

Introduction, Vision and Goals

Introduction and Vision Statement

Hudson has changed dramatically over the past several decades from a small, quiet, suburban community to an economically vibrant one. Partly due to its access within the Metrowest region of Massachusetts with prime access to major highways and direct connections to urban areas such as Worcester, Framingham and Boston, Hudson is an excellent

location for residential, commercial/industrial, and retail development. Hudson prides itself on having a true historic Downtown center with unique new restaurants and retail and supports small businesses that want to locate in Downtown.

With these changes, Hudson residents want to preserve conservation and recreation land to preserve its character and protect the Assabet River and the Town's many natural landscapes and resources. Residents also yearn for better housing choices particularly starter homes for young families, enhanced public



infrastructure and services. They place great importance on a better quality of life, including more opportunities for biking, walking and exercising, and enhanced support of Hudson's youth and aged and disabled. The Town strives to be a regional leader in promoting a healthy community.

Community Engagement

As part of the development of the Master Plan, the Hudson Community Development Department and Master Plan Steering Committee held a series of public input workshops on topic areas for the Master Plan as outlined below. The input gathered during these public events informed the preparation of the Master Plan.

On Monday, June 11, 2012, the Town of Hudson convened a public forum to discuss the 2014 Master Plan Update project. Approximately 60 people attended the forum. After a presentation on the planning process and Hudson 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 Hudson that was both positive and negative.

Some of Hudson's strengths included:

- Transportation and accessibility (6 votes)
- Town light and electric operation (3 votes)
- Parks and Recreation services (2 votes)
- Public service and tree removal (2 votes)
- Arts organizations (2 votes)
- Downtown center and walking trail (2 votes)

Some of Hudson's challenges were:

- Downtown vacancies (16 votes)
- More parking downtown (11 votes)
- Transportation services – lack of options (11 votes)
- Road system in bad shape (8 votes)
- Shortage of vacant industrial zoned land (8 votes)
- Need for community center (6 votes)

Some of Hudson's opportunities were:

- Create incentives to draw businesses into town (10 votes)
- Route truck traffic around main street (9 votes)
- Bike taxi, trolley service as ways to get people Downtown (8 votes)
- Older buildings (5 votes)
- Walking trail along Assabet (2 votes)
- Parking garage (1 vote)

Some of Hudson's threats included:

- Loss of small town character if too much growth (11 votes)
- People in their 20's leaving Hudson (9 votes)
- Need sustainable development (6 votes)
- Inability to sustain small town commercial development (5 votes)
- Loss of Intel (5 votes)
- Zoning to guide growth (4 votes)

The sentiments expressed by residents during this first public meeting were echoed throughout the next series of four topic area public meetings with more detail. The Planning Team engaged the public in a series of interactive polling exercises to gauge support for a variety of different tools to address issues in the Town. The public largely favored mixed use development with residential and commercial uses in the same building. The participants supported conservation efforts but not with higher taxes. Most participants were satisfied with the amount of recreational facilities and playing fields.

Housing and Economic Development Forum

On December 10, 2012, the Planning Team held a focused public forum on housing and economic development issues facing the town. Participants discussed the key issues for housing in Hudson noted the following opportunities:

- More single detached unit housing
- More condensed multifamily units
- More jobs before we build more housing
- Green building development
- Rehabilitate old buildings (mill buildings) to commercial and residential mixed use units
- Assisted living facility

Participants noted that Hudson was attractive for economic development because of its location, good school system, Town programming, and small town feel. In general participants were enthusiastic about revising zoning to be more flexible to allow more mixed-use buildings, façade improvements, townhouse development, green buildings, and reuse of older buildings such as the older mill buildings near downtown.

For economic development, participants focused on the downtown noting that it needed additional parking, more niche retail, better connections to Assabet River, streetscape improvements, restaurants, a farmers market and other activities to attract residents downtown.

Residents were optimistic about the transformation of Route 85 but noted that buffers and transitions were needed to protect current residences.

