

**Town of Sudbury
Route 20 Visioning Workshop
Wednesday, August 8, 2001
Goodnow Library**

This is a summary of the strengths, weaknesses and visions emerging from the Downtown Visioning Session held on August 8, 2001. Approximately 85 residents and business owners attended.

Dr. John Mullin of Mullin Associates, Incorporated conducted the workshop. His recommendations follow:

Introduction

The Town of Sudbury sponsored a workshop on August 8, 2001 to gain insights on the redesign and redevelopment options for the Route 20 Corridor. Approximately 85 residents and business owners participated to brainstorm on their visions and concerns. This report is a summary of the workshop results. It begins with our thoughts and recommendations based on the comments from participants and our experiences with other commercial corridors. It then highlights the comments made by participants as they relate to the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the Corridor.

Our Observations

Sudbury is fortunate in that it still has the ability to change the character of the Route 20 Corridor via infrastructure development. Mostly all participants felt that Route 20 needed improvements. Critical issues that emerged included that of image, character, and scale of development to be encouraged; the types of development and the need for increased choices that can be supported by the market~ the need for regulations and processes that protect the desired character while keeping merchant and property owner's needs in mind and the need to provide well landscaped and designed amenities that would make the corridor a pedestrian friendly and safe place to shop, relax and entertain. Based on the workshop and our professional experience, we offer the following recommendations.

On Character and Scale

We strongly believe that the Route 20 Corridor ought to be developed in character and scale with the rest of the community. This should not become a generic highway business zone. To this end, we recommend the following.

- Sudbury should not widen Route 20 to accommodate more traffic without completing a Corridor Study that includes land use and build out components. Stated alternatively, Route 20 should not be seen as the conduit of traffic between Waltham and Marlboro.

- The Route 20 Corridor does not have a monolithic character: It is really several pods (or nodes): Future planning needs to reflect this.
- Route 20 is anchored by the King Phillip and Wayside Historic Areas; the commercial center should reflect (but not be a slave to) the character of these two areas.
- Sudbury, unlike many long settled New England towns, has separate administrative and commercial centers: We believe that the Town should keep the identity and image of the two areas distinct.

On Use and Density

We believe that the Route 20 Corridor has great potential for a combination of complementary uses. These uses and densities along the corridor should be in keeping with the character of the Town. With this in mind, we offer the following recommendations.

- Sudbury should create a vibrant commercial center along Route 20 by pursue uses that make it active over a sixteen-hour day. Route 20 Corridor has the potential to provide increased choices for social and cultural interaction.
- The Route 20 Corridor should have mixed uses. These uses should include, retail, housing (market rate and affordable), service, entertainment, and office activities.
- The Route 20 Corridor needs to have an anchor that is reflective of Sudbury; similar to the library .An active Arts/Theatre complex would appear to have merit.
- Sudbury should gain an understanding of the potential for small service firms locating along the Corridor: Anecdotal evidence suggests it would be quite high.
- Sudbury should examine the spending patterns of its residents to determine uses for the Corridor that would be likely supported by its residents (see the CACI data, for example).

Process and Regulation

There were several process related issues that were raised at the meeting. It is our belief that these need to be addressed in an efficient and equitable manner. Regulations should promote the desired character and scale along Route 20 without causing unnecessary hardship to merchants and property owners along the corridor. We offer the following suggestions.

- If Route 20 is to be reflective of Sudbury then it must place limits on the maximum size of businesses to be located along the Corridor.

- The redesign of Route 20 should be undertaken in a manner that enables it to function as a spine rather than a border: It should enable easy movement from one side to the other.
- Route 20 needs to be safe and pedestrian friendly. Vehicles should not be given supremacy. In fact we suggest Sudbury evaluate some simple traffic calming techniques.
- The Route 20 Corridor needs to be "connected to Sudbury via sidewalks, bicycle trails, walking trails and the like: It needs to become an integral part of the community.
- Sudbury should consider adopting landscape and design guidelines for the corridor to promote an aesthetically pleasing environment.
- All planning for the Route 20 Corridor must respect the needs of merchants. They need to be involved in the process on issues of lighting, signage, curb cuts and parking.
- Wastewater treatment options should be based upon future considerations and guide future directions.
- Sudbury should be prepared to use incentives (i.e.: grants, tax agreements) to attract appropriate development.
- Sudbury should consider activating on EDIC to purchase selective parcels such that the Town can control its future use.
- Sudbury should explore creating public private partnerships that would facilitate and enhance the development along the Corridor.

