

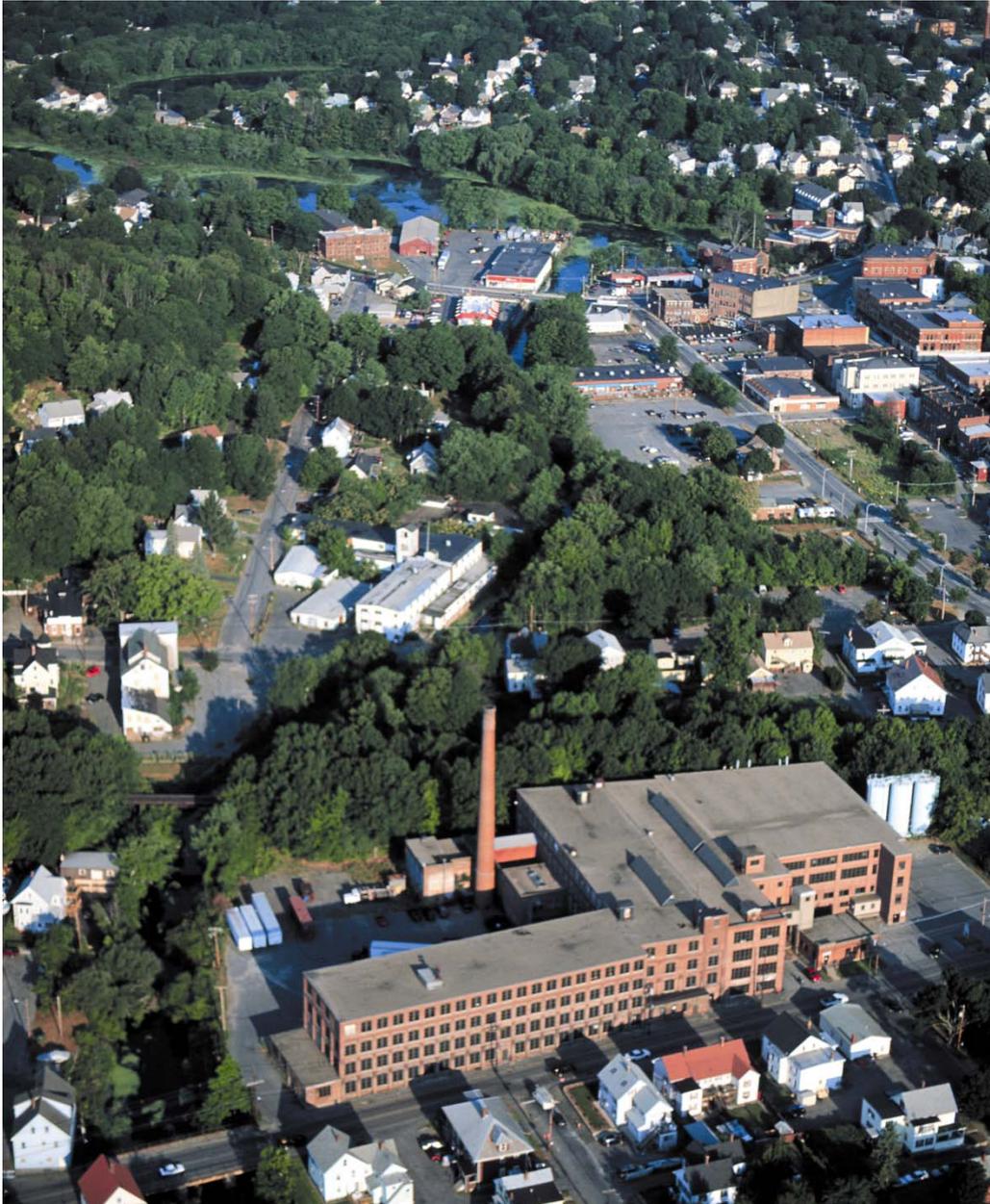
UrbanRiver Visions

*An initiative of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs,
Bob Durand, Secretary*

Hudson Charrette

October 8 & 9, 2002

Summary Report



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Downtown Hudson on the Assabet River

For more information, please visit www.UrbanRiverVisions.org



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UrbanRiver Visions Hudson EOEA/Consultant Team

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Introduction

The *UrbanRiver Visions* charrette in Hudson engaged the community in a visioning session on two consecutive nights to talk about community ideas, goals, and potentials for the river and the downtown. In meetings preceding the charrette, community leaders identified the study area and a number of themes that would be addressed during the event itself. Close to 100 local leaders, activists, and community residents participated in the charrette that took place at Town Hall on the evenings of October 8 and 9, 2002 and in a daylong open house and site walk.

