



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Sudbury has prepared this Communitywide Historic Preservation Plan to encourage and support the preservation of historic and cultural resources within the Town. The Historic Preservation Plan emphasizes the role of history as a component of community character and identifies ways it can be recognized, strengthened, and enhanced through public and private initiative.

This plan is an implementation action the 2021 Sudbury Master Plan that suggested it be prepared and outlined a number of recommendations that provided the basis for its conception. The plan outlines a coordinated historic preservation program embracing preservation initiatives that have been undertaken to date and broadening the scope of historic preservation activity for the future. It seeks to closely coordinate the work of Sudbury's historic preservation stakeholders with those of the Town's land conservation community. The ongoing need to raise public awareness and support for historic preservation is emphasized, recognizing that historic building and landscape resources are central to Sudbury's identity, community character, and quality of life.

This Historic Preservation Plan also seeks to incorporate preservation planning concepts and methodologies into Sudbury's long term growth management strategies and other municipal processes. It seeks ways to accommodate growth and change while preserving and enhancing the historic building, landscape, and archeological resources that are significant to the Town.

## 1. PRESERVATION PLANNING IN SUDBURY

Over the years, the Town of Sudbury has taken significant steps in the documentation and preservation of its historic building and landscape resources. Interest in Sudbury's history is longstanding – monuments were constructed commemorating important places and events in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a Town-wide history was written in 1889. Preservation of the Wayside Inn was a community focus in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was given impetus by Henry Ford through the Inn's restoration and other projects.

Since the mid-1940s, Sudbury has transformed from an agricultural community into a residential suburb of the Boston metropolitan area. As various planning tools and methodologies have become available for growth management, the Town has tended to adopt them.

Sudbury was among the earliest communities in Massachusetts to establish its first local historic district in 1963 and followed with the establishment of a Historical Commission in 1968. Similarly, the Town was quick to adopt the Community Preservation Act in 2002.

Preservation planning is the means through which a coordinated long-term program of historic preservation actions may be developed by the community to guide its work over time. The principal responsibilities of a preservation plan are to (1) **identify** historic resources within the community; (2) **evaluate** their character, significance, and integrity; and (3) **protect** identified resources through the development of programs, methods, tools, and processes for their preservation and continued use.

The core of any historic preservation plan is the community's historic preservation program. In Sudbury, this involves the activities of the Town's Historical Commission, Historic Districts Commission, and Community Preservation Committee in collaboration with a broad array of other public and private partners and stakeholders.

Preparation of this Historic Preservation Plan has been funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission with matching funds provided through Sudbury's Community Preservation Act program. The plan is organized into five sections as requested by the Massachusetts Historical Commission:

**Executive Summary:** provides an overview of the plan and key recommendations.

**Part I – Introduction:** provides background on preservation planning, Sudbury's historical development, the history of preservation planning in Sudbury, and partners and stakeholders.

**Part II – Investigation and Analysis:** provides background and analysis on topics related to preservation in Sudbury – inventories; National Register listings; public awareness; and municipal policies, bylaws, and regulations.

**Part III – Recommendations:** presents the plan's recommendations for action along with context and discussion.

**Part VI – Action Plan:** provides a matrix of the recommended actions noting priorities, timeframes, responsibilities.



Historic residence in Sudbury

## 2. VISION AND GOALS

The strategies and recommendations outlined in Sudbury's Historic Preservation Plan are informed and guided by the principles of historic preservation that have been developed and honed by practitioners in the field over the years. Preservation is a practical discipline that can accommodate growth and change while continuing to preserve the characteristics that make a place special.

The following brief vision statement has been developed to guide development of this Historic Preservation Plan in coordination with the Sudbury Master Plan:

### **Vision Statement**

***Sudbury is a community where historic, cultural, and natural resources are valued, preserved, and enhanced as central to the Town's character and quality of life.***

## Goals for Historic Preservation

Four broad goals are identified that together express how Sudbury's historic resources and character relate to the Town's vision for the future and are embodied in the strategies and recommendations presented in the plan.

