

**Town of Warner
Master Plan Update**

**Notes: Land Use Visioning Session
April 20, 2009**

Comments from Participants:

- Balance tax concerns and development control with owners' rights and interests
- Current use is a tool to reduce taxes and keep land undeveloped as owners and the town wishes; but also constrains people from developing their land due to penalties and forbearances – town has about \$30 million of property value in current use
- Need more commercial/industrial development to increase tax base
- Need more jobs to support local population
- Look at zoning and historical development patterns – now there is far less land zoned for business uses compared to the past; look at how dimensions of buildings built before zoning compare to existing zoning dimensional requirements
- 35 ft. building height restriction is no longer necessary; was based on historical fire-fighting capacity
- 75% lot coverage limit for impermeable surfaces (building footprint + parking area) means there is already a built-in restriction on size
- Need to consider overall road infrastructure in town: Class VI roads and covered bridges limit equipment that can access certain roads/parts of town
- Need to be aware that expanding the tax base may mean expanding services

Question #1: Exit 7 Area - What should future commercial and industrial development look like?

- Consider enlarging commercial zone near Exit 7, esp. land near the river or I-89
- Concerns of nearby residents – what would impacts be if the zoning district were enlarged? Would they no longer have a comfortable buffer?
- State forest areas may limit development, and forest already reduced/split by I-89
- Encourage light industrial/commercial uses at Exit 7 that benefit from interstate access but don't generate a lot of traffic (like Milton CAT)
- Consider environmental sensitivity of the area, like aquifers, soils, floodplains – what is the capacity?
- What are the possibilities for water and sewer for future development? Link to treatment facility using pumping station? Have new businesses share facilities?
- When zoning lines were drawn, Planning Board drew around businesses; went 400 feet back from roads
- Is there a more appropriate lot depth?
- Milton CAT (which appears to be well accepted by the community) couldn't be built today under 20,000sf floor area limit
- Support reusing gravel pit at Exit 7

Question #2: Exit 9 Area: Do we have the right permitted uses and floor area limit (20,000sf)?

- Keep in mind that there is no formula for continued development on parcels with existing buildings – owners could keep developing their lots if there is space
- 20,000sf limit is too low to encourage development – not attractive to developers
- Exit 9 Charrette, which received a lot of support, showed square footage larger than current zoning allows
- Need to modify wording about rooflines, cupolas, etc. with regard to square footage limits
- Many lots are available for development in the Exit 9 area, even with existing regulations
- Need to educate residents about taxes (how is each dollar distributed) and the need for additional development to raise the tax base
- Warner has available land for development, at Exit 9 and Exit 7 – should we focus on encouraging development there before expanding other commercial areas?
- Think about incentivizing green development with tax breaks
- Consider performance zoning: allow buildings >20,000sf if they use green building techniques, use traditional architecture, share a driveway, or stagger facades to seem like multiple buildings (see Epping’s point system for green building)
- Need to make Exit 9 a destination area to attract developers
- Must encourage development that brings local jobs (hotel may have been a good business to have in town)
- Look at use tables for floor area requirements of various types of businesses to find out a suitable floor area limit
- Look at revising 20,000sf limit to allow multiple floors (maybe 20,000sf per floor?) – keep in mind ADA and access considerations for multi-story buildings
- Look at floodplain restrictions in Exit 7 and 9 areas – should we allow future development in floodplains? Some towns have barred future development in floodplains altogether
- Support for professional building development – maybe 2-3 floors – workers commute to Warner during the day, go out for lunch, then go home at night

Question #3: How can we guide residential development in desired areas? How address workforce and senior housing needs?

- North Rd. has a +/- 90 acre lot that is zoned commercial and residential
- Not a lot of parcels left that are available for development in Village Water District
- Can certain areas accept denser zoning, such as Waterloo?
- Many undevelopable areas exist near Class VI roads – if future development is allowed there, make owners pay for road and service improvements (but does this open up areas that the town wants to stay undeveloped?)

- Need to maintain Class VI road policy – major deterrent to building in the middle of nowhere

Question #4: Downtown Area: What tools should we use to encourage desired growth? Is the 2,000sf floor area limit practical? How deal with pedestrian and parking issues?

- 2,000sf limit hampers growth
- Downtown lots are small, existing buildings are small; unless the downtown is expanded, 2,000sf limit may be okay
- Mixed use is most sustainable development type; 2,000sf limit works well downtown
- Unless parking is addressed, debates over the sq. ft. limits don't matter
- Need more commercial/industrial development
- Village is attractive because “you know when you get there” – not a long strip development
- Town parking study found a need for a centralized parking facility; plans were drawn up for a location behind Town Hall, but would be expensive to build – no funds to date
- Consider parking incentives in zoning: if a person agrees to provide additional public off-street parking, allow them to build a larger building
- Need to consider drainage limitations in downtown area when thinking about putting in more parking; make sure to get Allan Brown's observations about drainage issues

Question #5: Historic Sites and Districts: Should Warner use preservation tools such as tax credits, demolition delay, or historic district designations?

- Look at Mystic Seaport and Plymouth, MA as good examples of historic districts
- Need to know how restrictive historic designations/regulations would be for building owners – there may be strong support if owners still feel that they can make improvements to livability without having to jump through hoops
- Town has already adopted RSA 79-E to allow tax credits for community revitalization
- Town adopted agricultural building preservation regulations – have had two applications come in so far

Next Steps

- Investigate performance zoning
- Look at development possibilities and constraints in Exit 7 area, esp. environmental constraints and water/sewer options
- Look at use tables to investigate square footage needs for different business types and uses
- Look at floodplains and impacts of future development in Exit 7 and Exit 9 areas