On the first evening participants identified opportunities for enhancing the relationship between the Assabet River, the neighborhoods, and the downtown. Two groups were formed to explore the issues, one focusing on vacant land and mill redevelopment considerations and the other on open space and connections. After an intense work session the two groups reported back to the whole assembly and received comments. As part of an all day “drop-in” workshop at Town Hall the next day, a small group of participants walked the study area. Following the walk, the consultant team generated two preliminary visions that were presented to charrette participants that evening. A broad consensus emerged on the second night around a number of key opportunities.

The purpose of this document is to document the plans and supporting materials for charrettes and to record the notes from both nights of the Hudson charrette. Each group’s notes begin with a short summary of the main discussion themes, followed by the literal transcripts of the posted notes and map annotations taken by the facilitator. Any notes added after the charrette to describe what is seen on the page are set aside with brackets.



Hudson prepares for the two-day charrette



Herb Nolan presents the Hudson slide show

Tuesday Session:

Connections Group

Maria Van Dusen, *UrbanRiver Visions* Facilitators

The Connections Group discussed connections to and along the river as well as the quality of the environment along the river. They recommended a number of vital pedestrian connections including a spur from the Assabet River Rail Trail to the downtown, a Tannery Brook connection, a riverwalk between the South Street park and the Library above the dam, a riverwalk between the Armory Site and Wood Park and a nature trail connecting to the high school. Visual access to the river was important to the group and, in particular, the view to the falls under the Washington Street Bridge. Trees should be thinned and views opened up. Given the amount of land in private ownership along the river a strategy for land protection and acquisition was called for to achieve key points of public access along the shore.

Parking should be consolidated to other lots and a possible parking garage to create space for a larger park between South Street and the river. This would be a fine place for festivals.

Access onto the water was an important goal as well. New boat launch sites and portages above and below the dam were called for. It should be possible to launch a canoe at the Library park and paddle to Wood Park and the new High School. Continuing

to improve water quality and habitat for wildlife was essential. To this end the group discussed the pros and cons of breaching the dam to improve water quality. The draining of the mill pond and the resulting impact on aesthetics was a concern.

The group also took up the redevelopment discussion. They suggested that the mills be redeveloped for artist's loft style housing and for older individuals. The following verbatim notes were recorded on flip charts during the Connections Group discussion.



The Connections Group begins its evening discussion

CONNECTIONS

Focus Group Questions

1. How can better connections be established between the downtown and the river?
2. Are there barriers to achieving these goals, and how can these barriers be overcome?
3. How can the riverfront become a more attractive community amenity?

River Connections Discussion

- Tannery Brook – Connects Bruce's pond (to Assabet River)
- Public walkway / boardwalk
- Hidden, needs clean up
- Nature trail from High School
- Strategy for land protection / acquisition
- 2 miles upstream
- New Access to Wood Park
 - Canoe – fire station – Westborough
 - access from Chapen Road
- Best use for area behind Fire Station / Library?
 - Dependent on Dam vs. No dam
 1. dam removal – benefits water quality (but difficulty in getting it done)
 2. dam aesthetics (pond)
 3. CAE Involvement
 4. short term plans for pond

- 5. concrete lining of river
 - a. disconnect from river
 - b. unnatural effect
 - 6. structural support for surrounding buildings?
 - 7. river walkway aesthetics
 - 8. = HIGH PRIORITY
- Fighting “backyard” mentality of river
 - Must change perspectives
- Wildlife: Alewife shad fish reintroduction – as public attraction
 - Long term goal
 - Recreational canoeing and fishing – appeals to local residents and visitors
 - 1. duck race, canoe race
 - 2. sportsman stakeholders
- River visibility (thin trees)
- Comm. Trash clean-up
- Wider buffer
- Parking lot detracts
- Walkway – Chapen to Elks
 - Bridge= good, natural attraction
- Compare: Wood park – attractive vs. South St. – barren
 - Econ vitality
- Enlarge S. St. Park across Tannery Brook (private prop.)
- Connection
 - Existing trail across to S. St. Park
- Existing P. Lot
 - Elevate to 2 story garage and multi-use
 - Extra space = park (good launch spot)
- BIKE TRAIL: connections to S. St. Park
- H.S. use of riverfront (physical ed classes benefit)