### Goal 1 – Preserving Historic Resources:

***To prevent the further loss of historic building, landscape, and archeological resources in Sudbury. Historic resources are irreplaceable – once lost they cannot be regained.***

The Historic Preservation Plan recognizes the full range of historic resources in Sudbury and seeks to encourage their preservation and provide guidance for their appropriate treatment. A particular concern of some stakeholders has been the periodic loss of historic buildings that are of clear historical significance. The prevention of further loss should be a town-wide goal.

### Goal 2 – Coordinating Stakeholders:

***To facilitate coordination among public and private stakeholders in the recognition, preservation, and appropriate treatment of historic resources.***

Historic preservation is primarily a product of grassroots initiatives undertaken over many years by private property owners. Public and non-profit entities are critical in providing leadership and through example. It is important that the various stakeholders impacting historic resources be engaged, informed, and coordinated toward desired preservation outcomes.

### Goal 3 – Raising Public Awareness:

***To raise public awareness about the role historic resources play in representing Sudbury's history and embodying the Town's character and quality of life.***

Special emphasis is placed in this plan on raising public awareness about Sudbury's history and historic preservation. Needed and desired preservation actions will be easier if Town residents recognize the significance of historic resources and the benefits they provide to public and private interests. Rekindling the public spirit that led to the establishment of local historic districts in the 1960s or adoption of the Community Preservation Act in 2000 is an ongoing task as new preservation initiatives are considered.

### Goal 4 – Informational Resources:

***To provide Town government, the community, and owners of historic properties with information, resources, and support for the appropriate treatment of their historic buildings and landscapes.***

In order to achieve desired outcomes, it is critical that good information is available as issues arise and options are weighed. With respect to public policy, Sudbury's various boards, commissions, and committees must be provided with guidance on the appropriate treatment of historic resources as development and change are considered. With respect to private property, information and guidance should be made available to property owners to help with decision-making as they consider needed change to their historic buildings and other resources.





Barns are important but potentially vulnerable resources within the Town.

### 3. PRESERVATION ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Part II, *Investigation & Analysis*, of the Historic Preservation Plan outlines existing conditions with respect to historic preservation in Sudbury and provides the basis for strategies and recommendations going forward. Specifically, Part II summarizes the:

- Status of Sudbury’s inventory of historic properties,
- Degree to which properties have been listed or determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places,
- Extent of public awareness of and engagement with Sudbury’s history and historic resources,
- Adoption and use of available municipal bylaws and regulations with respect to historic preservation, and
- Status of and extent to which historic preservation considerations are incorporated into municipal policy, planning, management, and decision making.

An overview of historic preservation conditions, issues, opportunities, and challenges is provided at the beginning of Part II. Overall, however, two primary issues have been repeatedly identified by stakeholders in discussions conducted during the preparation of this Historic Preservation Plan and are reflected in the vision and goals presented above. These two primary issues are:

1. **Preventing further building loss** – Sudbury has a limited number of remaining historic buildings. They all contribute to the Town’s history, story, and character, and it is important to prevent their further loss whenever possible. Concern is particularly focused on buildings and clusters of buildings located outside of current local historic districts. The concern and focus on historic buildings should not, however, detract from the importance of historic landscape and archeological resources.

2. **Encouraging appropriate treatment of historic buildings** – Most of Sudbury’s historic buildings are private residences. Property owners should be provided with information, resources, and encouragement for appropriate treatment of their historic buildings.

Sudbury has undertaken a substantial amount of inventory work since 1967 through which most of the Town’s historic resources have been identified and documented. The Town’s inventory of historic properties is fairly thorough and complete for buildings constructed before 1940. Additional inventory work has been recommended by the most recent survey consultants, and inventory work and the upgrading and enhancement of inventory information should continue.