Open Space, Recreation, and Historical Resources Forum

The Town of Hudson convened a public forum on Monday, January 14, 2013 to discuss the topics of open space, recreation, and historical resources. Many participants noted that they most often walked or hiked when using Hudson's recreational facilities or used the ballfields. Participants noted the three most important issues facing recreational facilities and open space were need for improved maintenance, better access to the Assabet River, and connectivity of open spaces and trails.

Participants were then asked to get into small groups to discuss a series of questions. When asked how Hudson can better educate residents about its recreational resources, participants noted that notices could be sent through schools, senior citizen newsletters, an interactive web-based map, information table at community events, and scavenger hunts.

Residents noted the need for a dedicated dog park, canoe access/kayak launch on the Assabet River, Moulton Field improvement, additional trails, and improved maintenance of current parks, ponds, and facilities.

For the preservation of Hudson's historical resources, participants noted that using tools such as demolition delay, a cultural district designation, historical districts, better signage of historical buildings, and architectural conservation districts were particularly important.

Energy and Transportation Forum

The Town of Hudson convened a public forum on March 4, 2013, to discuss the topics of energy and transportation. Engagement with residents revealed that majority of participants had not had an energy audit of their home, but had received rebates for purchasing energy-efficient appliances and installed energy conserving appliances in their homes. The top three things that participants noted the Town could do with regard to energy included:

1. Green building/energy efficient building codes
2. Efficiency in municipal buildings
3. Education and outreach to businesses/residents

In addition to these top priorities, residents found there were opportunities for solar energy facilities on conservation land and landfill, developing hybrid and electric car infrastructure, streetlight efficiency, smaller scale hydroelectric generation, green roofs, and rate structure changes to encourage conservation.

In discussing transportation, everyone noted that their primary mode of transportation was the car with walking being the secondary form of transportation mainly for exercise purposes. Many felt that the Town should regularly allocate money to maintain and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Participants used public transit infrequently but thought the Town should provide more transit service and provide more forms of alternative transportation infrastructure (such as sidewalk improvements, bicycle accommodations, transit services, electric vehicle infrastructure). In addition to supporting alternative transportation, participants felt top priorities for focusing its resources included addressing downtown traffic congestion, parking structure, and better signage.

Social Services and Public Health Forum

On Tuesday April 23, 2013, the Town of Hudson sponsored a public forum at the Hudson Senior Center to discuss the topics of social services and public health, which was attended by approximately 30 people. While there was relatively broad support for the Town's efforts to provide social services, members of the audience noted that they would support funding for social services through grants rather than solely by municipal funds. Some suggested using grants such as state/federal government grants and a combination of public and private funds.

Participants understood the importance of providing public health services to residents and in particular thought that the following were the highest priorities to address:

- Hire a Community/Social Services Coordinator (social worker)
- Hazardous materials management
- Immunization
- Pre-rental housing inspection program
- Curbside household trash pickup

There was also some discussion about age-friendly actions that would be most important to achieve in Hudson:

- Assisted living facility
- Education to help seniors age in place
- Program helping seniors to retrofit homes to support aging in place
- Improve sidewalks in central areas
- Additional pedestrian paths for exercise

Social service programs to emphasize in Hudson included elderly services, youth programs, neighborhood and community outreach, disabilities and mobility, and veteran's affairs.

Community Services and Facilities Forum

On Monday June 10, 2013, the Town of Hudson organized an open house/discussion forum to discuss community services and facilities. The open house was set up to allow Town departments to describe the services that they offer and to discuss their facility needs, which in particular included the Department of Public Works need for a new office facility and the Police Department's latest plans for a new Police Station and Headquarters. In addition to information about building and restoration of Town Hall, the following departments participated in the open house:

- Department of Community Development
- Town Clerk
- Board of Health
- Building Inspections
- Recreation
- Senior Center
- Library
- Hudson Light and Power
- Police
- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- School Department

Residents expressed the top recreational need was more multi-purpose recreational fields and the biggest issue was maintenance.

