

FINAL REPORT FOR  
THE TOWN OF SUDBURY  
A COMMUNITY VISION FOR THE OLD POST ROAD



Funded by:  
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Department of Housing and Community Development

Prepared by:  
The Cecil Group, Inc.  
*Architects, Urban Designers, Landscape Architects and Planners*

# **Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road**

## **Final Report**

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## OVERVIEW

# Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road

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### Overview

The following narrative summarizes the planning process for creating *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road* in Sudbury, Massachusetts. The information enclosed provides a roadmap for the community and Town Officials with regard to implementation and suggests potential physical design recommendations for open space, mixed-use development and streetscape treatment. The goal of the planning initiative has been to provide the Town with the critical planning tools that can be utilized to help create a better commercial and civic environment along this portion of the Route 20 corridor.

### Process

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, through the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Program has provided a grant to the Town of Sudbury for planning and design assistance. This grant funds the planning consultant services and the technical information prepared for the Town including this report.

The process began with a coordination meeting between the State and the Town. Several interviews were conducted with Town officials and interested community members to frame the issues and potential opportunities for Sudbury. For Sudbury, the DHCD identified two main issues that needed attention relative to the ideal of improving the Town's business and commercial center.

Issue #1: How do you create a framework for beginning the process of physical change within the study area?

Issue #2: How do you translate goals and objectives into the tools for promoting redevelopment?

Once these issues were identified, the planning team was engaged to provide design assistance with respect to recommendations for physical design and land use planning.

In the case of Sudbury, the challenge for the planning team has been to consider those key features and elements that make up a traditional business and commercial center. Some of the traditional aspects of the New England commercial center include:



# **Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road**

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- Civic buildings such as town halls and libraries
- Public open space such as a village green
- Attractive streetscape features and elements such as trees, lighting and signage
- Mixed-use development that incorporates housing, commercial and retail
- Strong community support and pride
- Controlled traffic patterns and flow
- Convenient parking, access and circulation for vehicles and pedestrians
- Special identity that celebrates the unique setting of the place

Prior to the preparation of planning options by the design team, the Town conducted an initial community-visioning workshop to solicit interest from residents concerning desired uses, treatments, and features that could help improve Sudbury's commercial center. The following information prepared by The Cecil Group is based on the input received by the Town.

### **Participants**

As with any community planning initiative, public participation is a key element that can spur a successful process and promote continued involvement throughout the effort. The process to date in Sudbury has included a wide range of participation from the community and local officials. The Town Planner, Town officials, additional community representatives and the planning consultant team have all worked together to develop a strategy for creating a framework that will assist the Town in the process of improving their commercial center.

This report should act as a catalyst for the Town to gain support and momentum for the planned improvements. Additional copies of the report and the associated graphic material can be made available, giving many residents the opportunity to see the initial planning studies and provide input into the process and future outcome.

# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## Design Workshop January 23, 2002





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

The Town of Sudbury

Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development

The Cecil Group

*Jeff Denzak ASLA*

*David O'Connor ASLA*

*Dan Miller*





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Agenda

- Introduction
- Meeting Goals
- A Brief History: Sudbury, the Landscape and the Car
- The Community Vision
- Existing Conditions and Opportunities *Discussion*
- Design Concepts: Presentation *Discussion*
- Tools for Change
- Implementation: Getting it Done *Discussion*



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Meeting Goals

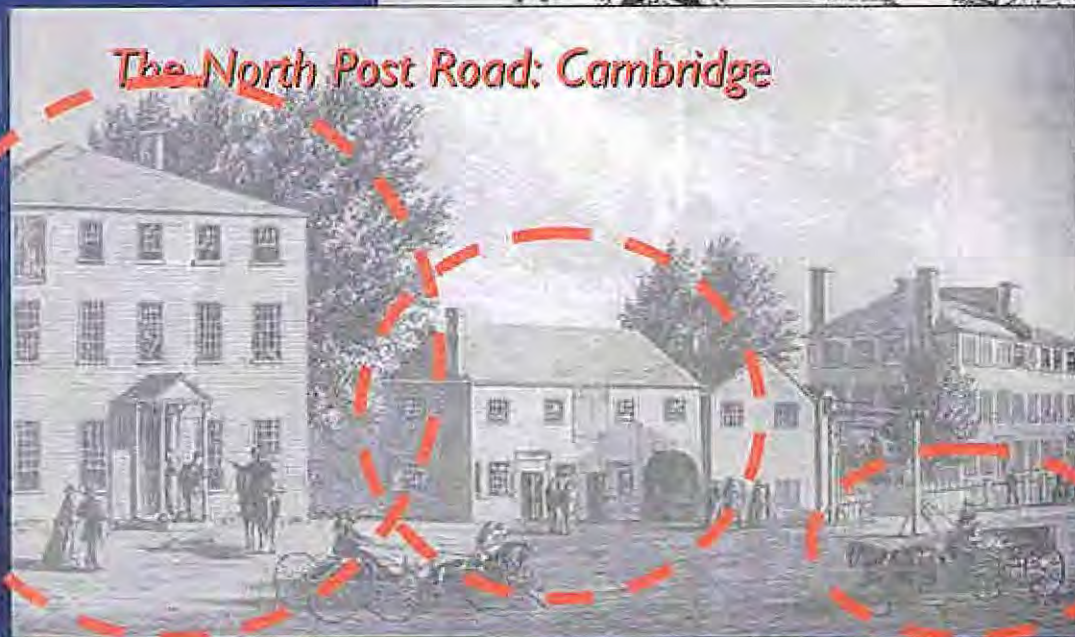
- Envision improvements that will create a more successful commercial and civic district (*a source of pride, enjoyment, business success and taxes*)
- Indicate how the community's goals and objectives from earlier planning efforts can be advanced through design and redevelopment
- Link the community's vision for the Old Post Road to *pragmatic tools for positive change*

## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OLD POST ROAD



# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## A Brief History

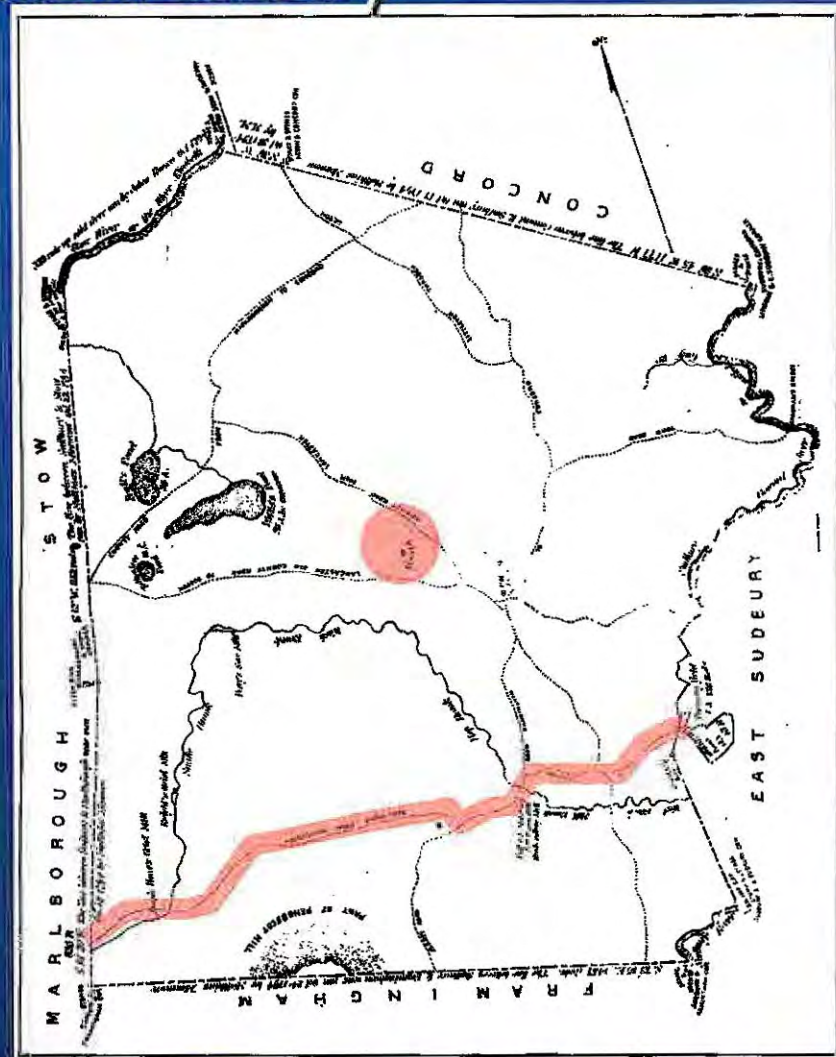


*Early Boston*



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History: the Post Road in Sudbury