- Enhance use of river as nature teaching tool
- Rentals : canoes (exist)
- Increase attraction for private property owners to share river front space
- Possibility of linking riverfront upstream – downstream
 - Long term idea
 - private, high demand property
 - importance of acquisition
 - change of land use & traffic patterns
- Retaining wall – walkway
- Town hall – only meeting place, parking problems
- Mill Buildings – artist influx? Festivals?
- Retail – home improvement orientation – need to mix up use – gift shop
- New business influx – old / new mix – restaurants
- Parking on S. Street currently undesirable (too far from commercial act. On Main Street) esp. in winter
 - Need attractions on S. Street itself
 - 2-layer parking w/in block between S. St. & Main Street (perception being closer to Main Street Activity)
- Festivals: space for gathering = Town Hall Lawn, close Church Street
 - Occasional S. St. use – parking lot use
 - Halloween – Main Street to Broad Street (kids)

- South Street – traffic? – one way / trucks only?
 - Taking advantage of its waterfront location for public gatherings / festivals
- Meeting Spaces: Armory (retaining wall)

- Private prop. Between Armory & Park potential linkage
- Fire Station & Library: (possible) proposal to relocate / build satellite stations (town property)
 - Seasonal waterfront use necessary – but right of way along edge near water
- Walkway link – from Fire Station to new S. Street park
- Fence blocks aesthetic view to bridge
- Relocate McD's (?) to draw people to S. Street & free up waterfront space
- Rotary – River – S. Street (bike trail?) = make a walkable look
 - Ideal for bikers on longer trips (can stop in Hudson for lunch)
 - Bike racks and signage
- Canoers – routes (upstream and back) portage & take outs: L-Date dam

HIGH SCHOOL USE OF RIVER

Increase South St. – Main Street Connection

Reasons to go:

- connection to rail trail & bike trail
- visibility & access
- wider buffer – reduce undergrowth (preserve some for natural qualities)
- recreation
- address questions of WHO



Work continues on the Connections Group's vision plan

Tuesday Session:

Economics / Redevelopment Group

Pam McKinney and David Spillane, *UrbanRiver Visions* Facilitators

The redevelopment group discussed a number of issues and made recommendations that, if carried out, could have a direct or indirect impact on the economic health of Main Street. The downtown together with the river needs to become a destination and place of choice for more people. Rather than compete with nearby highway strips Downtown needs to sharpen its identity by emphasizing its cultural and natural assets. Good PR will be part of this refocusing effort. Expectations for the downtown are getting higher as people rediscover Hudson. Main Street should cater to these folks and ensure that they have a positive experience.

To support this a number of initiatives were identified. The riverfront should become a part of the downtown experience by creating reasons to go there: destinations such as cafes or playgrounds. These attractions should be driven by demand and economics. Programmed activities such as the annual duck race or bicycle races are one of the ingredients of success. Hudson merchants should capture the activity generated by the Assabet River Rail Trail with new or expanded businesses such as a sports shop or restaurants.

The maintenance of the side streets, parking lots and open space between Main Street and the river is critical. An integrated parking strategy for downtown Hudson is needed to meet existing and potential demand. Better signage and maps, enforcement of rules, better pedestrian connections, shared lots, improved parking lots, and, possibly, a public parking garage, need to be part of this strategy.

Efforts should be made to streamline the complex permitting required for riverside redevelopment of the old mill complexes. The mills are outmoded for modern Industrial uses. Instead promote mixed use with residential and retail. The following notes are a record of the Economics / Redevelopment Group discussions.



Working Group participant Jennifer Burke expresses her concerns about the South Street area

Focus Group questions:

1. What kinds of development / uses are desirable – and will benefit downtown? Is there a market?
2. What amenities are needed to attract this duet/uses?
3. What are the barriers to success and how can they be overcome?

