

## GUEST COMMENTARY

### **Sudbury 1940 to 2019, Keeping Our Rural Character**

Submitted by Jan Hardenbergh, Master Plan Steering Committee Member

The Sudbury Master Plan process is underway (GUEST COLUMN April 25, 2019, "Sudbury is Thinking About its Future"). The Master Plan will be a vision of the changes our town will see extending to the year 2039. It will cover a wide range of issues such as neighborhoods, parks, public infrastructure, and commercial development. The first Master Plan Public Forum was held on May 22, 2019.

In order to see the decades ahead more clearly, it is worth taking a look at the preceding decades. Since 1940, population has been the key driver of changes to Sudbury. While there was a slight increase during the 1930's, the number of residents had been largely unchanged since Maynard was created in 1871 from the corners of Sudbury and Stow where the Assabet River powered the mill town. There had been so little growth we did not have a zoning map of Sudbury until 1938. From 1940 to 1970, the population grew from 1,754 to 13,506 people living in town, an almost 800% increase. By 2018, the number had grown by another 34% to 18,173 people.

In 1940, the town was a small and truly rural farming community with only 490 households and 3.7 people per household. Now, we are mostly a "bedroom community", with over 90% of resident workers (7,260) driving out of Sudbury for their employment. The most recent Town census was mailed to 6,583 households with an average of 2.8 residents. For every household in 1940, there are more than 13 households now.

The surge to a suburban community brought many new neighborhoods, schools, roads, and infrastructure at a dizzying rate of change. This in turn triggered the desire to protect Sudbury's rural character. As more and more farms were developed, the Town started granting agricultural easements (Chapter 61A). As good parcels came on the market, the Town bought land for recreational purposes, and to preserve open space and the iconic vistas as exemplified by the Pantry Brook and Broadacres Farms.

While we are no longer that rural small town, our rural character remains important to so many in the community. We need to find a way to protect that character, while balancing other needs while we plan to adapt to the future.

The Master Plan update process is expected to continue through the spring of 2020. The Master Plan Steering Committee meets the third Friday of each month at 8:45 a.m. at the Sudbury Police Station, 75 Hudson Road. All meetings are open to the public.

Visit our website for more information about the update process: [www.sudbury.ma.us/masterplan](http://www.sudbury.ma.us/masterplan). Right now, you will find a link to our current survey about what you see as the Town's assets and our challenges ahead. It will be open through June 24, 2019. Visit our site often to find out more opportunities to give us your ideas and input. If you have questions, please contact Adam Duchesneau, Director of

Planning and Community Development, at 978-639-3398 or  
DuchesneauA@sudbury.ma.us.