*The Post Road in 1794*



*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
A Brief History



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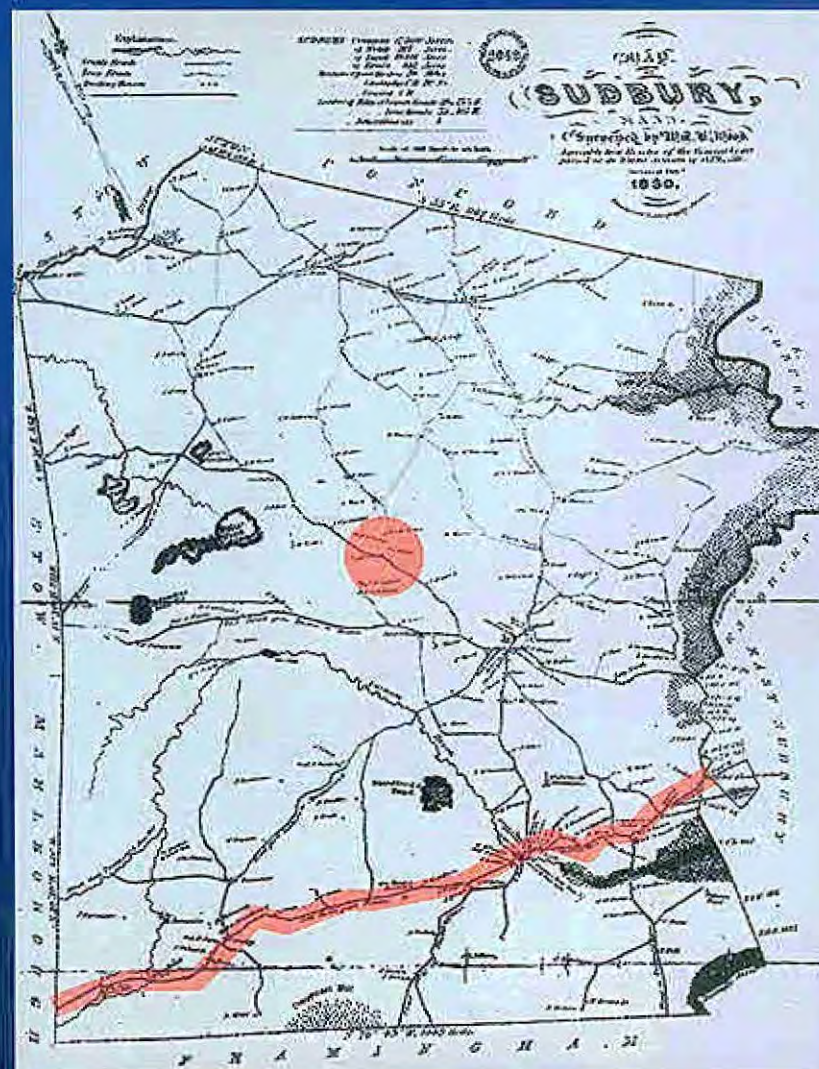
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# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## *A Brief History*



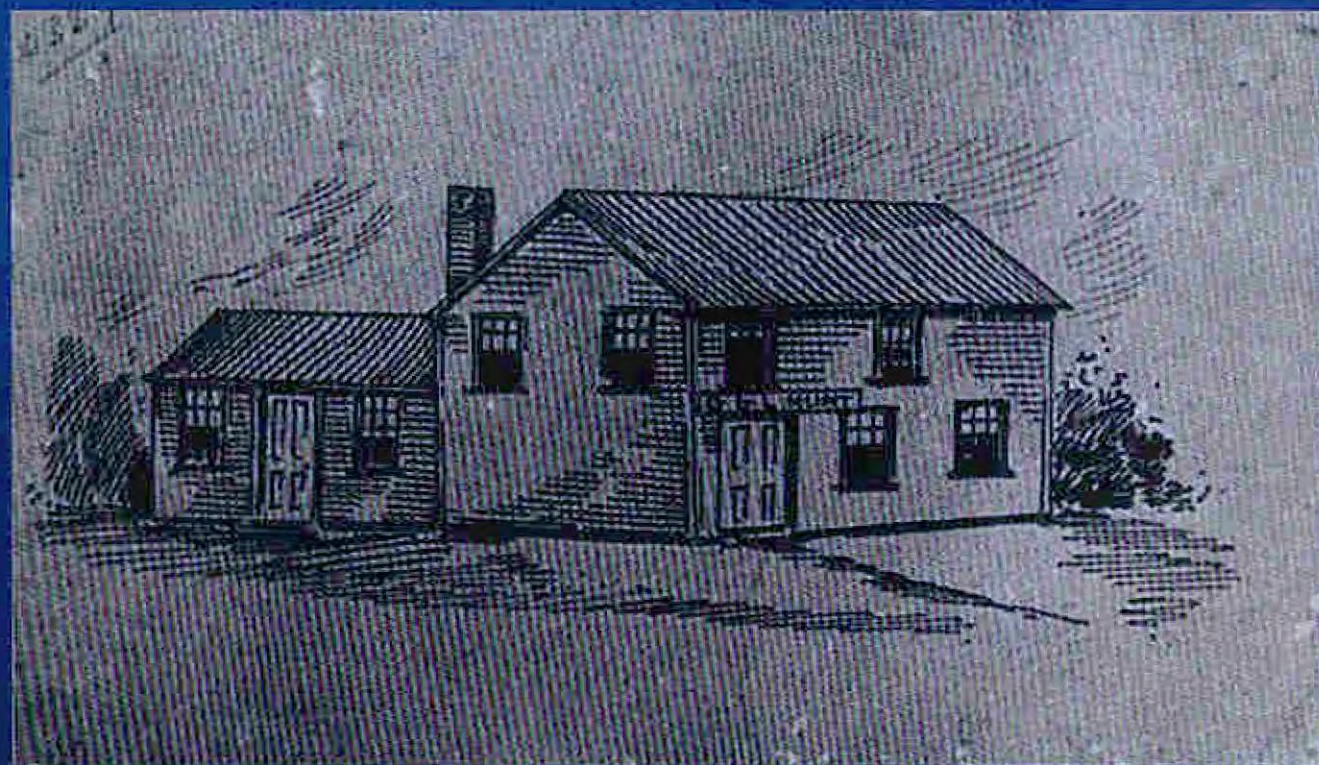
*The Post Road in 1830*



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History:

### Traditional Buildings as Homes and Businesses





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

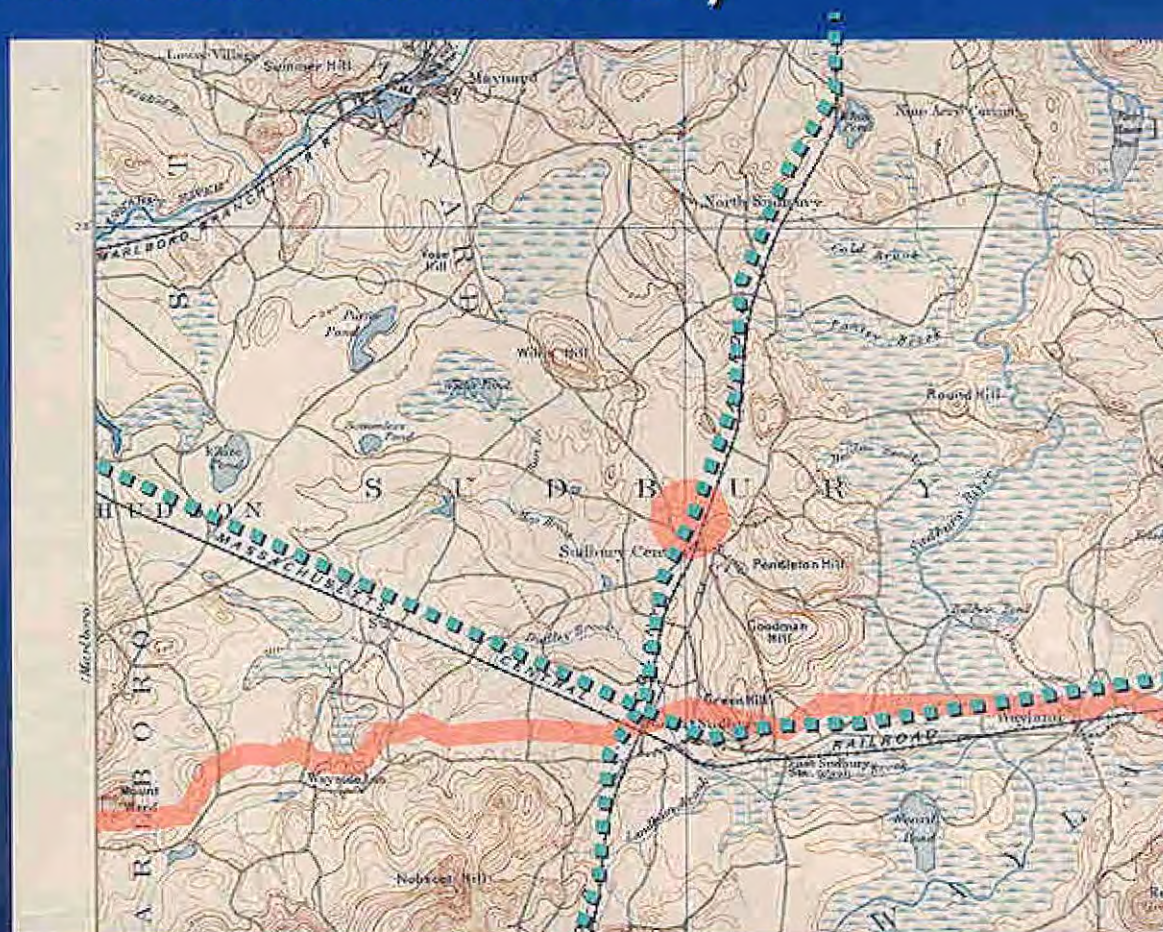
### A Brief History: Traditional Buildings as Homes and Businesses





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History : the Post Road in Sudbury



*At the end of the 1800's*



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History: Mill Village





*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
A Brief History: Building Types





*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
A Brief History: Building Types





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road* Streets and Transportation Modes



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*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
Streets and Transportation Modes



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*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
A Brief History: Transportation