ECONOMICS / REDEVELOPMENT

- cleaning up (simple things)
- Market Street is a mess
- Aubuchon Lot
- Parking lots on south street is a problem
- Adopted area program to solve cleaning the streets getting same quality of Main Street
- “Curb Appeal”
- create a culture
- Bocce Court
- Neglected areas need PR marketing downtown
- Façade improvement program 3

- Dam towards Main
- Wheeler Road is disaster
- Activity off of bike path
- Destination sports will be kept clean
- Riverfront as an enhancement driven by economics?
- Regulations along river
 - Riverbill
 - Clean soil
 - Flood zone
 - Many parameters
- Need to prioritize problems
- Parking garage

PARKING

- spaces taken up by business owners (2 hour parking)
- maps showing where parking is distributed to businesses
- signage
- need more parking (ticket fees go up?)
- South Street very full during day budget issue? How to solve monitoring parking
- Murphy and Hudson savings bank use many spaces
- Garage long term
- Short term solution
- Satellite parking, who supports it?

- bike trail bring around south street and main to utilize the park
- businesses will follow the people
- to river, maybe high school bike races to given destinations
- signage to point bikers to park and walk around town
- information kiosk
- not industrial
- retail, some residential (mixed use)
- change is slow

BENEFICIAL USES

- residential, office, retail
- retail
 - creating imagery that does not compete with strip
 - indigenous architecture
 - environment
 - not chain
 - not defused retail within walking distance of each other
 - concentrate it
- residential
 - plus to add more bodies to enhance retail success
 - mill rehab
 - artist component – loft style
 - large family housing 55+ small units
 - catering to 495
- Office
 - mostly offices now, not enough retail
- visibility to user/possible user
- beautification
- housing
- to draw people, more dollars

- create an identity for downtown
 - a culture
 - marketing
 - beautification
- park is too isolated
- people need to walk, stop drinking

- horseshoe pub made an island of itself
- sidewalk café ?
- path, amenities from café need reasons for people to go places, destination
- change of traffic pattern to slow things down

- burying utilities e.g. south street
- need for high end retail to meet demands of people coming to Hudson
- 30,000 pop. During day
- expectations for downtown getting higher
- business improvement district / CT more taxes to fundamentals
- cultural activities
 - festivals, reg. Series, use of town hall as gym to bring families to downtown
 - Multi-Level parking would free up current lots and areas for parks
 - Possible site behind town hall and bank
- Need to get people to park & walk from their cars in an attractive setting



Charrette participants visit a site below the dam

Wednesday Session: Combined Group

Herbert Nolan and David Spillane, *UrbanRiver Visions* Facilitators

In response to the notes from the previous evening and the plan alternatives that were presented the group came to consensus around a number of issues and suggested a few new ideas. They emphasized the need for much better connections from Main Street to the river and all along the riverbank. In Addition bicycle and or pedestrian access should be provided between the Intel campus and the Downtown and between Tripp Pond and the river. A sizable park should be established along the river at South Street and Broad Street with Tannery Brook as a feature. The town should plan for a transition in land ownership and/or land uses in some cases to achieve the goal of better access to the river. Well-designed facilities that support fun activities, such as skate boarding, should be provided to attract people to these open spaces.

Promoting redevelopment of the mills for housing could boost the local economy by bringing more customers downtown and would

animate the proposed river parks. Hudson has many assets to draw on and can do a much better job of marketing those attractions to potential visitor. The following notes record the comments from the group.



Charrette participants convene on Wednesday night to review vision plan options

COMBINED GROUP

- Connect to Tripp Pond neighborhood
- Connect to Intel – lunch downtown
- Need for signage to historic sites and from bike trail
- Need to link south and main street, make connections inviting (e.g. tannery brook, stairs)
- Landscaping on streets
- Tannery Brook
 - Important Link
 - Possible skateboard park
- Bridge @ wood park – make part of connection?
- Parking Issue at Wood Park
- Expansion of open space, a way to go?
 - Performance Center as reason to come here (indoor all season)
 - Parking need in downtown
 - Multi-Level Parking would free up current lots and areas for parks
 - Possible site behind town hall and bank
- Need to get people to park & walk from their cars in an attractive setting
 - Improve south street & connections
- Tourist areas vs. activities for local residents
- Linear park concept that connects along the river – better than large parks
- People might drive to other suburban parks instead of a downtown park
- Need to use river to connect existing open spaces for pedestrians
- On other hand a large park at Tannery Brook would improve the downtown