Sudbury has very few individual property or district listings on the National Register of Historic Places and no listed National Historic Landmarks. This may be due in part to the Town’s early achievements in undertaking inventories and the early establishment of local historic districts in Sudbury. There has been little impetus either publicly or privately in pursuing new National Register nominations since the 1970s. Opportunities exist for undertaking new nominations to the National Register that might help raise the public profile of significant historic resources in Sudbury.

Most residents recognize that history is an important part of community character in Sudbury, and this is almost taken for granted. The Town’s iconic public buildings, two historic villages, and landmarks such as the Wayside Inn are widely recognized as central to the Town’s identity. Beyond those widely recognized resources, however, historic preservation issues do not receive widespread public attention.

Opportunity exists for raising public awareness of historic resources by engaging residents with resources and providing educational and interpretive information highlighting their significance. The Recommendations outlined in Part III of this Historic Preservation Plan prioritizes such outreach. Proposed educational initiatives include additional studies focusing on Sudbury’s agricultural development, indigenous cultural heritage, and suburbanization. A comprehensive Town-wide interpretive presentation is proposed that will engage residents at historic, cultural, and natural sites throughout Sudbury.

Over the decades, municipal policy and planning in Sudbury have become increasingly sophisticated and have addressed an ever-broader number of community issues and responsibilities in accordance with local needs, national trends, and the enactment of state enabling legislation.

Today, Sudbury’s Town government addresses a wide range of topics of community interest as represented by the number of boards, commissions, and committees that have been established and how busy they are. The Town of Sudbury has a number of bylaws and regulations that are relevant to the preservation of historic buildings and landscapes and that affect community character. Of particular importance to this Historic Preservation Plan are policies related to planning and growth management, historic preservation in particular, land conservation, and the management of Town-owned historic properties.



Historic residence in Sudbury

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES

The following is a summary of prioritized recommendations presented in Part III, *Recommendations*, of this Historic Preservation Plan. These recommendations are based on the information developed in Parts I and II of the Historic Preservation Plan which address different aspects of historic preservation in Sudbury. Interviews with over forty individuals with interests in historic preservation and representing Town boards, commissions, and committees as well as non-profit organizations contributed to the recommendations presented. Many of the recommendations focus on raising public awareness and support over the long term as well as coordination among Town entities on stewardship.

### **SUDBURY MASTER PLAN**

This Historic Preservation Plan is prepared in concert with and as an implementing action of the Sudbury Master Plan, completed in September 2021 as work on the Historic Preservation Plan was about to begin.

Specific historic and cultural action items specified in the Master Plan have been incorporated in the Historic Preservation Plan and further developed for implementation, as outlined in the set of recommendations below. Other sections of the Master Plan that will impact historic resources, such as development of the Route 20 corridor and approach to conservation lands, are also relevant to the Historic Preservation Plan and are also addressed.

In general, the implementation of all historic preservation initiatives should be aligned with the Sudbury Master Plan and coordinated with other Town entities.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Maintain an ongoing awareness of implementation initiatives associated with the Sudbury Master Plan. Provide information, input, and support for initiatives impacting historic resources when appropriate.**
- **Be proactive in anticipating and planning in advance for upcoming implementation initiatives associated with the Master Plan.**
- **Coordinate historic preservation initiatives with the Sudbury Master Plan**

**CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Sudbury is in the process of seeking designation as a Certified Local Government (CLG) by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the National Park Service. As described in Appendix A of this plan, designation as a CLG will provide Sudbury with additional opportunities for grants and technical assistance.

The Historical Commission and Historic Districts Commission should use the CLG designation as the organizing concept and structure for the Town's Historic Preservation Program.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Undertake and complete the application process for designation as a Certified Local Government in accordance with processes administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the National Park Service.**
- **Review obligations under the CLG program and organize the Sudbury Historic Preservation Program both administratively and with regard to program implementation.**
- **Prepare a yearly report to be provided to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Select Board on activities and accomplishments of the Town with respect to CLG designation and the Town's Historic Preservation Program as a whole.**

**STEWARDSHIP WORKING GROUP**

The Sudbury Master Plan called for creation of a Historic and Archaeological Working Group to advance the protection, preservation, and development of historic and archaeological resources and Town character. It is suggested that this action be launched in conjunction with the Town's Certified Local Government designation as a means of establishing the concept of a Town-wide historic preservation program and of engaging stakeholders with respect to it.

