

Planning Board Minutes  
March 25, 2015  
7:30 pm  
Town Hall

PRESENT: Craig Lizotte, Chris Morely, Martin Long, Stephen Garvin, Dylan Remley, Jody Kablack, James Kupfer, Steve Cecil and Adam Wynn (The Cecil Group)  
ABSENT: Peter Abair

#### Route 20 Zoning Study, Presentation by The Cecil Group

Ms. Kablack introduced the consultants and the topic under discussion. The Cecil Group has been working with the Plan Bd and the Planning and Community Development Dept. for the past 7 months under a contract to complete a study of possible zoning changes to the Route 20 business corridor in order to visualize possible redevelopment if a sewer system is installed.

Steve Cecil introduced the study and led the Board through a Power Point presentation, including Purposes of the Study and the Goals for Redevelopment and Zoning. 3 study areas were identified by the Plan Bd in the commercial area. The Cecil Group studied 2 of the 3 areas, leaving the Union Ave area as is. 5 prototypical sites were chosen to study - Rugged Bear Plaza, Sudbury Crossing Plaza, Interstate Gas and Oil (corner of Nobscot and Route 20), Sudbury Plaza (Shaws), and Raytheon/Chiswick parcels (however the Raytheon/Chiswick site was removed from the study due to the recent announcement by Raytheon that they would be closing the Sudbury plant).

Sites were tested for zoning parameters to determine if there was development potential or capacity for reinvestment relative to existing conditions. Many of the retail plazas are fairly well built out and provide few opportunities for increased development.

Mr. Cecil noted that in the retail plazas, sites will be redeveloped if buildings are outmoded, or if there is opportunity for shared parking. Small additions can be situated to create a street edge and accomplish some of the town goals in these locations. Rugged Bear, Sudbury Plaza and Sudbury Crossing examples.

Interstate Gas and Oil does have development potential if the abutting parcels are combined.

FAR (Floor Area Ratio) was discussed, and Sudbury retail plazas were tested to see if there was development potential. Most of the sites studied had FARs of .2 to .27, which is essentially built out for suburban sites which require higher levels of parking. When there is a mixed use (with housing) or other shared parking uses, FARs reduce and allow for somewhat more development.

Parking analysis of study parcels indicate that Sudbury's existing zoning requires significantly more parking than necessary.

There is limited capacity for mixed use reinvestment without innovative zoning changes and sewer improvements. However, the retail plazas have some limited opportunities. Most of the opportunity lies in the Industrial zoned parcels, or if substantial reorganization and assemblage of sites occur.

The study recommends regulatory changes with a mixed use overlay district (Zones A and C as defined by the Planning Board), including the following:

- Add more uses in Industrial zones
- Some changes in dimensional standards in Zone A
- Some changes in dimensional standards in Zone C

- Min. lot area in Zone C - can be accomplished since the parcels are larger (not effective in Zone A due to small parcel sizes)
- Tiered height allowances - taller buildings in back of properties
- Revised parking requirements - fewer required spaces in most categories (including residential). Not recommended to establish a maximum # of spaces. The market will determine this. Most developers do not want to pave additional areas if they don't need it. Sudbury parking requirements are some of the highest The Cecil Group has seen in similar communities.
- Don't penalize mixed use - allow shared parking to balance time of use

#### Observations:

- Zoning as an incentive for redevelopment - most effective in Industrial zones, particularly with expanded uses. Installing sewer will allow different uses to occupy space, but those are already allowed in current zoning (restaurants, etc.).
- Tiering to address deep lot conditions - address with internal roadways, 2 story development better on deep lots, but may not address market. Need to be flexible if demand is not present.
- Also, residential uses above commercial not necessarily compatible. Footprint of commercial vs. residential uses is different. It may be better to differentiate uses in separate buildings (side by side).
- Which is better - change underlying zoning, or adopt overlay bylaw? Area A may work best with changes to underlying; Zone C (Industrial) ripe for Overlay Zone.

Mr. Garvin asked if it is feasible to require some percentage of buildings be 1 story, and some percentage be 2 stories. Mr. Cecil indicated that market conditions fluctuate and cautioned against creating a situation that may not be developable. Flexibility is key. Allow 1 or 2 stories, but do not legislate.

#### Other Land Management Tools:

- Planned Development – provides set standards for a large parcel, but allows flexibility. Wayland Town Center development is an example. Good tool for large parcels that may have phased development over time.
- Design Guidelines - best outcomes for architecture, open space, etc. Developers like predictable requirements and will be more likely to comply with the guidelines suggested.
- Procedural Changes - Permit streamlining will produce more consistent results.
- Transfer of Development Rights - not highly beneficial for Sudbury since commercial area has limited potential as receiving site. Costly for developers. Complicated to legislate.

Mr. Lizotte noted that the Raytheon site was removed from consideration due to the announcement of the site being sold. The Planning Board did not want to give any impressions in this study as to what may or may not be appropriate. Those discussions happened between the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Remely asked if timing of development could be used as an incentive to spur redevelopment, i.e. the first ones in get the most favorable conditions. Steve Cecil thought that zoning was not appropriate for that type of incentive. Timing of development is dependent on market forces and other infrastructure improvements. Mr. Cecil noted an example in San Francisco which used a bylaw to slow growth, but which created a demand and increased property values.

