

## Dunstable Master Plan Visioning Session 2 - Responses

September 20, 2016

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

Dunstable Town Hall

### Questions for Land Use and Zoning

1. What revisions to the Town's land use regulations, policies and procedures will be needed to ensure that the rural character is preserved?

- Town Center at risk of losing rural look
  - Town Center District should keep rural character while allowing for business use
  - Commercial uses must follow design guidelines regarding architecture and design in order to keep rural look.
  - Grant funding for historic preservation may be available
  - Dunstable has a "non-monitored" historic district within the Town Center and has adopted a demolition delay bylaw. Protects structures from state and federally initiated projects
  - Keep business activity in the Center but require that barns and buildings keep the same facade.

2. Can you identify modifications to the town's zoning regulations that would allow for small business enterprises that are compatible with community character? Is the Town's B-3 zone appropriately located? Are office and high tech uses still appropriate for the B-3 zone? Should specific locations be identified for the B-1 and B-2 districts?

- Good business zoning area is close to Route 3, keeps traffic out of town
- Can't compete with low cost real estate in Nashua (in terms of attracting high tech businesses)
- Agricultural-type businesses in the center of town would be successful
- New Hampshire workers are commuting further into Massachusetts due to real estate costs and higher wages.
- Keep the existing B-3 district and see what businesses the town may be able to attract. Can't compete with Nashua for retail opportunities.
- The B-3 zoning district is located on private property and the Town cannot do anything to attract business to that location.
- The Tyngsborough side of the B-3 district has been successful in attracting business development.

3. What can be done to strengthen and enhance the Town Center as the civic and cultural heart of the community? Should mixed use be allowed within the Town Center?

- Country store/rural type businesses would make it a unique town center, along with a Bed & Breakfast.
- The community could purchase land and open a business like Fern's in Carlisle.
- Construct sidewalks in the Town Center

- Town Common land should be utilized for additional activities that bring people to the town center.
- Craft beer brewery/October festival would attract people; alcohol licenses could be restricted to certain establishments only;
  - Dunstable is currently a dry town--change regulations so it's no longer a dry town but with restrictions.
- A tea or coffee house would be successful. (Need a place for the mothers' group to meet.)
- Town is looking at the construction of a public safety building in the Town Center, which could include additional parking for events in the town center.
- Restaurant that could serve adult beverages.
- Look at Town Center as a location for agriculturally supported businesses such as a farmer's market or bakery
- Establish an overlay district along Route 113 allowing commercial type uses by special permit
- An art gallery and traditional artisan type establishments should be allowed to create an unique "New England" brand for the town

4. Are revisions or modifications needed for the existing MUD district?

- MUD District- finalizing plan for 40 units of affordable housing
- Limited mixed use is allowed in the MUD District presently.
- MUD district allows B-1 uses
- Any more than two stories and Town fire department will need to purchase a ladder truck ( at a cost of \$700,000)
- Municipal water system currently is not sufficient to accommodate sprinkler systems for commercial developments or large housing complexes
- Housing Committee does not envision mixed use as part of proposed project that is now being considered for the MUD district. Senior housing residents will not want mixed use.
- Original mixed-use proposal was for a business on the first floor with residential use above. Assumed residence would be occupied by the business owner. Renting housing was not considered when the MUD bylaw was crafted.

5. Can you identify specific locations that would be suitable for future development? Would any changes need to be made to the zoning bylaws to manage such future growth in order to ensure that the impacts are mitigated and community character is preserved?

- People don't know what is currently allowed in residential areas. Many home businesses currently exist in residential areas
- B-3 Parcel should be further studied to better understand future opportunities.

6. Should the town revise the density requirements for residential zoning to allow slightly higher density as a means of retaining available open space?

- Town cluster zoning does not specify lot size/density.
- Refine the cluster bylaw so developers understand what is acceptable in terms of density and minimum lot size for residences. This would also help the Planning Board.

7. The Town currently has a Wind Energy bylaw and a Solar Bylaw. Are changes to these bylaws in order to encourage the increased use of renewable energy?

- The Town's solar bylaw was updated last year.
- The Town is looking at small and medium scale free-standing solar, but state restrictions prohibit meaningful regulation of these uses.

8. What can the Town do to help support its agricultural enterprises and preserve its agrarian landscape? Should uses that are supportive of agricultural production, such as a farm-to-table restaurant or food processing facility, be allowed?

- Encourage farm-to-table restaurants.
- What can Dunstable do to protect dairy farmers?
  - Start a town committee to look at farmers' issues and needs. {There is an Agricultural Commission that could take on this task}
  - Establish a partnership with Cabot.
  - Promote a buy-local campaign
  - Educate residents regarding the right to farm bylaw.
  - Establish a central place, year round store or co-op that sells local products
  - Promote Chapter 61 A and B tax programs
  - Work with the Grange
  - Encourage community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Recognize the benefits of managed forests
- The number of farms in town is increasing. The town should inventory all of the agricultural lands and enterprises within town

## Questions for Housing

1. How can the Affordable Housing Committee and Town move forward to develop affordable housing opportunities? Which priority development sites should be focused upon and what funding sources should be utilized? Should funds from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) be utilized to encourage the development of affordable housing?

- State funding does not fix the problem. Keep it local if you want it to stay local.
- Dunstable does not have any state-recognized affordable housing, leaving the town vulnerable to 40Bs.
- The Town's inclusionary bylaw is part of the General Bylaw, not part of the zoning bylaw. This issue needs to be addressed due to the legal implications.
- It is in the Town's best interest to be able to control the development of 40B housing, therefore the town should proactively create affordable housing to address resident's needs in a manner most appropriate for Dunstable, rather than leaving the developers in control.

5. What infrastructure improvements will be needed to accommodate housing production in town (water, public transit, etc.)?

- Currently the Town's water infrastructure can't handle any increase significant in demand (The town now has 104 connections with the infrastructure to allow for only 120 connections).

## Questions for Economic Development

1. What should the town do to retain and attract businesses? What specific types of businesses should be targeted?

- Stay away from chain-type businesses.
- Model town center after Groton.
- Develop a business that is local and unique to the area.
- Cap building height for businesses at 2 floors.
- Keep New England character.
- Consider architectural restrictions on the Historic District.
- Promote the Town as an artisan community.
- Utilize Dunstable's location and rural character to create a small town (Norman Rockwell-type) ambiance and brand that attracts people from the area.
- Promote the Town as an artist community, like Lowell did with the mills and artist studio space and lofts.
- Create a place for artists and artisanal workers.
  - Utilize the vacant barn on the McLoon property
    - Town could look into options for economically utilizing open space, such as an Eco-Adventure park, zip line, cross-country ski center