It is suggested that the Town's conservation and planning entities be included and that conservation issues and initiatives be recognized and supported through the Working Group as well, perhaps renaming it the **Stewardship Working Group**. The purpose of the group's expansion would be to better



integrate historic and conservation interests and to demonstrate that the stewardship of historic and natural resources is interrelated.

At minimum, the Stewardship Working Group should include the Historical Commission, Historic Districts Commission, Community Preservation Commission, Sudbury Historical Society, Wayside Inn Foundation, Conservation Commission, and Sudbury Valley Trustees. It is suggested that the Working Group meet twice yearly, spring and fall, to discuss issues, coordinate activities between participating entities, establish yearly goals and work program, and measure progress.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- **Establish a Stewardship Working Group as recommended in the Sudbury Master Plan as the vehicle for engaging stakeholders in historic preservation Town-wide. Include land conservation entities as a means of better integrating historic and conservation interests.**

### **TOWN-WIDE INTERPRETIVE PRESENTATION**

Interpretation — storytelling through public exhibits and media — is a means of exposing residents and visitors to the rich and diverse stories of Sudbury’s natural and historic places. A robust interpretive program in Sudbury will raise public awareness about those places and support historic preservation and conservation by stimulating interest, conveying significance, and highlighting the resources important to the Town. Interpretation will relate Town history to the authentic places that give Sudbury its distinctive character and quality of life.

As a primary initiative of this Historic Preservation Plan, a Town-wide interpretive presentation should be developed that offers a comprehensive summary of Sudbury’s history and natural landscape to the public using online and onsite exhibits. The initiative should include both historic and natural sites and should be organized and led by the Stewardship Working Group discussed above.

The Sudbury History Center (Loring Parsonage), Hosmer House, Wayside Inn, and Great Meadows NWR should serve as anchor sites to which visitors are directed for personal contact and an interpretive overview. Digital and onsite exhibits presented at natural and historic sites throughout Sudbury would expand the stories, provide places to explore, and provide in-depth personal experiences. The Town’s local historic districts, conservation lands, parks, trails, and other publicly accessible places would be featured for storytelling.

The presentation should coordinate storytelling between natural and historic sites — weaving the Town’s natural and human history together. Natural, indigenous, settlement, and agricultural stories should be featured. Implementation should be phased in over time. Together, the Town’s existing attractions, public lands, and potential new programming should be presented as a single coordinated Town-wide system such that interpretation of Sudbury’s identity is consistent between sites and landscapes. The program should be a

feature of the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area, which will support, promote, and market it.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop a coordinated Town-wide interpretive presentation of Sudbury's natural and historic places to raise public awareness and encourage support for preservation, conservation, and stewardship.**
- **Designate the Stewardship Working Group as the lead entity in implementation of the Town-wide interpretation and public engagement program.**

#### **THEMATIC NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

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The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of historic resources that have been determined worthy of preservation. Listing on the National Register is purely an honorary recognition, recognizing the importance of a historic resource without placing any obligations or restrictions on the resource owner. Listing does not give the federal government any ownership rights or regulatory controls with respect to a property.

As a priority action, this Historic Preservation Plan recommends preparation of a thematic Town-wide nomination to the National Register of Historic Places based on the Town's agricultural history.

Sudbury's history is distinctive for its 300-year-long evolution (1639-1940) as an agricultural landscape and community without significant intrusion from non-related commercial, industrial, or other forms of development. Sudbury's agricultural history parallels and exemplifies the history of agriculture in eastern Massachusetts.

Preparation of a thematic nomination will encompass the entire agricultural landscape in Sudbury, including historic farm complexes, farmhouses, barns, other outbuildings, and landscape features. It will include mills as an integral part of the agricultural landscape and Sudbury's important greenhouse industry that extend this history through the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. The study will facilitate and enhance the identification of resources for documentation and protection. It will inform preservation understanding by identifying architectural styles and building types, including barns and outbuildings.

