

Meeting Notes
“Spotlighting the Master Plan Chapters”
Natural Resources, Open Space & Recreation
Land Use & Development

The following notes represent the comments obtained during the open comment period of the meeting. A copy of the evening’s presentation may be found on the Master Plan website:

<http://www.cityofnewburyport.com/master-plan-steering-committee>

Comments related to Land Use & Development

- The presentation mentions infill development in different areas of the City. In regard to infill along the Merrimac Street corridor, the residents are not in favor of adding density. Some infill, moderate density may be ok, so long as the development is carefully considered.
- Ways to prevent loss of farmlands to housing development should be considered. In other states there are aggressive funding/financing programs that allow farmland to be purchased, preserved, and leased back to farmers; while Massachusetts does not have strong financial programs like this, the Master Plan should explore options to preserve agricultural land in the City.
- Storey Avenue development was mentioned in that there were two projects going through permitting or about to go through the permitting process. The audience member asked for more information about the two projects. Response: both are proposed pharmacies – one at the corner of Low and Storey and the other adjacent to Port Plaza. The Low Street project is currently before the Planning Board with copies of the plans available for review in the Planning Office. The other project has not yet filed any plans.
- What are the overall capacities of the water and sewer systems and how will these determinations effect future build-out and growth? Response: City staff are working together with the water and sewer staff to determine what the capacities are currently and what they will be once all of the new systems are brought online. In addition to the Land Use & Development group looking at this, the Public Facilities subcommittee is working on it as well.
- Land use, development and transportation concerns all overlap. As you focus on different corridors or sites that will be considered for redevelopment, traffic routes to and from these sites should also be considered. We need to be cognizant of how people come into the City, what they see and how they move around.
- Complete Streets
 - Objectives and actions relative to Complete Streets should be incorporated into this chapter.
 - A map of what streets in the City that can be retrofitted to incorporate the tenants of Complete Streets should be included in the Plan.

Comments related to Natural Resources, Open Space & Recreation

- The “Middle Way”
 - The “middle way” should be explored as a safe, viable option for pedestrian movement from one part of the City to the other. This way may be safer for pedestrians and families to travel than using Merrimac and High Streets.
 - This notion will be considered in the Transportation chapter as well. This subcommittee will look into stop signs, pedestrian amenities, traffic calming measures, etc.
- This draft of the plan appears to be silent regarding the future of the Crow Lane landfill. Will this parcel be called out for redevelopment? Response: the subcommittee has discussed this site and has called out the need for more trails in the immediately surrounding area. The general consensus of the subcommittee is that the landfill is not currently a useful site. However, with technology ever changing, it could potentially be developed into playing fields or even a solar farm.
- This chapter should include waste management practices and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques to preserve the quality of the water supply and the City’s natural resources.
- It seems as though that every time open space becomes available for purchase, the City is scrambling to respond. Is there a way to put in place a program or financial capacity so that when land is available for purchase that, if purchased by a private developer, would be developed into commercial and/or residential property, that the City could step in and purchase the land and preserve it as open space?
- Having goals and actions related to walkability is good. However, attention needs to also be paid to the systems that allow for pedestrian use. If the sidewalks aren’t clear or are unsafe and if the crosswalks result in pedestrians running across several lanes of traffic, the City cannot be considered walkable. Putting in a sidewalk or a crosswalk is not enough, they need to be safe.

Miscellaneous Comments

- Master Plan Process
 - Will the Plan include metrics and measurable goals so that the community can see if progress is being made on the listed action items? Response: measurable goals will be added to the sections of the Plan where appropriate. Progress will be tracked via the Implementation Plan chapter of the document. This chapter will list all of the action items, with each item having a responsible party and a timeline for implementation.
 - Will there be a build-out analysis conducted as part of this plan and will a comparison of square feet of development to revenue generation be conducted? Response: the Planning Office is currently looking at future build-out in the City; both under the current zoning now and also will be looking at potential build-out under any new and/or proposed zoning amendments.

- Once the City adopts the Master Plan, City staff, volunteers and the community need to work together to choose objectives each year and incorporate them into the City's budget and plans so that the objectives are worked on across various City departments and boards/commissions. Implementation of the plan should be coordinated with everyone working to accomplish the same goals.
- Zoning Revision Project: what is the timeline for the zoning rewrite? Response: the Planning Office is working with Community Opportunities Group (COG) on the zoning rewrite and hopes to bring a final draft (after several community meetings for input/ideas) to the various City Boards and the City Council in March or April 2015. The zoning rewrite will run somewhat parallel to the Master Plan process.