



THE PLANNING BOARD OF WEST BOYLSTON
MIXTER OFFICES • 120 PRESCOTT STREET
WEST BOYLSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 01583

TO: Town Wide Planning Committee
DATE: December 4, 2007
RE: Master Plan Implementation

2007 Master Plan Implementation Report

On September 14, 2005, the Planning Board voted to adopt the plan drafted and presented by the Town Wide Planning Committee as the Master Plan for the Town of West Boylston. The following is a discussion of the progress made on the five-year implementation plan of the recommendations in the Master Plan.

This memo discusses the items in the Implementation Plan that list the Planning Board as a responsible party. It is organized with the same sub-sections as the Implementation Plan itself.

1. Housing

1.1. Adopt an Incentive Zoning Bylaw to encourage developers to provide housing for low and moderate-income households in new developments.

The Town Wide Planning Committee voted to classify this item as **completed on 10/3/2006.**

1.2. Revise Zoning Bylaw requirements for multi-family housing to include standards for design, neighbor-hood compatibility, and environmental protection. Increase density to four units per acre.

The Town Wide Planning Committee voted to classify this item as **completed on 10/3/2006.**

1.3. Use a “limited development” approach to create some affordable units and preserve open space. (with Conservation Commission)

The residential developments of Hillside Village and Angell Brook, totaling over 230 units were approved with affordable units and more than 25% open space which will be under the control of the town through the Land Trust.

“Limited Development” as defined in the Master Plan refers to selling a small portion of the land acquired by the Town as open space for housing, while protecting the rest of the land. Most of the open space/conservation land that has been created in the past several years has been a result of requirements that the Planning Board included in the Zoning Bylaws, specifically in the Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) area. This open space is not eligible or appropriate for selling for house lots, as it is already part of a housing development. The Town, itself, has not acquired any Open Space. With the adoption of the Community Preservation Act, this may change and we should revisit this possibility within the confines of the legislation.

However, though this “limited development” tactic may not be applicable for West Boylston at this time, the intention of creating affordable units is part of the current Incentive Zoning Bylaw and the maintenance of open space is part Cluster or Open Space Development Zoning Bylaw under development. In addition, the Planning Board is currently considering requiring affordable units in all future CCRC developments.

2. Open Space and Recreation

2.1. Amend the Zoning Bylaws to include provisions for Open Space development (Cluster Zoning.)

This item is under consideration. The Planning Board is taking care to develop a well-crafted bylaw. In addition, information about this bylaw needs to be made available to the Town to answer concerns and garner support.

3. Transportation

3.1. Develop a plan to improve and construct sidewalks and promote bicycling activity through expansion of the trail system. Improve walking systems near schools and construct sidewalks along Route 12 to insure pedestrian safety along this busy road. (with Board of Selectmen and DPW)

The Subdivision Regulations currently promote the construction of sidewalks, walking paths and bikeways. The Planning Board has required new sidewalks constructed in the new Timberwood and Century Farm subdivisions. We also have attempted to require projects undergoing Site Plan Review to construct

sidewalks, especially along Route 12. However, some concerns have been voiced as to the ability and responsibility of the Town to maintain these new sidewalks within the state right-of-way and whether the Planning Board can require developers to add sidewalks on state-owned property.

The Planning Board has limited resources to implement an integrated sidewalk plan. A project should be developed within the Town's capital plan to address this issue.

3.2. Review Subdivision street width standards to determine if narrower streets are feasible without compromising public safety.

The document, *Rules and Regulations Governing Subdivisions in the Town of West Boylston*, was amended on March 15, 2007. The regulations reduce the roadway width for Local Residential streets from 26' to 22', for Primary Industrial streets from 36' to 32' and Secondary Industrial streets from 30' to 28'.

We request that the Town Wide Planning Committee vote that this issue has been addressed.

3.3. Review Subdivision Regulations to improve street connectivity.

As mentioned above, these regulations were amended on March 15, 2007.

We request that the Town Wide Planning Committee vote that this issue has been addressed.

3.4. Participate in regional transportation planning activities, especially the Transportation Committee of the CMRPC and the Metropolitan Planning Organization to keep abreast of regional projects that may affect the Town and insure that Town projects are advanced. (with Town Administrator.)

This is an ongoing responsibility for one elected member of the Planning Board. Currently, John Baker is our representative to CMRPC.

4. Land Use

4.1. Adopt a new Zoning Map with Assessors parcels as the base.

We received assistance from the Department of Conservation and Recreation on assessing this project. After careful review of the process and the number of parcels involved, the Planning Board determined that the benefit to the Town would be overwhelmed by the complexity of the task.

Specifically, over 400 parcels would have been affected. Many of the parcels would not have a significant impact on the use or possible use of the lot. And in some cases, making the change could push a business use significantly into the midst of an existing single-family residential area. We intend to support the request of landowners for a change to a split parcels zoning when such a change

does not have a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood. For example, such a request was made by Checkerboard for their property on Route 12 at the October 2007 Town Meeting. The Planning Board supported this change and it was adopted.

We request that the Town Wide Planning Committee vote that this issue has been addressed.

4.2. Investigate the feasibility of creating Village zoning districts for Oakdale, Pinecroft and the Town Center to insure future development is compatible with the village character of each area.

The Planning Board has begun work on this issue and is generally very favorable to the idea.

4.3. Revise the Schedule of Use Regulations to insure appropriate land uses are allowed in each district.

At the October 2007 Town Meeting, the Planning Board presented a new Schedule of Use Regulations to include the newly created Commercial/Limited Industrial area. At that time, we made **no** changes to the other zoning districts so that the proposed changes were restricted to the new district and clear to the voters. However, at that time we did review the current uses and no other changes appeared as necessary.

We will continue to review the Schedule of Use Regulations on an annual basis.

4.4. Adopt a cluster development bylaw to preserve open space, preserve natural resource functions, and allow for a more compact development form.

This item is under consideration.

4.5. Increase the permitted density of multiple family developments in the GR district now that sewers are available. (From 2 to 4 units per acre.) (with Housing Partnership)

The Town Wide Planning Committee voted to classify this item as **completed on 10/3/2006.**

4.6. Study the feasibility of allowing Mixed Use projects, especially in existing villages.

Mixed Use projects are part of the discussion of the Village Zoning district. Currently our zoning allows both residential and business use on parcels in the business district, which certainly qualify as mixed use. There are several of these parcels in the villages at this time. However, the bylaws only allow for one “habitable” building on each parcel.

4.7. Consider prohibiting single-family homes in Business districts to minimize conflicts between incompatible land uses.

We considered this prohibition during our review of the Schedule of Use Regulations mentioned above.

We request that the Town Wide Planning Committee vote that this issue has been addressed.

4.8. Develop a water and sewer policy that manages growth. (with DPW and West Boylston Water District.)

The Planning Board believes that development of the policies is important and has express willingness to assist. We requested an opportunity to comment on any proposed policies, but have yet to receive notification. The Planning Board's role in policy development could be better utilized.

4.9. Reduce the minimum lot size in Industrial Districts from 5 acres to 2 acres.

The Town Wide Planning Committee voted to classify this item as **completed on 10/3/2006.**

4.10. Undertake a thorough revision of the Zoning Bylaws to insure consistency with the Plan. (with the Board of Selectmen and the ZBA)

The modifications that we are proposing are drafted with this goal in mind. A more thorough revision will take time and resources.