In addition to documenting this significant history in Sudbury, the thematic nomination will help raise public awareness, especially that of the owners of historic properties outside of the Town's local historic districts. It will provide a basis for interpretation as recommended above.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

- **Prepare a thematic nomination of Sudbury's agricultural building and landscape history and resources to the National Register of Historic Places.**

## **INDIGENOUS CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STUDY**

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A significant number of residents in Sudbury expressed interest in Native American history and archaeological resources during preparation of the Historic Preservation Plan. A study of pre-European history and archaeology was suggested. Some local residents are well aware of historic indigenous settlement and use areas.

It is recommended that such a study be undertaken as an Indigenous Cultural Landscape Study relating historic Native American occupation and use of the land with natural landscape characteristics and features. The study will help raise public awareness of indigenous history and resources and provide a basis for landscape protection where appropriate. The study should include preparation of an archaeological sensitivity map which should be used by the Historical Commission and Planning Board to raise awareness when archaeological resources are threatened by new development.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- **Prepare a study of the Indigenous Cultural Landscape in Sudbury relating the Town's various natural landscape areas with Native American occupation, use, and significance.**

## **ROUTE 20 CORRIDOR PRESERVATION STUDY**

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One of the primary initiatives of the Sudbury Master Plan is development of a vision and plan for commercial and mixed-use development along the Route 20 corridor. The Master Plan favors redevelopment of Route 20 as a mixed-use area of high-quality design that serves as a pedestrian friendly destination for people in Sudbury and surrounding communities. The planning initiative will build upon and expand the work completed in early plans undertaken for the corridor.

The Historical Commission and Historic Districts Commission should actively engage in the visioning and design process seeking to preserve and enhance historic resources along the corridor and to enhance the character of South Sudbury and the King Philip Historic District.

As a proactive and short-term action, the Historical Commission should undertake an assessment of historic resources along the Route 20 corridor to assess their capacity for development and adaptive reuse. The planning work should be undertaken by a professional planning consultant experienced in work with historic buildings and contexts. The study should identify the historic resources, their significance, their character defining features and landscape contexts, and their capacity for adaptive reuse while retaining their historic integrity.

The study should recognize that the Route 20 corridor may change dramatically in overall density and character and should provide guidance to the broader visioning, planning, and development process. The planning study should be undertaken in collaboration with the Sudbury Planning Board. Community Preservation Act monies may be used to fund the study.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Support the Historical Commission's and Historic Districts Commission's active engagement in the visioning and planning for the Route 20 corridor.**
- **Prepare a Route 20 Corridor Preservation Study to identify the capacity of historic properties for adaptive reuse and change in accordance with visioning and planning for the corridor.**

**HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

The Sudbury Historical Commission has taken on issues and projects of increasing range and complexity in recent years and has responded to the challenges with perseverance and professionalism. As with many of the Town boards and commissions, the Historical Commission has had a full agenda of issues to address which places time pressures and stress upon members.

The Historical Commission's mission as stated in its enabling legislation is the preservation, protection, and development of Sudbury's historical or archeological assets. The Historical Commission is responsible for implementing many of the initiatives and activities addressed in the Historic Preservation Plan, including inventories, nominations, and studies.

In undertaking its mission, it is important that the Historical Commission actively engage with and provide information and advice to other Town boards, commissions, and committees as those entities are addressing issues that may impact historic resources. It is also important that the Historical Commission focus on initiatives that will build public awareness and support for historic preservation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Make sure that the Historical Commission is kept aware of topics and issues being addressed by other boards, commissions, and committees that may impact historic resources.**
- **Organize Historical Commission members and alternates to engage with and maintain relationships with key Town boards, commissions, and committees and their activities.**
- **Proactively and positively engage in topics and issues being addressed by other Town boards, commissions and committees providing information and guidance on the treatment of historic resources.**
- **Focus on initiatives that will engage residents, support property owners, and create positive perceptions of the Historical Commission and Sudbury's Historic Preservation Program.**

The Historical Commission is responsible for administering Sudbury's Demolition Delay Bylaw, which seeks to find alternatives to the demolition and loss of historic buildings when proposed. As implemented, Demolition Delay Bylaw review addresses both full or substantial demolition of buildings as a whole as well as partial demolition impacting a historic building's exterior building fabric.



