



# Town of Sturbridge

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**TO:** ROBIN GRIMM, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR  
**FROM:** JEAN M. BUBON, TOWN PLANNER **JMB**  
**SUBJECT:** GATEWAY SIGNAGE PROPOSAL  
**DATE:** 10/06/2023

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Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the Board of Selectmen's meeting being held on October 16<sup>th</sup> as I will be away. However, I did want to provide some information for the Board to consider when they review the design and placement of the sign proposed.

Several Planning Board studies including the Master Plan, Commercial Tourist District Plan (CTD) (which covered Route 20 from the intersection with Rte. 148 to the intersection with New Boston Road) and Wayfinding Study all discuss the need to update the entries into the Town so that the appearance more closely aligns with visitor expectations. During these processes, a common complaint we heard (and continue to hear) is that you exit the highway into the Town, but it still has the appearance of being on a highway; nothing really says you have arrived.

The Commercial Tourist District Improvement Plan really sums up the impression well. The section that discusses the Gateways says "there is little to suggest that you are entering the Sturbridge CTD, and little to support the character and identity that residents and tourists have come to associate with Sturbridge". Further on in this section it states "For tourists entering Sturbridge, the architecture of the eastern gateway is good and bad: the types of services typically needed by tourists are readily available and understandable by auto; however, this important entrance gives the impression of a highway rest stop rather than a sense of arrival to a uniquely Sturbridge experience."

We have long believed that well designed signage could be one element that contributes to that sense of arrival. The plan also calls for significant landscaping, sidewalk and roadway improvements, but the sign will be the first step in implementing some of these ideas.

The sign proposed has been designed to be consistent with the Wayfinding design adopted several years ago. However, instead of all black and white, the sign brings in a warm rust color as the back drop to all the other Wayfinding elements. The shape of sign elements, tag-line and weathervane are still prominent and consistent features, but the Welcome really stands out and makes an impact when placed over the warm rust background.

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As everyone is aware, some type of improvements to the intersection are slated to occur in FY 26, but we do not have the plans yet. The sign design has been mindful of this and at least the top portion of the sign can be removed and re-used when the improvements are complete. The sign will also be designed to MassDOT standards as we will need their approval. While MassDOT has seemed reluctant to allow signage of this nature in the past, it does appear they are very willing to work with the Town on this project.

I am sorry I cannot attend the meeting, but wanted to make sure that I lent my wholehearted support to the implementation of this project. If I can provide anything additional, please let me know.