- On other hand large park next to parking would provide critical mass for events
- Large park's esthetic value – brighten area up and make more inviting
- park as pedestrian connection over Tannery Brook
 - prolong fence and make current park less scary
- What are the destinations? Need reasons for going there
- Connecting bike trail will make area more inviting
- Interest in housing in this area of town?
 - Define demand for housing in the area
- Maybe not necessarily elderly housing
- Would that enrich the downtown? Economically?
- Seniors
 - Fewer \$ but better access to downtown & spend locally
 - Actually seniors may also have *more* disposable income
- Nearby residential – improvement of businesses and store fronts
- Bike trail: What are destinations, even outside of Hudson?
 - Hudson use to be a trail destination.
- Residential in mill buildings an exciting idea – need for housing
- Mill building not reusable as industrial building – too small and constrained
- Trail from Intel to Main Street. (avoid busy Washington Street)
- Move welding shop on South Street (eye sore and obstacle to parking lot)
- Improve Market Street to help connect to river (ex Gateway to the parking lot)
- Possibly swap lots like VFW and gas stations at bridge and change for more inviting uses
- Bring river water into the park?
- Goldfish pond in south street park as way to draw people to parks: create special parks
- Bench donation program exists, but not marketed
- Hudson needs to market its assets to its residents and visitors
- Website, maps
- Example: Belfont, PA with fish feed in local river great attraction
- Public art, reflection of Hudson history
 - Ex. Erie, PA sculpture contest
 - Unique special things
- Landscaping: asphalt broken between streets is forbidding
 - Need for tree lined walks to lead to river, get people to participate in tree planting & donations
- Change name of south street to “children’s way” and have kids participate

What we've heard – themes

- A. Create a community destination
 - That attracts all segments of the community downtown
- B. A new waterfront gathering and recreation space
- C. Create links along the water
- D. Preserve and enhance existing parking supply in accordance with need

Cultural

- What kind of community? In historical, heritage & today
- Cultural activities
- Destination venues
 - wood park
 - South St. park and parking area
 - High school
 - Nature trail
 - Town hall
 - Music festival, river art, picnics

Recreational

- Hubs
 - Wood park
 - South st river green way and park
 - Lower pond
 - Library
 - Church
- Connections
 - Hi School and Trail
 - Bike way
 - Link to senior center
 - Link to businesses
 - Link to neighborhoods
 - South St. River greenway
 - Tannery Brook link
- Activities
 - Biking, fishing, duck race, canoeing, canoe race, walking nature study, road race, charity walk, mini golf, exercise, music, art, climbing wall, batting cage, yoga

Residential

- intown
 - new housing buildings for seniors
 - downtown village and commons (family)
 - recreation, biking, shopping, community gardens, walking, tot lot, library, fitness, mini golf, restaurants, senior center, churches, skateboard park
 - artists
 - living spaces, work places

Who? Where? DOWNTOWN VILLAGE

- Hudson Residents: area
 - Families – near by in town
 - Seniors
 - New senior housing downtown retirement condos
 - Artists – lofts downtown
- Visitors from Region and town
 - Cultural interests
 - Tot lot
 - Families – library, McD's
 - Restaurants
 - Shopping interests
 - Home improvement
 - Hardware
 - Specialties
 - Meetings, events
 - Bed and Breakfast
 - Bikers on rail trail

NEXT STEPS

- How to sustain ideas and enthusiasm
 - Local leadership
 - Organize local businesses for events and activities
- Provide large number of visuals for community
- marketing, press releases
- large format materials for town hall meeting or hallway exhibit
- materials for stores to post
- clear areas to reveal the river & views
- something (plants) on south street.
- Clean up effort (the dam)
- Clean up town park



Dave Carriere discusses the feasibility of a connection from Intel to the downtown

South Street Vision



Houghton Street Vision



Summary: Important Charrette Themes

The following is a list of the important themes discussed in both sessions and most of the groups at the Hudson charrette. Although this is not an exhaustive list, it covers the topics that received the greatest attention and the most discussion during the course of the day.



David Spillane addresses charrette participants

- Mill site redevelopment for mixed uses with emphasis on housing.
- Main Street as a retail center for Hudson.
- The appearance and function of South Street and the side streets.
- An attractive, convenient and adequate supply of parking for Main Street.
- Attractive destinations along the river
 - Residential developments at the mill sites,
 - An expanded and improved South Street Park,
 - A millpond promenade and boat launch at the Library.
- Pedestrian walkways between riverfront destinations and Main Street
- Assabet River Rail Trail connections to downtown and the riverfront.
- A continuous Riverwalk from the Broad Street Bridge to the Library and beyond.
- Management and maintenance of the public realm between Main Street and the River.
- Environmental quality and recreational potential of the river.



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