According to participants, the highest priority for the library was to improve parking and access to the building. The majority of participants noted that it was very important to build a new police headquarters, and combining the police and DPW headquarters was a good idea. In prioritizing road repairs, many felt that a combination of safety, pavement condition, and high traffic areas should be considered. Many felt that creating additional space for document storage was key for the Town Hall.

Finally, the following comments were made during the general discussion after the presentation on community facilities, including the following highlights:

- Consider expanding solid waste management options to include curbside pickup
- Consider impacts to residential areas from a new transfer station
- Create more opportunities for performing arts in Hudson
- Create a Washington Street gateway
- Address issues related to downtown traffic and a parking garage
- Consider a community center for other recreational activities – hockey, performing arts, etc.
- Address vandalism at parks and recreation areas

- Move the Building Inspections Department into the new Police Station
- Digitize documents wherever possible to reduce need for storage of paper copies

Master Plan Goals

In light of the public input from the community, the analysis of past and current economic, housing, natural resources, infrastructure and land use trends and needs, the Master Plan sets out the following goals by plan element.

Land Use and Community Design Goals

Over the past decade, the Town has made strategic decisions about where and how development should occur. The Land Use element of this Master Plan provides additional focus on the Town's overall land use goals including:

- Transform the Route 85 Corridor into a vibrant and thriving commercial area with smaller scale commercial, office, and light industrial uses along with selective mixed use developments.
- Facilitate the rehabilitation of abandoned and under-utilized mill complexes for flexible use, whether for new light industrial or commercial or mixed use development including residential.
- Develop an identity and sense of place for the Downtown that focuses on balancing the needs of the residents of Hudson, the businesses, and the need for continued economic development at an appropriate scale.
- Encourage new upper-story residential and commercial development within the Downtown that is consistent with its historic character.
- Encourage the development of clustered single family and townhouse development in areas where there is existing available and residentially zoned land.
- Develop buffers and transitions from the more intensive uses in Hudson's Downtown, industrial and commercial areas to protect its single family neighborhoods.
- Steer new development away from areas that could compromise Hudson's water resources and critical habitat, or in areas that currently lack appropriate infrastructure such as sewer service.

Housing Goals

While the housing in Hudson is affordable to many, the cost of housing is growing as a major share of household income. One of the primary housing goals of this Plan is to provide choices for people and therefore, diversity in housing type and price. Hudson should strive to:

- Provide for a variety of housing types that suits the diversity of community members' needs and to develop a balanced housing market.
- Maintain control over the development of affordable housing in Hudson to encourage a well-designed housing stock.
- Encourage denser housing in existing buildings that are in need of rehabilitation or infill sites in areas already served by existing sewers.
- Leverage town resources to encourage the development of affordable housing by private entities.
- Provide incentives to owners and developers to rehabilitate existing vacant or underutilized buildings into residential properties, such as assistance with state grant and loan programs.
- Plan for the increased need for housing for seniors in Hudson using a variety of options, including an assisted living facility, affordable housing for seniors, and multi-generational housing.
- Attract more young families by providing more starter homes that are affordable to them.

Economic Development Goals

The 2004 Hudson Community Development Plan was guided by a series of “Principles for Smart Growth” that shape policy across a variety of topic areas. A number of these principles relate directly to the Town’s economic development policies as noted below.

- Concentrate development and support development that is compact, conserves land, integrates uses, and utilizes existing infrastructure for sewer and water.
- Protect the village character and “strong sense of place” of downtown Hudson with its locally-owned businesses, healthy economy, pedestrian environment, access to the Assabet River, built features and landmarks, historical resources, and role in community life.
- Redevelop first. Identify existing built resources that are unused or underutilized and give preference to their reuse. Promote redevelopment of brownfields, preservation and reuse of historic structures, and rehabilitation of existing housing, industrial buildings, and schools.

