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## **6 Consolidated Analysis and Recommendations**

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### **6.1 Historic Influence on Development**

Hudson's character today has been determined by a flow of events and investment that have generally benefited the community. Throughout its history, Perhaps its greatest strength has probably been its location. Hudson initially developed at a point in the Assabet River where a dam could be constructed, and at the confluence of the Assabet River and Tannery Brook. Both streams could power a number of mills during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Hudson geology was also suited to agricultural prosperity which and that factor contributed to the community's success. Hudson's development was based on its natural resources, and the retail center that arose to serve the manufacturing and agricultural undertakings.

When I-495 was constructed during the 1960's, another significant wave of change flowed over Hudson. Hudson has two entrances to Interstate 495, one of which also connects directly to I-290 providing a direct route to Worcester. The proximity to 495 allows residents and workers to have access to East-West routes (I-90 and Route 2) both within a ten minute commute. These access points have made a significant impact on the attraction of Hudson to commercial, industrial, retail, and residential developers. Much of the more recent development is clustered at the point that the I-290 connector links with Route 85 in Hudson. It is here that major shopping centers, strip retail, big-box stores, office parks, large residential developments, and large multi-national corporations have chosen to locate. The Rt. 62 access to I-495 has not been as intensely developed, having attracted some larger housing developments, but little new business development. With the exception of a recent hotel, much of the business activity in this area has been in place for a period of time. Consequently the street generally lacks landscaping and amenities, which if present, could improve the appearance of the area. The Route 62 approach to 495 also has a good deal of ledge and a fairly hilly terrain. These factors increase development costs and have likely contributed to the somewhat slower pace of development of this area.

At the time of the writing of this document, the Town has been in the process of entertaining an offer from a developer who would like to purchase a large piece of Town land on the South side of Route 62 in close proximity to the 495 entrance. Being proposed for the site is a shopping center with several large box stores. The Town has hired a consultant to review the developer's submittal and to analyze traffic impacts anticipated from the development. A significant amount of traffic mitigation will be expected of the developer to enable the project to go forward.

Careful thought and planning need to go into the design and functioning of both access areas to I-495, and in the near future. These efforts will protect the remaining assets in these areas, and enhance the value to the community of the development that has been undertaken.

## **6.2 Planning and Zoning Issues**

The below attached zoning map was digitized as part of the CD Plan process. Prior to its development, Hudson had only a hand-colored zoning map that did not allow easy viewing of zoning districts and parcels. The new map is integrated with the Town's existing GIS layers and can be examined with multiple layers overlaid. The digitized zoning map was utilized extensively by the CDP Steering Committee during the planning process to inform its discussions about appropriate land-use. Because of the complexity of Hudson's zoning with the multiple districts, we chose not to overlay the existing zoning map with the final land-use map. Doing so would have made the "Land Suitability Map" too visually busy and unintelligible. Consequently the existing zoning map is shown below separately to provide the reader with context and perspective.

### **Existing Zoning Map:**

The Town adopted its Zoning Regulations decades ago. Since that time and primarily in the last 20 years, Hudson has experienced significant and continuing growth. Prior land uses have been materially altered and there are major changes currently anticipated for several large sites within Town.

Hudson has tried to keep its zoning updated and current with the various statewide zoning movements. It adopted provisions such as Watershed Protection Districts, Site Plan Review, well-head protection areas, Wireless Communication Zones, Adult Entertainment zones, and Retirement overlay districts. The Town's newer zoning provisions have allowed the development of a significant amount of shopping center and "big box" retail. The Retirement district specifically has converted two large parcels formerly zoned for business purposes to residential uses, and boxed in the major industrial facility in town with these residential developments in formerly industrially-zoned areas. The rapid and somewhat haphazard growth has shown the Town what is and is not effective in its land use. Armed with the wisdom it has gained over the past several decades, and augmented by the visioning exercise undertaken in recent years, there is general agreement that it may now be appropriate for the Town to consider revising and updating the underlying text of its zoning by-laws. Some of the revisions being contemplated are minor adjustments to provide clarity and equitable promulgation of the by-laws. Other revisions are broader in scope and include some innovative provisions to promote sustainable development principals and increase affordable housing.