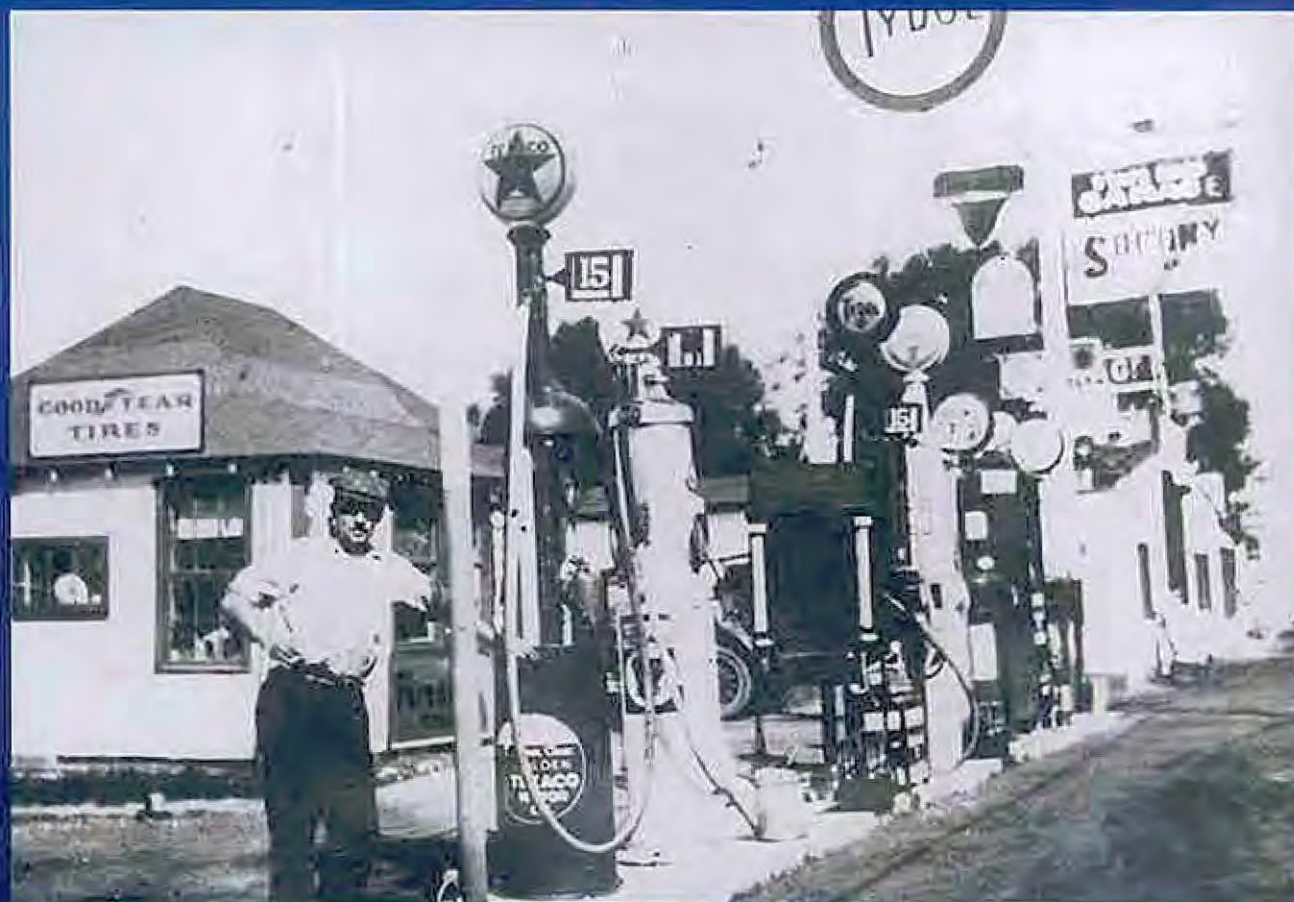
*Henry Ford and the automobile.....*



*Accident at Concord Road and  
Route 20 in 1915*



*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
A Brief History: Building Types





*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
A Brief History: Building Types





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History: Building Types





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History: Building Types





*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
A Brief History: Building Types





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History: Building Types





*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
A Brief History: Building Types





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History: Building Types





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

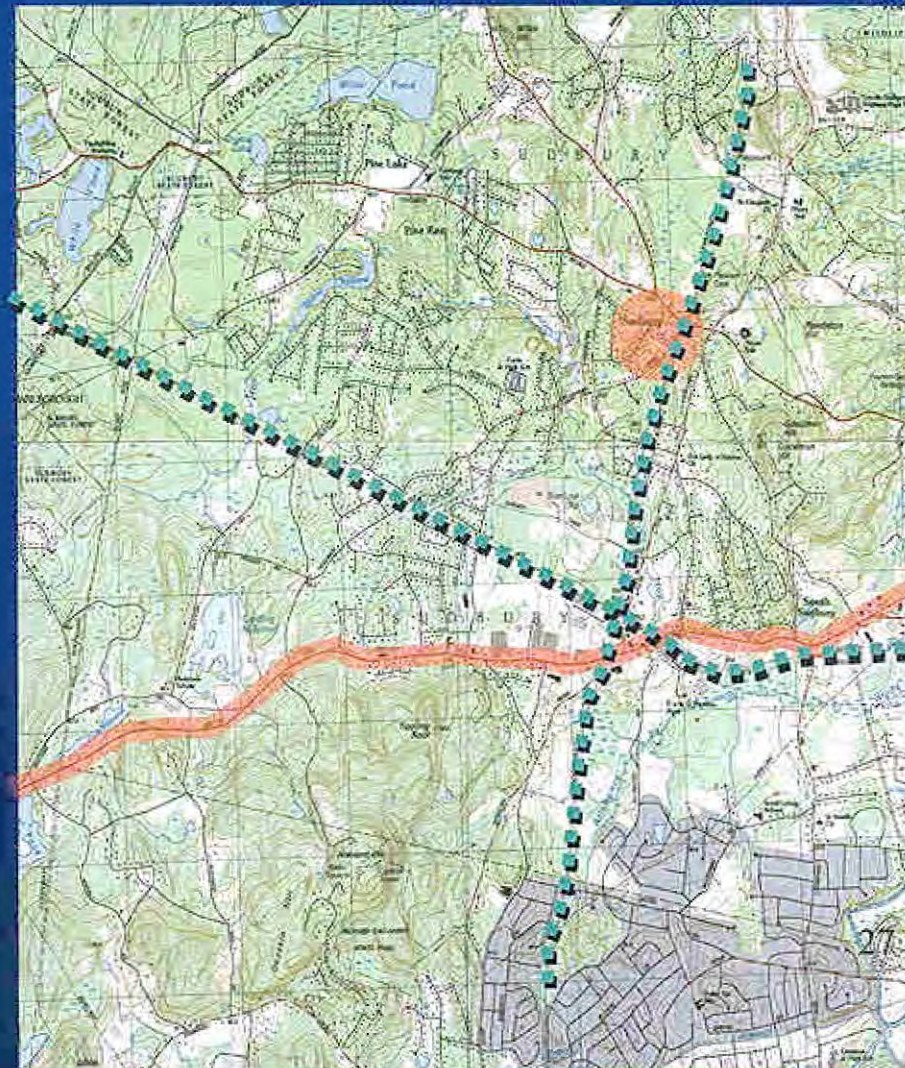
### A Brief History: Building Types





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### A Brief History

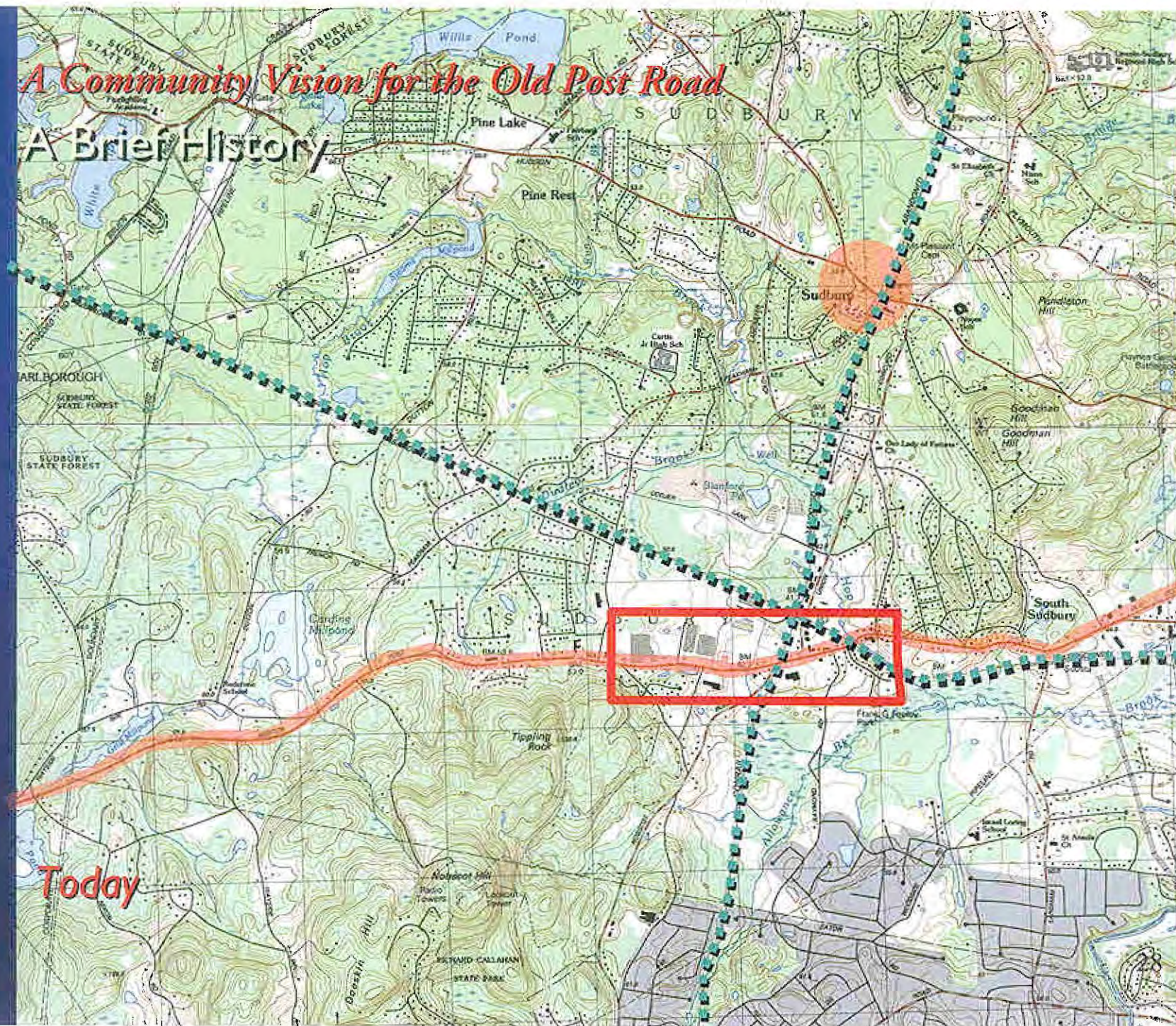


*Today*



# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## *A Brief History*





## EXISTING CONDITIONS



*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
Study Area



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# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## Study Area