- Increase job opportunities. Use rehabilitation and infill development to encourage the location of new business development near housing, infrastructure, water and transportation options. Support the growth of new and existing local businesses.
- Foster sustainable businesses. Strengthen sustainable natural resource-based businesses, primarily agricultural activities. Support economic development in industry clusters consistent with regional and local character. Maintain reliable and affordable energy sources to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels.
- Encourage “green” buildings. Work with developers on new construction projects to reduce stormwater through “green” roofs, permeable parking surfaces and other options, and to reduce energy consumption of new construction and rehabilitation through active and passive energy saving building options.

The 2004 Community Development Plan included an Economic Development component that identified potential actions for the Town to take to help support existing businesses and facilitate the growth of new economic activity. The recommendations from the 2004 Plan encompassed five general themes including:

- Plan, design, and construct public infrastructure to enhance economic development.
- Initiate/strengthen/enforce town bylaws and regulations.
- Support business already located in Hudson.
- Support Hudson residents with employment skills and as employees.
- Enhance private sector ability to redevelop business real estate.

Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources Goals

Hudson is known for its water features, open spaces, farmland, and scenic vistas. The Assabet River in particular is the heart of the community, providing many scenic views, and opportunities for a variety of recreational activities. To enhance and protect these assets, Hudson should strive to:

- Preserve, protect and enhance Hudson's natural, cultural and historic resources.
- Improve water quality of streams, ponds, and the Assabet River.
- Protect Hudson's drinking water resources.
- Acquire, expand and enhance areas for open space and recreation.

- Support Town administration of natural resources and leverage funding opportunities to support conservation efforts.

Open Space and Recreation Goals

The Town of Hudson is active in and has made great strides towards accomplishing the community's goals and objectives related to its open space and recreational resources. The Town should continue to:

- Establish a healthy balance between development and open space.
- Provide a wide range of recreation opportunities for all residents of the community.
- Increase recreational opportunities and open space resources by encouraging multiple uses and by creating linkages between open space and recreational properties.
- Enhance administrative capacity to support the Town's open space and recreation resources and facilities.

Public Services and Facilities Goals

The following provides an overview of the public services and facilities goals:

- Improve the comprehensive planning process for short- and long-term capital improvements for all town facilities and services.
- Given the often conflicting demands, establish priorities for building and facility upgrades and replacement.
- Establish new or improved/upgraded facilities and increase staffing for public safety to meet demands resulting from anticipated growth.
- Lead by example in community facilities and operations by establishing sustainability principles and initiatives.

Transportation Goals

The following provides an overview of the transportation goals:

- Balance the need to facilitate traffic flow throughout the community as a whole with desires to make the roadways more walkable and bikeable; calm vehicle traffic speeds where appropriate;
- Seek opportunities to introduce public transportation at an appropriate scale and in an affordable manner to the community as a whole;

- Identify necessary transportation infrastructure needs and seek traditional and non-traditional funding sources to advance these projects;
- Ensure that paratransit service meets the expanding needs for elderly and disabled residents; and
- Address the perceived lack of parking availability throughout the community.

Energy Goals

Energy planning is relevant to the Town's operation of buildings, vehicles, lighting, and other infrastructure, as well as to residents and businesses living and operating within Hudson. To create a more efficient and cost-effective energy system, the Town should:

- Incorporate energy efficiency considerations into all short- and long-term planning for capital improvements, transportation, infrastructure, housing, and land use.
- Lead Hudson by example in the promotion of energy efficiency and clean energy throughout municipal operations.
- Utilize policy, financial, educational, and other mechanisms to promote energy efficiency and clean energy among Hudson residents and businesses.
- Maintain the benefits of Hudson Light & Power as a community asset by maintaining electricity reliability and low costs to customers.

Social Services and Public Health Goals

Overarching goals related to the Town of Hudson's social services and public health systems have come out of this master plan process. These include the following:

- Improve water quality in order to maintain safe and clean drinking water resources.
- Increase access to local and healthy foods.
- Improve pedestrian amenities to encourage walking, running, bicycling, and public transit.
- Develop additional programming and capacity related to public health and social services.



Aerial Photograph, Hudson, MA