A comprehensive review of Hudson's Zoning Bylaw is likely warranted based on the proliferation of zones with few differences, and the fact that it is pyramid zoning – any uses allowed in less developed zones are allowed in more developed zones. This provision, for

example, allows single family housing in business and industrial zones. There are also many individual provisions of the Hudson Zoning Bylaw that require attention. New sections of the Zoning Bylaw that could be considered include a conservation subdivision bylaw, mill overlay district, and incentive/inclusionary zoning. Both the conservation subdivision and incentive/inclusionary provisions could allow a density bonus to provide an incentive to include affordable units. Other sections that have been recommended for some improvements include accessory apartments and units, mixed use buildings in the C-1 District, facilitation of the development of home occupations, and reviewing parking requirements. Other suggestions that could strengthen the effectiveness of the zoning bylaw would be to institute height restrictions and make some improvements to the “over-55” Retirement Overlay district.

The following items have been discussed by the CDP zoning sub-committee as items in Hudson’s Zoning By-laws that could use some attention:

New Items to consider adding to By-Laws:

1. Conservation subdivision design by-law provision
2. Mill overlay by-law
3. Density bonus for affordable units (Inclusionary Zoning)

Sections of by-law needing revision or updating:

1. Home occupation definitions and restrictions
2. Accessory apartments (in-laws) and duplexes
3. Pyramid zoning
4. Height restrictions
5. Watershed Protection District - overlay district
6. Floodplain by-law
7. Parking requirements in C-1
8. C-1 residential over food establishments
9. Dual uses on same parcel / multiple buildings
10. "Over-55" overlay district
11. Location of Adult Entertainment overlay district
12. Site plan review
13. Buffer zones between districts
14. Regulations for accessory structures – definition of maximum size.

Housekeeping / Minor Edits:

1. District definitions
2. Consolidating some districts
3. Changing some districts to allow for more uses

As Hudson goes forward to take steps in implementing this Community Development Plan, the above list will need to be examined and discussed in greater detail to see what actions the Town might need to take to modernize its zoning.

As mentioned above, the Route 62 access to I-495 has largely been undeveloped until recently. Other than the development of a hotel in this area, much of this area zoned for Light Commercial/Industrial and Industrial (M-6) are available for development or more intensive redevelopment. Hudson should pay careful attention to this area to ensure that new development is attractive, suits the Town's needs, and does not have an unduly adverse impact on traffic. While Site Plan Review is of recent origin and has been amended several times, it does not contain many of the protections of appearance and access, and the requirements for traffic and environmental studies, that Site Plan Review carries with it in other communities. These additions should be considered to augment Hudson's ability to control its future development for the benefit of the entire community.

One key challenge to planning for its future has already been addressed by Hudson – a moratorium on extending sewers outside the current area served except for identified areas where there are significant septic failures. The other key challenge is to consider, amend, and ultimately accept the Smart Growth Principles included in Section 1 of this Community Development Plan. The acceptance of these Principles that can be utilized by all boards reviewing development plans to evaluate plans and to render decisions will be key in approving projects that make sense for Hudson. It will also assist in having boards communicate with each other based on the same set of Principles.

The recent decision to restrict sewer extensions to extensive areas of Hudson also creates a need to plan for the unsewered portions of town. The east portion of Hudson is a mix of small firms in modest business properties able to function with only septic systems. Keeping these buildings functioning may be an issue in the long run. As businesses change, the ongoing viability of these business properties may be challenged by the need to have on-site septic disposal. This eastern portion of Hudson is also the primary target area for land preservation and much of the watershed protection district is located there. The competing and contradictory desire to maintain business viability while simultaneously protecting water quality and preserving open space will be an ongoing struggle in the eastern portion of Town. Hudson will need to plan carefully in this area to protect the varying interests.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan identifies goals and objectives for land preservation throughout town and outlines key parcels to protect in the eastern portion. A summary of that information is also presented in Section 5. A careful review of zoning and open space goals will assist the Town in realizing its vision. The implementation of this CD Plan could also be enhanced by the passage of the Community Preservation Act.

## **6.3 Suggested Options for Location of Future Growth**

As part of the development of the Hudson Community Development Plan, participants in the planning process identified areas of Hudson that were appropriate for further housing and economic development, and others that were appropriate to preserve for open space and recreation. These discussions occurred during the Visioning meetings in June of 2003, and in the Community Development Planning Committee. The primary recommended land-use map is inserted below. This map attempts to summarize and depict all of the issues discussed throughout the report. Thus, it shows lands that were deemed (by the visioning participants and Steering Committee) to be suitable for development or redevelopment of housing and commercial areas; it identifies land that the Town should seek to preserve; and it outlines transportation infrastructure needs. Detailed maps depicting goals outlined for each planning element are contained within each chapter.