Old Post Road (Route 20)

Union Avenue

Concord Road



Raytheon

Star Market

Sudbury Farms

Mill Village

*Today*



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

# The Community Vision: Goals and Objectives

Summary points from  
previous charrette

- Perceptions of the Route 20 corridor
  1. Heavy/ fast traffic
  2. Car oriented
  3. Lots of congestion
  4. Visually unattractive
- Primary strengths
  1. Better/ different than a mall
  2. Community oriented vendors
  3. Narrow roads
  4. Car culture
  5. Community support





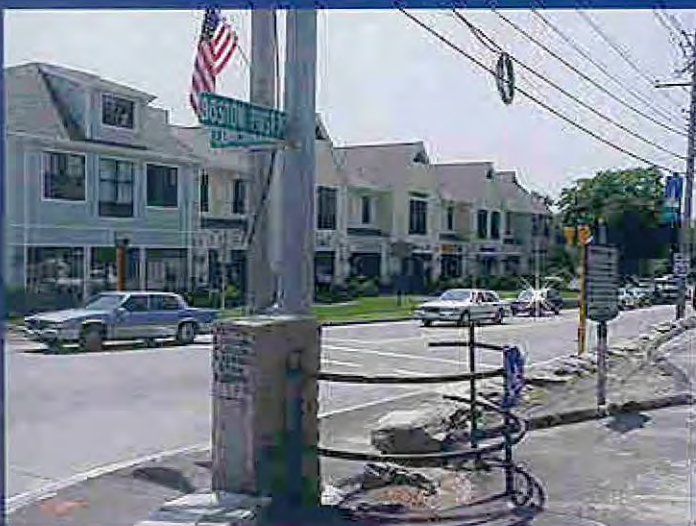
## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### The Community Vision: Goals and Objectives



- Major weaknesses

1. Congestion/ traffic
2. No pedestrian links or desires (bikes)
3. Lack of open space/ aesthetics
4. Infrastructure issues (sewer, electric)
5. General aesthetics



- Potential Opportunities

1. Screen parking
2. Pedestrian linkages (rails to trails)
3. Architectural character (colonial)
4. Mixed-use development
5. Strategic open space (Hop Brook)
6. Diverse businesses
7. Control traffic



# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

Scale comparison  
for example

Lexington, MA





## OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS



# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

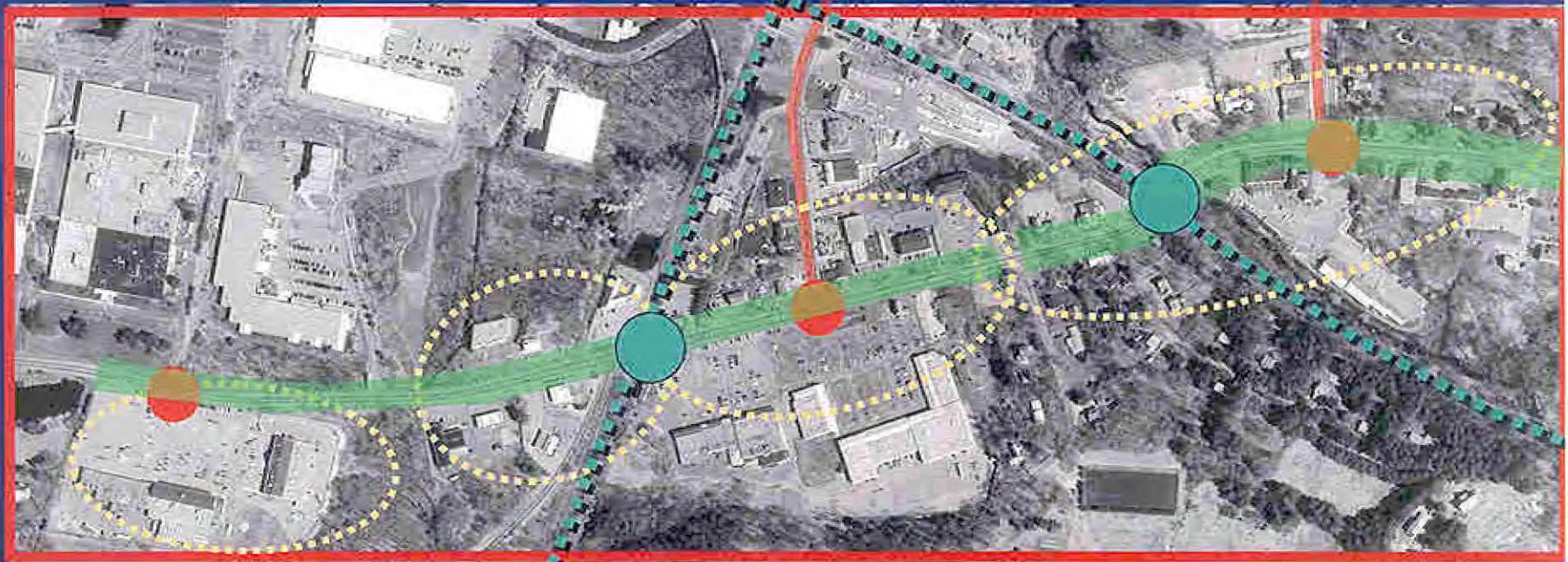
## Opportunities

Nodes

Rails/Trails/Crossings

Union Avenue

Concord Road



Landscape and Pathways

New "Places"

Mill Village Character

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# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## Issues and Opportunities

- Star Market





# Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road

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### Issues and Opportunities

#### Star Market Property

The following sketch plans represent a basis for considering site improvements to the Star Market property along Route 20. The sketches and design intent have been structured in three potential levels of implementation. While these are not intended as design solutions, they are meant to convey several opportunities relative to aesthetics, function, and possible development for future consideration.

#### Landscape Improvements

The ability to incorporate traditional landscape treatments within this area of Route 20 and the Star Market parcel would result in a dramatic visual improvement for the area. The intent of such landscape features and treatment would be to carry the detailing along Route 20 and incorporate the landscape treatment to all the parcels within the area. Such landscape improvements would most likely be the easiest way to start the process of improving the overall character of the area. In addition, the landscape treatments suggested are probably the least costly and easiest to implement of any proposed alterations. As new development is considered, appropriate landscape measures should be included. The plan for the Star Market property, which is represented by the baseline landscape improvements plan, suggests the following features:

- Street trees along Route 20
- Wider landscape buffer between Route 20 and parking lot edge (This would allow for a bike path and generous planting areas)
- Ornamental street lighting along Route 20 with appropriate signage
- Shade trees in the parking lot
- Parking lot islands to allow for pathways and additional planting
- Safe and attractive sidewalks along the face of Star Market and CVS so patrons can easily pass between buildings
- Attractive parking lot lighting that compliments the landscape and the buildings

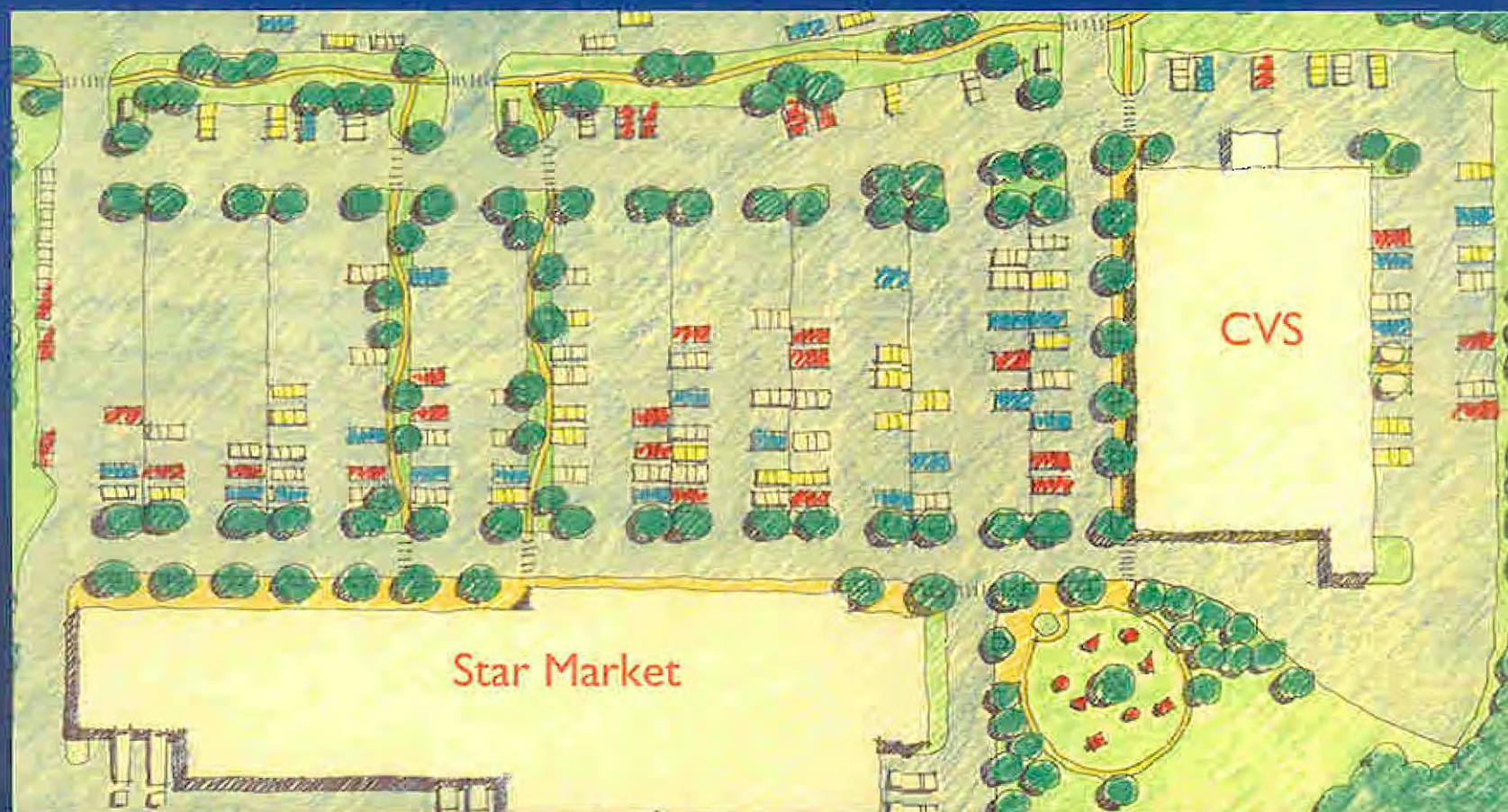
As part of these suggested improvements, parking demands would have to be studied in more detail so that appropriate quantities of parking spaces would still be available for the patrons. The property owner and the Town would also need to coordinate on issues relative to the potential relief from parking spaces required by zoning. In addition, the property owner could study the potential for making the back of the building more conducive to both service and employee parking.



# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## Issues and Opportunities

- Star Market (baseline landscape improvements)





## Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road

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#### Appropriate Scale In-fill

One issue identified during the planning process articulated the existing problems regarding the relationship of existing buildings to the roadway. In almost all instances along this portion of Route 20, the buildings are set back from the roadway to allow for sizable parking lots in front of the buildings. The result is a condition that is visually unattractive, pedestrian unfriendly and not conducive to proper techniques for village planning. While it is unrealistic to imagine locational exchange between buildings and their parking lots, one way to improve the quality and character of the environment is to consider strategically placed building in-fill. The plan on the following page shows how additional development within the Star Market property might be tastefully done in addition to landscape improvements.

The plan calls for a small development at the corner of the property along the street front. This includes a strong pedestrian connection to the market and incorporates a well-defined parking zone. Such development would bring needed street front development to this end of the study areas and also help visually fragment the large expanse of parking. By locating the building at the corner of the site, the development would not screen existing views of the Star Market storefront.

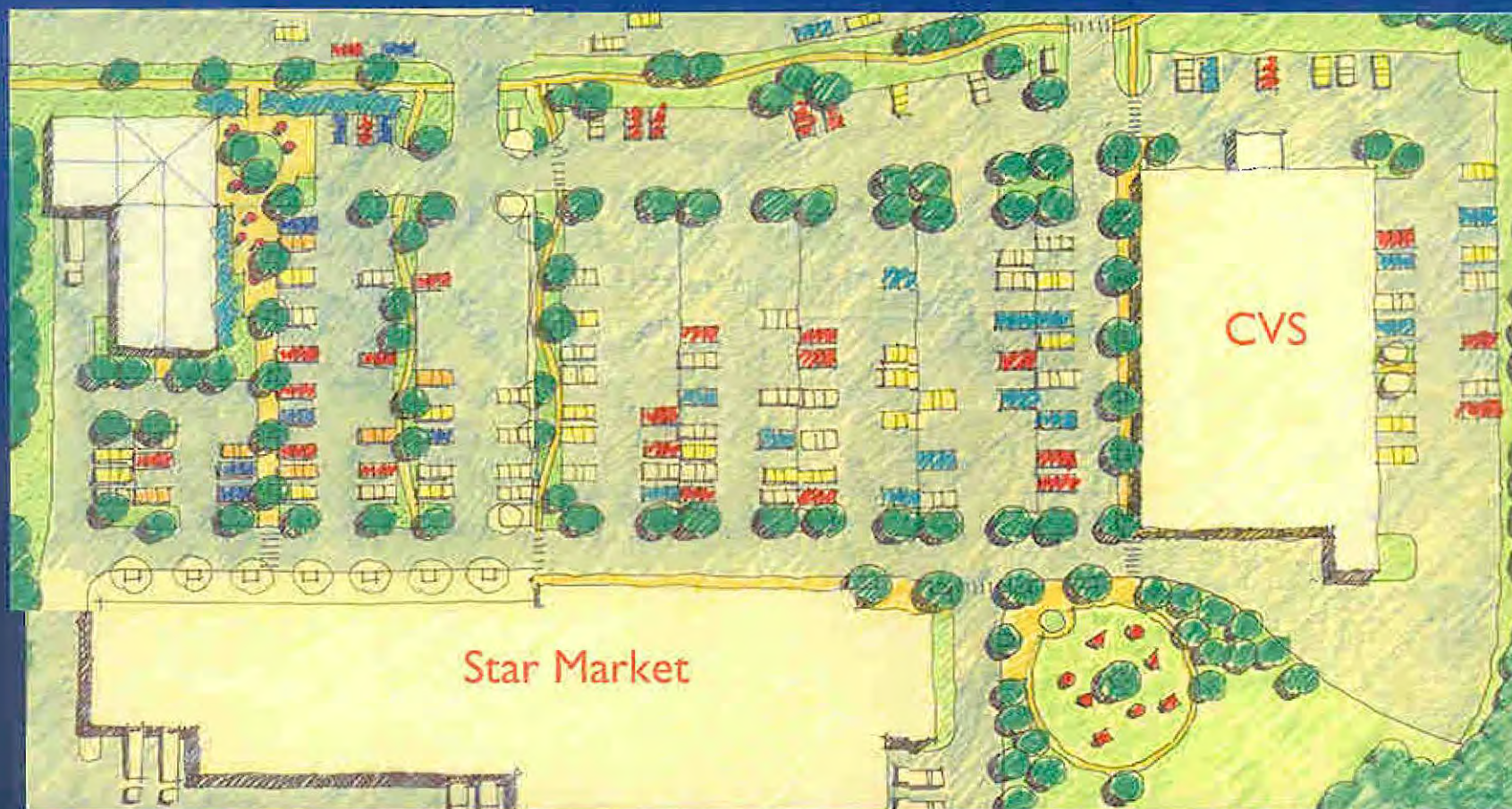
If such a scenario were desired, several issues would have to be addressed in order to allow the development to occur. These issues would include:

- Zoning changes, variances and or special permit considerations
- Utility upgrades related to sewage treatment practices



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road* Issues and Opportunities

- Star Market (landscape & appropriate scale in-fill)





# **Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road**

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### **Street Frontage Development**

In addition to the in-fill development suggested previously, the design plan on the following page considers additional new street front development for specialty commercial enterprises that encourage dynamic street life and exhibit high-turnover business. The plan illustrates the development of streetscape features and elements that are more typical of traditional village centers. These features include:

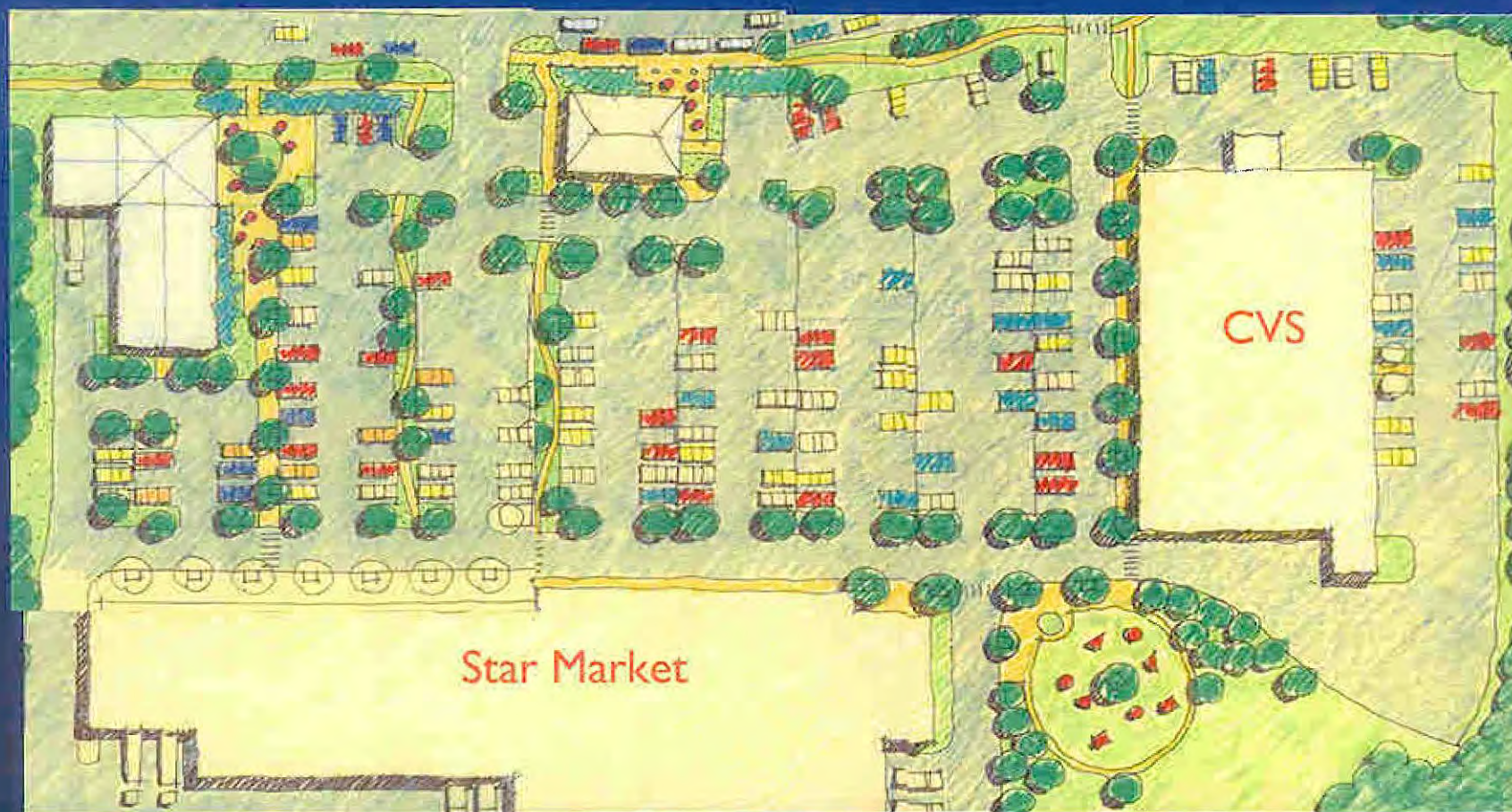
- Smaller building footprints along the street front
- Short-term, on-street parking
- Small outdoor terraces
- Well-defined entrances (in this case a signalized intersection at Route 20 and the main entrance to the property is proposed)
- Shielding large parking expanses through the use of building placement and landscape treatment

