commercial Tourist District.
- Balance the need to facilitate traffic flow with desires to make the roadways more walkable and bikeable; calm vehicle traffic speeds where appropriate (especially through the Commercial Tourist District along Route 20).
- Eliminate sign clutter and improve wayfinding to the key destinations.
- Make public transportation more available and increase opportunities for residents to walk and bicycle safely around Sturbridge.
- Develop access management and traffic impact study guidelines.
- Establish a collaborative working relationship with MassDOT.

Public Services and Facilities Goals

- Establish efficiency and cost-effectiveness as a guiding principle for delivery of public services.
- Ensure that the Town can meet its infrastructure and service needs as growth and demand increases.
- Given the often conflicting demands, establish priorities for building and facility upgrades and replacement.
- Work to ensure that municipal staffing levels are adequate as the Town grows and service demands increase.
- Lead by example in municipal facilities and operations, fostering partnerships, communication, and sustainability principles through its investments and initiatives.

Energy and Sustainability Goals

- Work towards becoming a Green Community by meeting state criteria for the designation.
- Promote sustainability in municipal and public operations, starting with a Sustainability Task Force that can advise and support sustainability efforts by Town departments.
- Encourage energy efficiency, conservation, and sustainability in Sturbridge to reduce energy consumption and cost.
- Establish best management practices and technologies in future construction, renovation and maintenance of public buildings and facilities.
- Reach out to the community as a whole to inform and educate residents and businesses regarding energy conservation, recycling and sustainability principles.

Survey and Public Participation

In April 2010, the University of New Hampshire Survey Center conducted a survey for the Sturbridge Master Plan effort. Residents were asked about their attitudes and opinions of the community, town services, open spaces, development, and transportation issues. Three thousand and forty-nine (3149) randomly selected household members were sent a survey and nine-hundred and thirty (930)

Sturbridge residents responded. The resultant response rate of 30 percent is very respectable for a survey of this type. The following is a summary of the key findings from the survey.

- Half of Sturbridge residents (51%) said they moved to Sturbridge because of the quality of life, followed by rural town character (45%), location (42%), schools (39%), historic town character (31%), job/employment (23%), born/raised in Sturbridge (19%), shops/stores/restaurants (15%), public amenities (9%), recreation (6%), the tax structure (1%), and 10 percent stated some other reason.
- Half of Sturbridge residents (49%) rate the town's ambulance/paramedic services as excellent, followed by fire protection / rescue services (48%), police services (43%), the library (43%), senior citizen services (31%), recycling center (31%), public works (10%), and parks and recreation facilities (9%).
- When asked to indicate the three most important reasons for the town to manage, acquire and/or preserve open space, more than half of Sturbridge residents (56%) said "to protect water quality and resources," followed by "preserve forests and woodlands" (46%), "passive recreation" (44%), "wildlife preservation" (34%), "scenic vistas" and "rural character" (31%), "preservation of historic assets" (24%), "sports fields" (22%), "long-term economic benefits" (19%), "agriculture" (5%), "hunting" (5%), "snowmobiling/4-wheeling" (4%), and some other reason (4%).
- Eight in ten Sturbridge residents (80%) favor (37% "strongly favor" and 43% "favor") the Town providing more dedicated bike routes, followed by walking trails (78%), picnic areas (70%), canoe/kayak public access (68%), playgrounds (62%), indoor sports recreation (57%), team playing fields (57%), ice skating (54%), outdoor swimming (47%), tennis courts (35%), horseback riding trails (23%), 4-wheeling/ATV/snowmobiling trails (16%), and hunting areas (16%).
- In Sturbridge overall, a vast majority of Sturbridge residents favor a movie theatre (85%), followed by more health care services (72%), more art galleries, boutiques, and small retail (71%), historic/cultural museums (64%), assisted living facility (57%), light industrial (54%), health spa resort (52%), service industry (52%), office development (46%), shopping mall/big box/outlets (45%), mixed use (44%), and amusement/theme parks (29%).
- Along Route 15, four in five (81%) Sturbridge residents favor a movie theatre, followed by recreational facilities (73%), small scale retail (64%), restaurants (60%), light industrial (59%), office buildings (59%), assisted living facility (55%), hospital/medical treatment facility (53%), a shopping mall (50%), health spa resort (45%), lodging (45%), bank (44%), campground (36%), amusement park (33%), single family homes (32%), and multifamily dwellings (16%).
- Town residents believe the town should investigate and or encourage participation in alternative types of transportation: sidewalks (85%), dedicated

bike routes (82%), seasonal in-town trolley (58%), regional bus services (54%), carpool/rideshare programs (46%).

- Sturbridge residents describe the following streets/intersections as unsafe: Route 20 and New Boston (57%), Route 131 and Fiske Hill Road (53%), Route 20 and Fiske Hill Road (52%), Route 131 and Hall Road (43%), Route 20 and Hall Road (42%), Route 20 and Arnold Road (42%), Route 131 and Shepard Road (30%), Route 49 and Putnam Road (11%), entire length – Whittemore Road (11%), Route 15 and River Road (10%), Mashapaug Road and Breakneck Road (8%), Route 49 and Walker Pond Road (8%), entire length – Brookfield Road (7%).
- Sturbridge residents describe the following streets/intersections as congested: Route 131 and Fiske Hill Road (84%), Route 131 and Hall Road (79%), Route 20 and New Boston (76%), Route 20 and Hall Road (76%), Route 20 and Fiske Hill Road (72%), Route 20 and Arnold Road (71%), Entire length – Brookfield Road (49%), Route 131 and Shepard Road (48%), Route 49 and Walker Pond Road (28%), Route 49 and Putnam Road (25%), Route 15 and River Road (20%), Entire length – Whittemore Road (19%), Mashapaug Road and Breakneck Road (17%).

The survey was only one part of the overall public participation effort. Additionally, there were two town-wide public forums – one at the early stages of the planning process and one towards the end.

On Saturday, November 21, 2009, the Town of Sturbridge convened a public forum to discuss the 2010 Master Plan Update project. Approximately 80 people attended the forum, which was held at Old Sturbridge Village from 8:30 AM until 12 noon. The forum was attended by Jean Bubon, AICP, Town Planner; Sandra Gibson-Quigley, Chair of the Master Plan Steering Committee; members of the Master Plan Steering Committee; and representatives from the VHB and RKG consulting team (Ralph Willmer, FAICP; Juli Beth Hinds, AICP; Joe Wanat, P.E., PTOE; and Mike Casino).

After a presentation on Sturbridge land use and demographic data, a Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SCOT) analysis was conducted. Participants were asked to describe aspects of living, working, shopping and playing in Sturbridge that was both positive and negative. After the lists were generated, they were given four “voting dots” which were to be placed next to those items that the audience thought was most important issues to address in the master planning process. The results of this analysis can be found in the Appendix to this Plan.

The second forum was held on Thursday, November 18, 2010 from 6:30 pm–9:00 PM at Paige Hall at the Publick House. This forum was attended by approximately 75 people. The presentation focused on the key findings from the research and data gathering phase of the project for each plan element. The major recommendations were summarized, followed by discussion and comments from the audience.



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