Mr. Long asked if the recommendation was that site plan review should rest with the Planning Board, and Mr. Cecil answered yes. Both zoning considerations and site planning are tied together and should be reviewed in tandem.

Mr. Morely noted that an article at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting is to move site plan review from the Selectmen to the Planning Board, and he is hopeful that it will pass.

Mr. Garvin noted that the recommendation for tiered heights is interesting. Mr. Cecil noted that continuity within the site will be important, so heights should be considered.

Mr. Lizotte noted that the purpose of the study was to be a tool to educate the public on what could happen if a sewer system is installed. Since the town can both make zoning changes, and install sewer, he questioned will be the primary driver to redevelopment? Mr. Cecil answered that it is hard to quantify, and is dependent many factors – physical amount of space for development, water use, location. The Cecil Group looked hard at this and did not quantify build out of the 4 studied sites. But zoning and infrastructure both work hand in hand. This study definitively indicated that in Industrial uses, zoning could be a catalyst for significant improvement. Changing zoning could spur some redevelopment, which could then lead to infrastructure improvements.

A board member asked if we fix parking standards, and the answer was yet.

Another question asked about whether The Cecil Group thinks a significant pedestrian element along Route 20 is achievable? Yes, although it will be a challenge to implement through individual site reviews. The Town could consider requesting easements from property owners. Mr. Cecil noted that the Town of Ashland is working with MassDOT on roadway improvements which will introduce better pedestrian accessibility. Mr. Cecil suggested that working with state is important piece of the puzzle for this project since Route 20 is a state highway. He recommended 3 tiers to accomplish a final product: Zoning - sewer - corridor work.

Mr. Morely noted he would like to see more shared parking and roadways, and parcel assemblage, and asked how can we incentivize these? Mr. Cecil suggested that minimum size in Zone A could be a disincentive to single lot redevelopment and could outweigh any benefit. Again, assemblage of lots will be market driven. Mr. Cecil thought it would be difficult to create an incentive with this concept.

Kirsten Roopenian, Harness Lane commented that she agreed that site plan must be moved from BOS to Plan Bd to make Route 20 more cohesive. One body reviewing plans will make this more successful. She also thinks Sudbury should understand the commercial market better. All these recommendations speak to a master plan vision. Is the Planning Board considering updating the Master Plan, or creating a master plan for Route 20?

Craig Lizotte noted that the Planning Board engaged The Cecil Group to review zoning because it is something we can control. However the Planning Board cannot implement sewer or make improvements to infrastructure. This study is groundwork for larger ideas and projects.

Eric Poch, Ruddock Road - Encouraged about recommendation to reduce parking standards. Could translate into revitalization with minor effort.

Craig Lizotte - industry standards have changed as well, but Plan Bd will be looking at this closely.

Steve Cecil - less parking means more building area, translating to more revenue. But also need to understand actual parking needs in suburban setting.

Craig Blake, Old Lancaster Rd - Need to further address revised parking spaces, since many of the study parcels are already using smaller ratio. May not necessarily create more development potential. Need to recognize and take advantage of shared parking and location of parking.

Craig Blake - how critical is undergrounding poles to Route 20 redevelopment? Mr. Cecil answered that it is not critical, but is part of aesthetic/streetscape. A cost benefit analysis could look at that in the larger context since it is so costly. Utility companies not subject to local zoning control.

Chris Morely - hope that poles are buried in the Raytheon redevelopment.

John Baranowsky, Belcher Drive - BOS is driving affordable housing at Raytheon, so why wasn't this studied.

Craig Lizotte stated that the joint process the Planning Board and Selectmen undertook in the fall/winter regarding Raytheon was to clarify town goals and processes to encourage an acceptable level of development. Reaching our 10% housing goal has been articulated by many residents, and this was articulated to Raytheon in hopes of achieving this goal. The Boards had also been counseled that an industrial reuse of the site was likely not sustainable.

Len Simon, Meadowbrook Circle – Studies have shown that the proximity of rail trails to commercial sites improve property values. Have these recreational amenities been factored into changes to the districts? Also interested in recommendations for bike lanes along Route 20.

Mr. Cecil answered that pedestrian connectivity has been recommended throughout district, and across sites as a fundamental requirement of redevelopment. Both between sites, and across sites - getting from the car to the front door. MassDOT also has requirements for bike lanes/shared lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street.

Peter Cramer, Singletary Lane - How does the Town influence improvements to Route 20? Mr. Cecil noted several possible funding sources - MassWorks, Chapter 90, TIP – that the town can apply for. These require a clear plan and purpose, and persistent advocacy over time in order to be successful.

Ms. Kablack noted that if the sewer construction project is initiated, state enhancement funds would be sought for streetscape improvements - wider sidewalks, bike lanes, etc. Funding is very limited and competitive. We would also need to be cognizant that MassDOT might also attempt to widen Route 20 to 4 lanes, which could be detrimental to the character of the town.

Kirsten Roopenian – Installing a sewer system along Route 20 has been a vision for over 20 years. She encouraged the Planning Board to help move the sewer issue forward in near future.

Mr. Lizotte thanked The Cecil Group and all those attending for their participation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 pm.