During the visioning and the follow-up meetings conducted by the Steering Committee, virtually every large parcel of land in Hudson was looked up in the Town's database to determine its existing use, ownership, and underlying zoning. The watershed protection area map, the Town's Zoning Map, and the Sewer Areas maps were all utilized in tandem with this process to inform the committee's decision making. In general we found that the land suitability plan relates fairly well to existing zoning with the exception of parcels that Town might seek to acquire for open space. Most commercial properties are being recommended to continue as commercial and the same is true for housing. The one major exception to this is the downtown and older industrial areas that house mill buildings. Here the committee clearly felt that additional zoning options should be pursued to provide alternatives to the existing industrial uses. Taking the map parcel by parcel, there are several areas where the Committee is recommending that additional zoning uses be enacted to encourage the type of development believed to be appropriate. There are no cases where the map suggests removing development options from what is presently available to the property owner. Any future zoning changes pursued as a result of this map will augment land use opportunities and not remove options.

### **Land Suitability Map: Recommendations for Development, Redevelopment, and Preservation**

Achieving the goals established and outlined on the various maps will take a great deal of directed work in modifying the Hudson Bylaws to provide a road map for this outcome; to review projects seeking special permits, variances, and site plan review to reflect the desired outcome; and to undertake community development projects and seek grant assistance that can help assure the desired outcome. These efforts that can help achieve the concentration of development in Hudson where it is desired are outlined in the general discussion in this section and in the recommendations of this Plan. Recommendations are detailed at the end of each section of the Plan. They are also summarized in Table C-1 at the end of this section.

Table C-1 contains a brief restatement of each recommendation and indicates which entities in Hudson is the responsible party for implementing these recommendations, and suggests a time-frame appropriate for the recommendation to be initiated and/or achieved. The Town can modify Table C-1 over time as recommendations are achieved or altered. An ambitious schedule is outlined in Table C-1 but Hudson needs to act quickly if it is to affect many development activities that are already in the discussion stages.

## **6.4 Community Development and Funding Initiatives**

As noted above, Hudson has already taken on several important planning projects – the Open Space and Recreation Plan completed in 1999 and the Urban RiverVisions Plan completed in 2002. The implementation of these important planning efforts can have a huge impact of the appearance, functioning, and quality of life in Hudson into the future. Implementing these plans through local community development efforts, coupled with grants from the state and federal level, are the task focus for the implementation of these plans.

Hudson has made strong efforts to support its downtown area in the face of a proliferation of strip retail. Most of these downtown commercial buildings are tenanted, but some buildings struggle to keep tenants. At the same time, older commercial/industrial buildings are lying abandoned in areas in the periphery of the downtown. These areas are in need of rehabilitation and provide the next obvious focus of the Town's development and redevelopment efforts. Hudson has begun to focus on these areas, principally through the recent resources provided by Urban RiverVisions that created goals for Hudson regarding access to the Assabet River, recreation resources in riverfront areas, and connections of these riverfront improvements to proposed building reuse in the areas abutting the Assabet River.

Hudson has recently applied for grant funds to improve building facades in the downtown (funded), and to undertake park development and infrastructure improvements as recommended in the Urban RiverVisions Plan (funding decisions pending). These ongoing efforts will be key in maintaining a collective awareness of progress and improvements. The successful funding and current construction of the Assabet River Rail Trail in Marlborough and Hudson also contributes to the ongoing sense of improvement in the Town and its quality of life.

## **6.5 Municipal Administrative Issues**

The Town of Hudson has many strengths already existing in its municipal government that have delivered the town to its current condition. Capable management has provided significant leadership in negotiating with developers to ensure that project design and outcome have so far been beneficial to the community. The Economic Development Commission is the envy of many surrounding communities that would like to have a dedicated group of knowledgeable volunteers to interact with business owners and municipal officials on a variety of efforts to attract and support businesses in Hudson.