Like the previous, plan, this design idea would require substantial consideration of zoning and utility issues.



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road* Issues and Opportunities

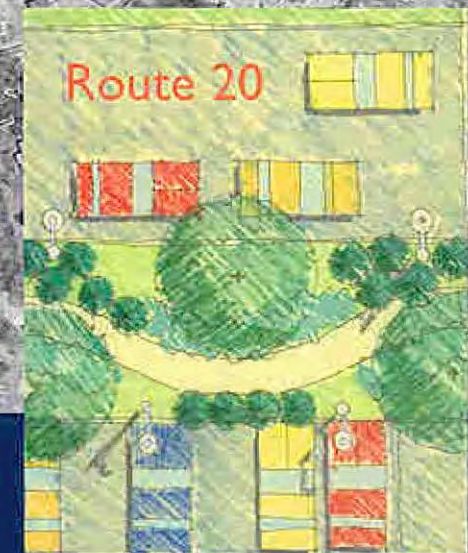
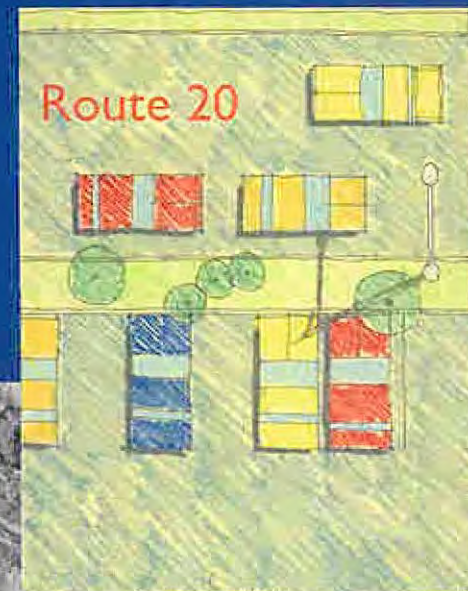
- Star Market (landscape, infill and street frontage development)





# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road* Issues and Opportunities

- Streetscape treatment





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Issues and Opportunities

- Intersection of Nobscot Road and Old Post Road

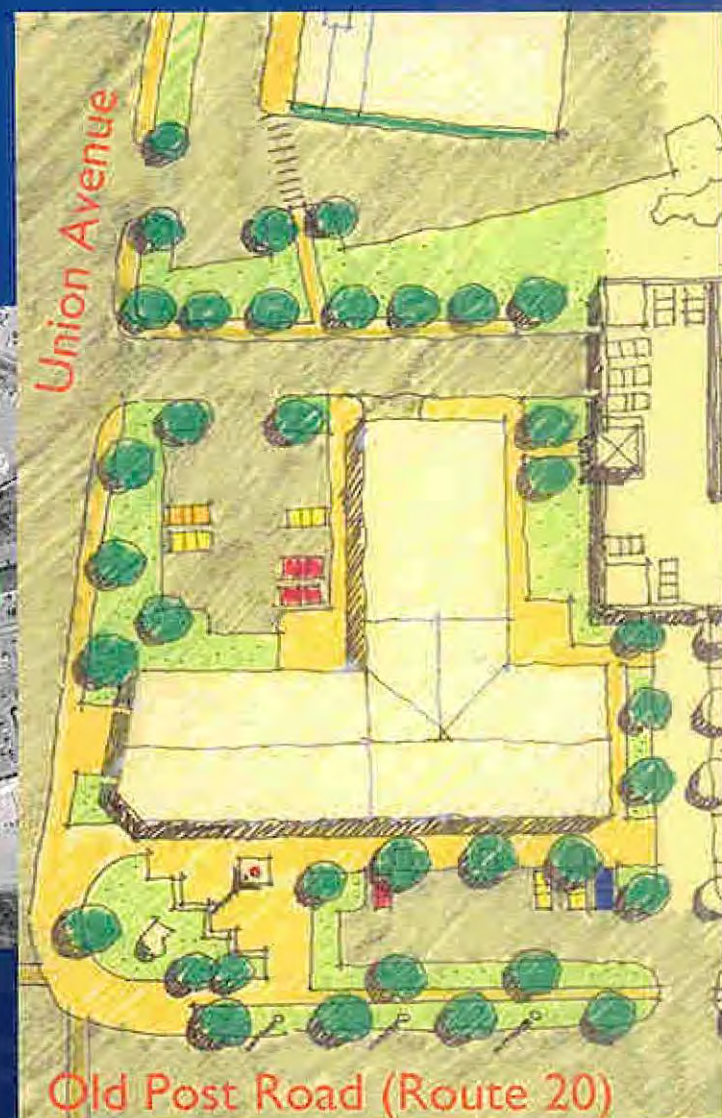




# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## Issues and Opportunities

- Intersection of Union Avenue and Old Post Road

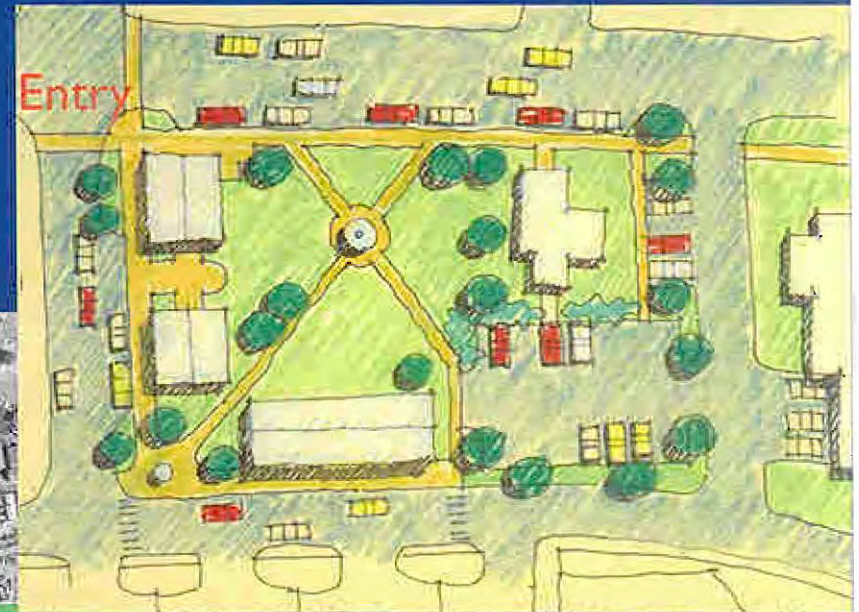




# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## Issues and Opportunities

### •Sudbury Crossing





# **Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road**

## **Final Report**

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### **Issues and Opportunities**

#### **Sudbury Crossing Property**

The following sketch plans provide a series of design ideas relative to the Sudbury Crossing property. Like the design ideas articulated on the previous pages, these sketches are not intended to be solutions, but rather strategies to be considered for future improvements.