With respect to full or substantial demolition, the existing potential for a 6-month delay is not an adequate time period to allow for the exploration of alternatives to demolition. An 18-month time period is more common as recommended by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and is necessary to leverage discussions when major development projects propose the demolition of historic buildings.

With respect to partial demolition, the Historical Commission makes a special effort to simplify and expedite reviews and make the review process friendly to property owners. However, the expedited review process is not written into the bylaw or described by regulations implementing the bylaw. It is recommended that regulations be prepared describing the review process for partial demolition and standards or requirements for avoiding triggering of a delay.

Additional potential modifications to the Demolition Delay Bylaw and its implementing regulations have been discussed by the Historical Commission and are outlined in Part III of this Historic Preservation Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- **Revise language in the Demolition Delay Bylaw and its implementing regulations to make it more effective in use with projects proposing full or substantial demolition and as efficient as possible with respect to projects involving partial demolition.**

## **HOSMER HOUSE**

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One of the most important and rewarding responsibilities of the Historical Commission has been the oversight and management of designated historic buildings owned by the Town, of which Hosmer House is probably the best known. In past years, management of Hosmer House has been one of the primary activities of the Historical Commission. In more recent years, as the range and complexity of preservation issues has increased, Hosmer House has received a lower percentage of the Commission's time and attention.

The Historical Commission has explored the possibility of delegating management of Hosmer House to a subcommittee so that it may more reliably receive the attention it deserves. Additionally, specific actions have been recommended to support the appropriate care and treatment of Hosmer House and its collections.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Establish a Hosmer House Subcommittee of the Historical Commission with authority to manage the day-to-day operations of Hosmer House.**
- **Prepare a combined Historic Structure Report/Cultural Landscape Report for Hosmer House and its surrounding landscape to document their historic features and guide their appropriate treatment over time.**
- **Retain a consultant to assess the Hosmer House collections and provide ongoing guidance for their care and treatment.**

## **ZONING BYLAW AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS**

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The language with respect to historic resources in Sudbury's Zoning Bylaw and Rules and Regulations Governing Subdivision of Land documents is very limited. Without expanding regulatory authorities, simple changes to the existing language could strengthen the Planning Board's hand in negotiation of historic preservation issues with developers. Specifically:

- Provide definitions for historic resources, historic landscape resources, historic landscape context, and archaeological resources.
- Require that historic building and landscape resources be surveyed and identified on existing conditions plans. Include identification of resources on adjacent properties.
- Require that historic landscape contexts associated with historic buildings be identified.
- State that it is Town policy that historic resources should be preserved and incorporated into new development in a manner that preserves their historic integrity.
- Require that developers describe the proposed treatment of historic resources in their development project.
- Allow for adaptive reuse that preserves the overall historic integrity of historic buildings and building complexes.
- When negative impacts are anticipated, require mitigation measures as an element of negotiation.
- When appropriate, require the preparation of a full Historic Resource Impact Study detailing the above measures in increased detail.

While these measures do not provide additional regulatory authority, they make the Town's intent that historic resources be preserved and appropriately treated clear, and they provide the context and basis for negotiations to achieve that aim.

In support of preservation planning goals, it is important the Town's historic resource inventory be made accessible through the Town's GIS system. This is easily accomplished through data sets available through MassGIS. Additionally, the Town's historic resource inventory should be made available digitally to developers online.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- **Include additional language in the Town's Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations supporting the preservation and appropriate treatment of historic resources when new development is being planned.**
- **Make Sudbury's historic resource inventory available through the Town's GIS system and make historic inventory forms available online.**