A community the size of Hudson with the amount of development taking place generally has a full-time planner to review projects, oversee zoning changes, implement plans, and staff the planning board. If Hudson is going to accomplish many of the ambitious goals identified by this Community Development Plan, by the Urban River Visions efforts, and the Open Space Plan, additional professional assistance may be needed to undertake this effort. A variety of the housing recommendations suggested in this document will require applications for grant funding, management, and administration as well. While Chapter 40B has been effective in getting the private sector to develop affordable housing in Hudson, redevelopment of some of the mill buildings targeted for redevelopment may not attract private sector attention on their own. A review of tasks required to be undertaken to achieve the actions laid out here could be undertaken by Hudson government to determine the critical nature of some of these goals and objectives, and to determine whether additional staff may be required to achieve some of these goals and objectives.

In sum, coordinated efforts that may be required to implement the list of recommendations in this plan include:

- Formally accept this Community Development Plan and the Smart Growth Principles included in it
- Continue aggressively seeking private, state, and federal funds to undertake the variety of recommendations in existing plans
- Review the Hudson Zoning Bylaw to update it and specifically make portions of it more functional and allow necessary changes to improve land use and quality of life
- Target future growth in areas identified as part of this planning process, and that are served by adequate infrastructure
- Pursue the development of a corridor study for part of Route 62 between 495 and the Downtown.
- Review staffing in the area of planning and community development implementation, administration, and enforcement to assure that Hudson can implement its aggressive and comprehensive agenda

**Table C-1: Community Development Plan: Consolidated Recommendations**

	<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Involved Parties</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
<b>Housing Recommendations</b>			
H-1.1	Develop housing plans that meet State certification requirements	BOS, Admin, Housing Authority	Short Term
H-1.2	Seek endorsement of CDP by land use boards, and other interested parties	CDP Steering	Short Term
H-1.3	Meet with Intel regarding housing needs of employees	Housing Authority, ZBA	
H-1.4	Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act to assist with implementation of the CDP, including affordable housing	ConCom, Recreation, HDC, Housing Authority	Medium Term
H-1.5	Establish review criteria for comprehensive permits	ZBA	Medium Term
H-2.1	Consider developing an accessory unit and accessory building bylaw or modify existing by-laws to permit such units	Planning Board, ZEO, Admin	Short Term
H-2.2	Consider developing mill overlay district to encourage redevelopment	Planning Board, CDP Steering Comm.	Short Term
H-2.3	Encourage redevelopment of existing mill buildings for housing, such as assisted living or affordable condominiums	Administration, ED, ZBA, Building Dept	Ongoing
H-4.1	Consider adopting new options for mixed-used development downtown	CDP Steering Comm. Planning Board, HDC	Short Term
H-4.2	Encourage rehabilitation of downtown residential properties through use of CDBG funds and other sources	Admin, AV Chamber, Building Dept	Medium Term
H-5.1	Develop and adopt flexible zoning for conservation subdivisions to protect land on-site or off-site	CDP Steering Comm. Planning Board	Short Term
H-6	Emphasize development of home-ownership units to meet demands and get benefits of greater percentage of home-ownership	Administration	Short Term
H-7.1	Encourage school and municipal employees to live in town through preference programs in affordable units	Housing Authority, Administration	Ongoing
H-8.1	Review state needs assessments for assisted living and nursing care facilities to identify market options for this need	Senior Center, Housing Authority	Medium Term