#### **Landscape Improvements**

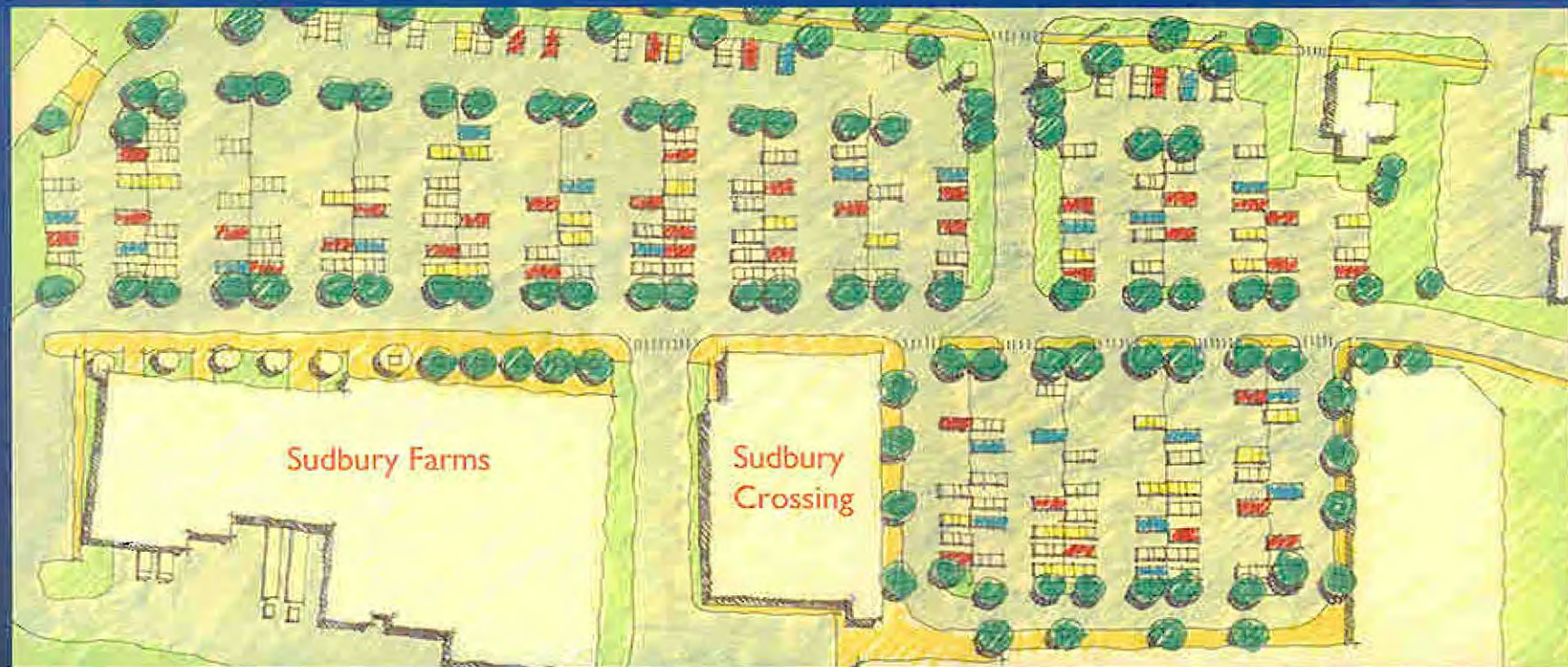
As with previous design ideas, the baseline for any improvements should consider landscape treatment along the Route 20 corridor and the adjoining parcels. In this case, a series of landscape features and elements have been suggested for the Sudbury Crossing area that would dramatically improve the overall visual quality of the property. Street trees, shade trees for parking lots and accent flowering trees would help to minimize the harsh visual character of the large asphalt parking lot. In addition, ornamental lighting, better signage and pedestrian linkages along the front of buildings would improve the overall quality of the space.



# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## Issues and Opportunities

- Sudbury Crossing (baseline landscape improvements)





# Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road

## Final Report

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### Village Green

Where do people go after they finish their shopping at Sudbury Crossing? Most people go to their cars and drive away. One characteristic of vibrant village commercial centers is the ability and draw for people to mingle, people-watch and relax outdoors during the shopping experience. Today in Sudbury, along this portion of Route 20, there is no relief for pedestrians from their automobiles. The village green sketch on the following page suggests that a small portion of the existing parking lot in front of Sudbury Crossing could be turned into a village green. This feature would provide visual relief for cars traveling on Old Post Road, it could act as a gateway identification element for the area and it could provide a wonderful setting for pedestrian users to linger in and around the Sudbury Crossing property.

The small park-like setting might include:

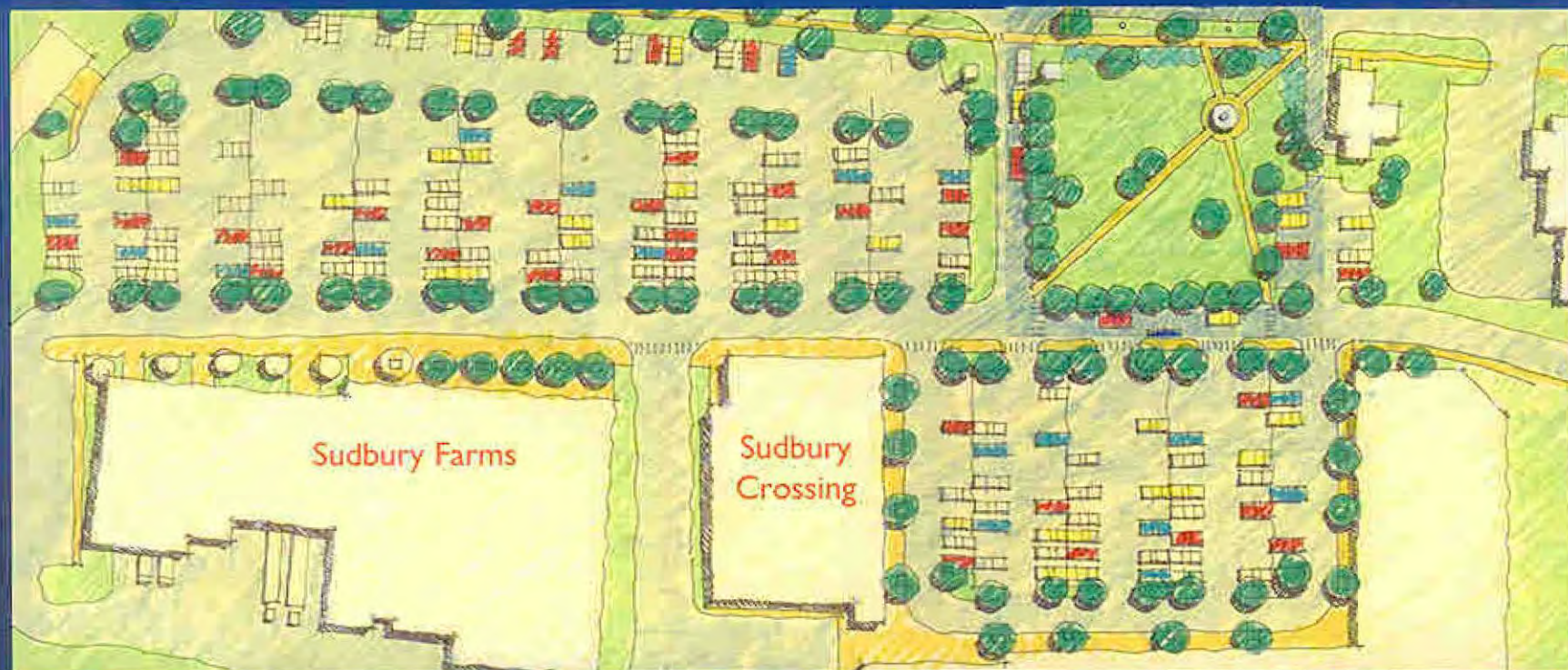
- Brick pathways
- Ornamental benches
- Ornamental lighting
- Gateway signage
- Open lawn
- Shade and flowering trees
- Perimeter hedges and perennial boarders
- Bandstand or gazebo
- Information kiosk



# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

## Issues and Opportunities

- Sudbury Crossing (landscape & village green)





# Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road

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### Building in-fill

Associated with the proposed village green planning scheme might be a series of small in-fill buildings with specialty items and services. These buildings could be oriented around the open space to help reinforce the village green concept. This building in-fill strategy would reinforce the idea of creating an environment with more pedestrian appeal in the heart of the Route 20 commercial center.

As can be seen from the sketch plan on the following page, the proposed landscape improvements and proposed village green planning scheme would not prohibit the later introduction of additional buildings and the associated square footage.

For the village green and/or building in-fill schemes to occur, much coordination, corporation and additional infrastructure would be required in order to achieve a successful and realistic development. First, zoning requirements related to parking for existing uses would need to be reconsidered based on the potential loss of spaces due to the introduction of a major green space. Second, the Town would need to coordinate with the effected property owners to ensure that the parking demand would still be met despite a potential loss of spaces. Finally, major utility upgrades relative to sanitary sewer requirements would need to be introduced in order to accommodate additional building square footage.

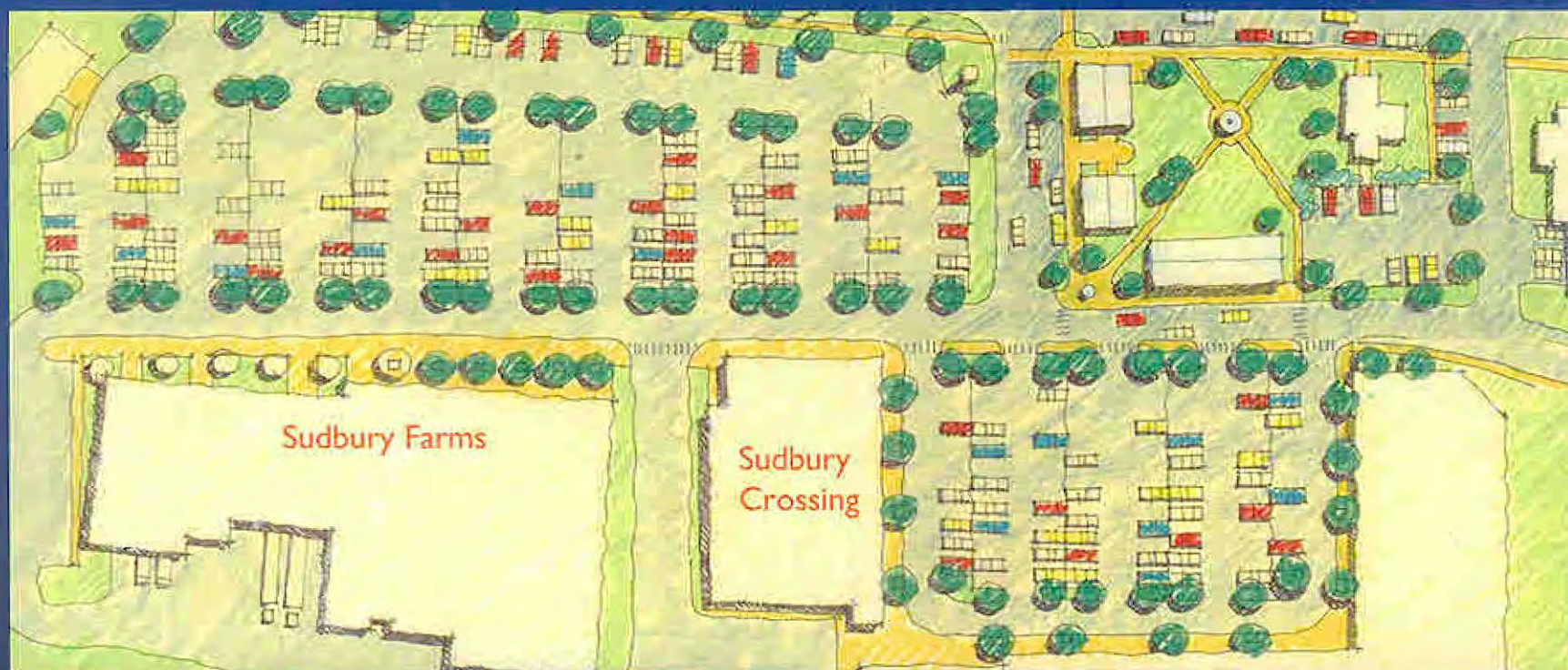
The series of sketches presented display such success because the implementation of the base-line improvements of landscape treatment does not prohibit future additional improvements based on changes to zoning and infrastructure.