Summary of Participant Responses:

Participants were first asked to describe the Route 20 corridor. Their responses follow:

- Traffic
- Car orientated
- Congestion
- Not aesthetically attractive
- Lifestyle

Participants were then asked to describe their visions of Route 20 in the year 2020:

Strengths:

- More attractive than a mall; should not try compete with malls
- Small community, small vendors

- Car culture
- Beautifully landscaped
- Good to have narrow road – allows people to see businesses as they drive through
- Strong, supportive community

Weaknesses:

- Poor traffic circulation, congestion
- No pedestrian capabilities – bikes or walking
- No open space; no public spaces
- Groundwater is threatened by proximity of commercial development
- Sewage Disposal – no flexibility for different uses/density
- Limited diversity of use – seems to be only retail shopping oriented
- Car Orientated
- Not aesthetically attractive

Opportunities

When asked what they would like to see Route 20 as in the future, responses included:

- Want the rail line back
- Design of commercial properties to have parking on the backside, alleyways
- Accommodations for cars and foot traffic to facilitate better flow / movement / circulation
- Solid sidewalks, trails, bike paths
- Bypasses east/west and north/south
- Colonial feel; 17th/ 18th century architecture
- More integrated but diverse – broader design guidelines than just colonial
- Mix of housing and employment
- Better foot access
- More alternative forms of transportation
- Better access to major regional roadways - Route 9 and Turnpike - alleviate congestion (North/South connectors)
- Pedestrian contact/village contact on route 20
- Multi-uses, some housing
- Restaurants/parks/recreation
- Activities for teenagers, attractions
- Modern book store
- Model after towns with affinity such as Chestnut Hill; cobble paved
- Annex land on north for access, don't need big construction
- Fix traffic flow with lights, turn lanes as opposed to bypasses
- Tangent roads
- Already have a town center – churches, schools, municipal offices – this should be something else

- Bring buildings closer to the street, even if only on one side
- Keep development at a compatible scale, but allow more density
- Historical look, some type of museum or commemoration to Sudbury's history
- Merchant sensitive signage
- No overhead utility lines
- Incubator space for small businesses
- Better use of Hop Brook
- Nodes of development
- Broader hours of use

What stores/activities would you like to see?

- Ice Cream shops
- Specialty shops – local owners
- Gravestart is trying to be more community friendly, trying to incorporate smaller, specialty shops with a Colonial feel
- Shoe Store
- Gourmet restaurants; music
- Movie theater/stage
- Skate parks
- Multi-cultural center
- Retail corridor – local and national stores
- Houses rather than shops – trees
- Toy store,
- Outdoor dining, café – mingle place
- Five and Dime store
- Buildings created around a theme (possibly historical)

What is essential/what are amenities? What else would you like to see?

- Affordable housing
- Taxes are too high, need other sources of revenue
- Public space for activities
- Need active non-profit base
- One stop shopping
- Accommodate any business willing to locate here
- “Staples” for home
- Connections for activities – trails, bike routes
- Recreational winter activities
- Respectful of meadows/fields
- Developable land on Route 20 can be source of revenue
- Better walkways, bike paths, lights, signals
- More pedestrian (children) friendly
- Street numbers, markers
- Merchant identifiers, especially for rear property tenants
- Take away phone poles; underground lines

- Better signage for retailers – community outreach
- Small offices
- Nodes as opposed to strips, integrate Route 20; housing, commercial, offices, entertainment, activity
- Connectors between businesses along eastern side of Route 20
- Landscaping
- “Main Street” rather than downtown or town center

What if we did nothing?

- People/businesses would relocate
- Gridlock

Most Important Priorities for Route 20:

- Pedestrian friendly/ connections (16 responses)
- Business friendly
- Business friendly signage (4 responses)
- Reality check – we are what we are/physical constraints (2 responses)
- Updated infrastructure (2 responses)
- Parking and safe movement/accessibility between different areas
- Marketplace 1st, amenities are 2nd priority (6 responses)
- Government support of businesses/working together; achieving consensus/prioritizing issues/vision for future (7 responses)
- Aesthetically attractive
- Reflective of Sudbury values
- Landscape design (4 Responses)
- Public sewer (5 responses)
- Mixed use/greater density (15 responses)
- Incubator space
- Diverse housing mix
- Compatibility of pedestrians and vehicles
- More vibrancy for tax relief purposes (4 responses)
- Public spaces
- Synchronize traffic lights
- Maintain Route 20 as a 2 lane road/Take control from State
- Sliding scale tax rate
- Broadcast attributes of Sudbury
- Local usage
- Learn from other communities/undertake pilot projects
- Integrate uses