<b>Economic Development Recommendations</b>			
	<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Involved Parties</i></b>	<b><i>Timeline</i></b>
E-1.1	Undertake roadway improvements to maintain efficient access	Administration, DPW	Ongoing
E-1.2	Implement infrastructure improvements of the Urban River Visions Project, particularly parking and parkland improvements	Administration, DPW	Medium Term
E-2.1	Seek to limit the use of commercial/industrially-zoned properties to designated business purposes	Planning Board, EconDevl,	Ongoing
E-2.2	Review the zoning of land accessible to I-495 for appropriate commercial/industrial designations that will enhance the tax base and protect the quality and amount of development	Planning Board, Administration, DPW	Short Term
E-2.3	Encourage greater mixed use in C-1 District through public information, programs, and zoning changes to include mixed use in new construction	Administration, AV Chamber, CDP Steering Com, PB	Short Term
E-2.4	Review home occupations in the zoning bylaw to facilitate appropriate home occupations	Planning Board, Economic Development	Short Term
E-2.5	Review uses and restrictions in the C-1 District to identify their role in preserving the downtown and to identify any appropriate changes	PB, CDP Steering, ZEO, HDC	Medium Term
E-2.6	Develop a mill overlay district bylaw as described in recommendation H-2.2 to allow existing mill buildings to be used for residential and commercial uses	Planning Board, CDP Steering, Admin	Short Term
E-3.1	Continue working with Intel to resolve water and wastewater issues	DPW, Administration	Short Term
E-3.2	Support small businesses in Town through state and federal resources, in concert with the Assabet Valley Chamber of Commerce	Administration, AV Chamber	Short Term
E-3.3	Review the use of TIF and DIF in downtown Hudson to support and encourage economic development	Economic Development, Planning Board, Admin	Short Term
E-3.4	Reexamine zoning on the east end of Hudson in an effort to support the businesses located there	Planning Board, Economic Development	Medium Term
E-4.1	Provide quality education for Hudson students and facilitate local businesses working with the schools on mentoring and internships	School Dept, Economic Development	Ongoing
E-5.1	Target the façade improvement program to the most needy buildings	Administration, HDC, AV Chamber	Short Term
E-5.2	Encourage mixed uses in the active efforts to redevelop 4 largely vacant mill buildings surrounding the downtown	PB, EconDevl, (see H-2.2), Admin, ZEO	Short Term

<b>Transportation Recommendations</b>			
	<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Involved Parties</i></b>	<b><i>Timeline</i></b>
T-1.1	Continue overseeing construction of the ARRT, and pursue acquisition, design and construction of remaining portions privately held	Admin, DPW, ConCom	Short Term
T-1.2	Encourage state and regional efforts to develop the Mass. Central RR Branch as a rail trail and/or other regional transit opportunity.	Admin, PB, EconDevl., DPW, AV Chamber	Ongoing
T-1.3	Encourage regional efforts to develop a shuttle service that can carry Hudson residents to the MBTA commuter rail in a cost effective manner	Admin, EconDevl, AV Chamber	Medium Term
T-2.1	Undertake key road improvements projects identified by the Hudson Department of Public Works	DPW	Ongoing
T-2.2	Undertake key road improvement projects already listed in the TIP and those targeted for the TIP	Administration, DPW	Ongoing
T-3.1	Consider appropriate zoning of Route 62 area west of Hudson downtown	Planning Board, Economic Development	Short Term
T-3.2	Strengthen Site Plan Review portion of the Zoning Bylaw to protect the appearance and interface of commercial development projects with roadways	Planning Board, Admin	Short Term

<b>Natural Resource Recommendations</b>			
	<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<b><i>Involved Parties</i></b>	<b><i>Timeline</i></b>
N-1	Expand and enhance existing facilities and opportunities	Recreation	Short term
N-2	Preserve natural features through maintenance programs	ConCom, Rec	Medium term
N-3	Protection of waters supplies, wells and aquifers and land surrounding those areas	ConCom, DPW, Zoning Board	Medium term
N-4	Improve handicap accessibility to facilities and lands	Rec, School Dept	Medium term
N-5	Seek financial sources for acquisition, renovation, and development by forming partnerships with both private and public sources – Consider passage of Community Preservation Act	BOS, ConCom, Rec	Short term
N-6	Encourage increased Conservation and Planning resources	Admin, BOS, FinCom, PB, ConCom	Short term

**NOTES:**

1. Period of Project Timelines are as follows: Short Term – 1-2 years; Medium Term 3-5 years; Ongoing – continually as issues and opportunities arise
2. Abbreviations for Responsible Parties include:

Admin =	Administration including Executive Assistant's Office, Board of Selectmen, Department Heads, Zoning Enforcement Officer, and Site Plan Review Committee
AV Chamber =	Assabet Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce
BOS =	Board of Selectmen
Building Dept =	Building Department / Inspectional Services
CDP Steering =	Community Development Plan Steering Committee
ConCom =	Hudson Conservation Commission
DPW =	Hudson Department of Public Works
EconDevl =	Hudson Economic Development Commission
FinCom =	Finance Committee
HDC =	Historic District Commission
Housing Authority =	Hudson Housing Authority
PB =	Planning Board
Rec =	Department of Recreation / Park Commission
ZBA =	Hudson Zoning Board of Appeals
ZEO =	Zoning Enforcement Officer