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Issues and Opportunities

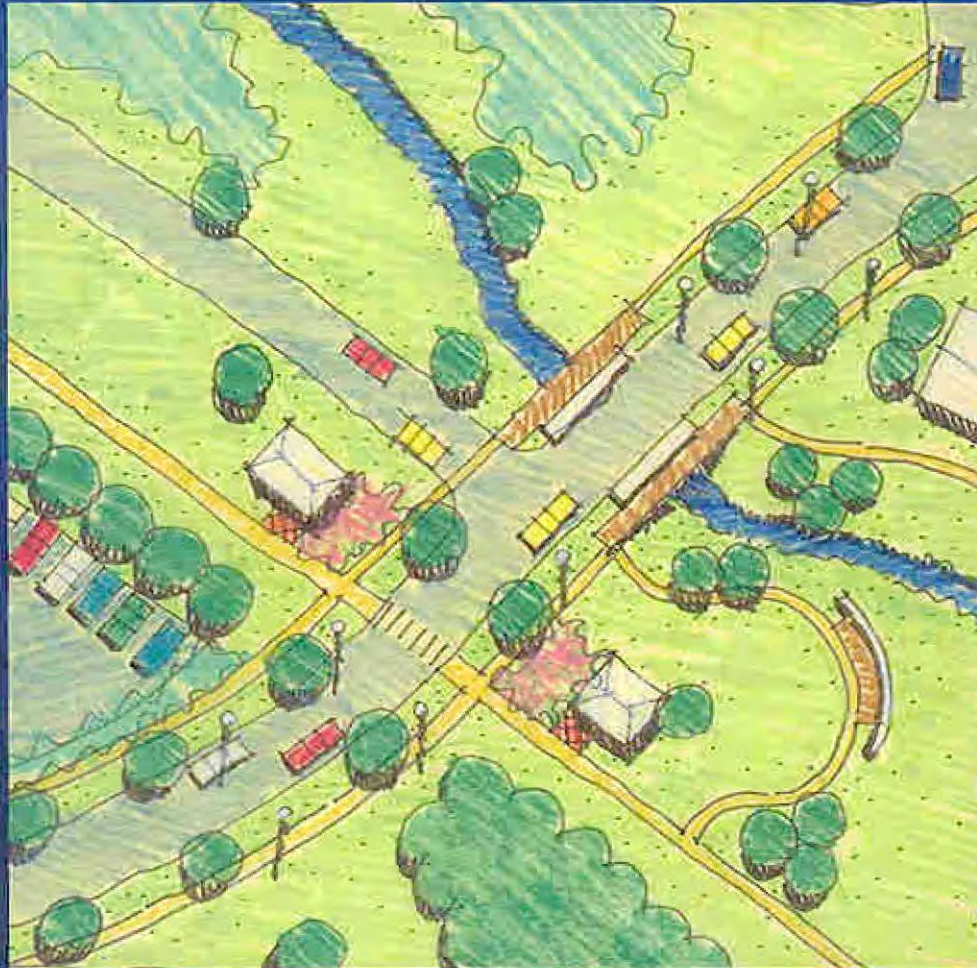
- Sudbury Crossing (landscape, village green & appropriate building in-fill)





# *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road* Issues and Opportunities

## •Hop Brook



Department of Housing & Community Development

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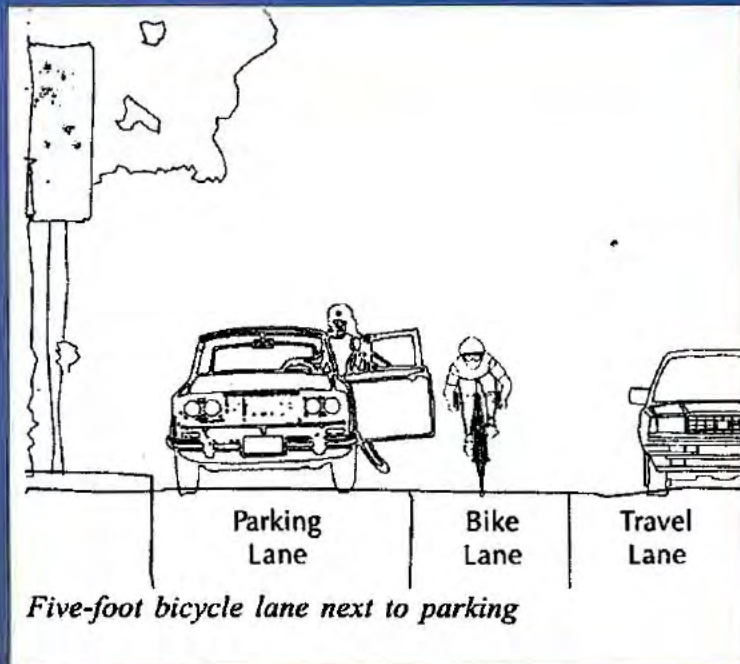


## STREETSCAPE TREATMENT



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Bike Lanes



Dedicated bike lanes increase safety for cyclists and remind motorists to share the road.





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*



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## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Lighting



Ornamental lights are often evocative of a specific period and should be carefully chosen to represent the community as it sees itself



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Street Furniture

Street furniture should be substantial in appearance, of durable construction and appropriate for its context





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road* Street Furniture



Kiosks or informational signs can orient visitors to the area and serve as a community bulletin board



*A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*  
Direction Signs





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Direction Signs





## CONCLUSIONS



# Town of Sudbury, A Community Vision for the Old Post Road

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### Conclusions

With any planning visioning process, a key component will be the need for the Town to build continuous momentum for desired improvements over an extended period of time. This is not an easy task. One critical strategy would be for the Town and local citizenry to consider a succession of smaller improvements. Sudbury is a wonderful place to live; although this stretch of the Route 20 corridor, which is considered by many as the commercial center, has a number of issues related to good village planning practices, it is still a vibrant and active environment. Any future planning and design work should consider all of the positive aspects of the area, as well as those problem elements that have been articulated in this document and throughout the planning process.

It has taken this stretch of the Old Post Road a long time to develop into the place it is today and it will take a long time to make improvements. It is absolutely appropriate to make such improvements in small increments over a period of time. Due to implementation constraints, it is unrealistic to think dramatic changes can happen over night. However, by considering planning issues and better design practices, in combination with associated funding, positive change can occur. Citizens will take note of these small enhancements and this will help build momentum for additional improvement projects.

The Following series of images provide information and direction with respect to the process of implementation.



## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road* Implementation

- Responsibilities
- The Vision
- Funding
- Phasing
- Design
- Construction





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Implementation: **Responsibilities**

- Town Stewardship: Special Committee
- Community Stewardship: Involvement
- Public/Private Stewardship: Business Improvement District, or...
- Private Stewardship: Association or Organization





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Implementation: **Public Realm Improvements**

- State versus Town ownership, Route 20

  - Transfer opportunities*

  - Ability to provide traffic calming*

  - Increased ability to provide on-street parking*

  - Eligibility for Chapter 90 funds*

- Infrastructure/Economic Development Grants

  - Public Works Economic Development (PWED)*

  - Community Development Action Grants (CDAG)*

- Federal Surface Transportation Funding

  - Enhancement Grants*





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Implementation: **Public Realm Improvements**

- State Funds – Chapter 90
- Dedicated State Funds (Legislated)
- Local Funding or Construction
- Special Program Grants (Bikeways, waterways, historic programs, and the like)





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Implementation: **Public Realm Improvements**

- **Business Improvement District (B.I.D)**

*Study is underway*

*Must be supported by the owners*

*Provides for focused funding within the district*





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Implementation: Regulations

- **Key Concept:** Regulations that enhance and ensure quality and provide incentives for high value development is good for business, good for commercial development, and good for the tax base.

- **Zoning**

*Overlay Zone: special use, dimensional standards and review process*

*Special site plan standards*

*Special density and parking provisions*

*Signage standards*

*Architectural review process*





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Implementation: **Regulations**

- **Design Review**

*Use the existing process*

*Enhance the process with simple but clear guidelines to  
anticipate issues and convey  
fundamental concerns*





## *A Community Vision for the Old Post Road*

### Implementation: **Public and Private Initiatives**

- Using public property to spur appropriate redevelopment
- Private sector redevelopment initiatives to help complete the vision

