



TOWN OF SHREWSBURY
RICHARD D. CARNEY MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING
100 MAPLE AVENUE
SHREWSBURY, MASSACHUSETTS 01545-5338

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Selectmen
Kevin Mizikar, Town Manager
Kristen Las, Assistant Town Manager

FROM: Bernard Cahill, Town Planner
Department of Planning and Economic Development

SUBJECT: Town Center Zoning

DATE: October 3, 2019

The purpose of this memo is to inform the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen about the on-going efforts of the Planning and Economic Development Department to create a zoning district for Shrewsbury's town center.

Brief History of Recent Town Center Projects

Shrewsbury's Master Plan was completed in 2016 and an entire section was dedicated to the town center and its revitalization. Participants in the master planning process, at public forums or in response to public surveys, repeatedly named the enhancement of the Town's center as one of their primary goals. During the past two years, the Town of Shrewsbury has gone through a myriad of planning exercises related to the Town Center, including a 2018 parking study of the town center, a town center visioning and master planning project completed in May 2019, and a town center wayfinding and branding project that began in Summer 2019.

Using the findings of these studies and their recommendations, the Planning Department is in the process of drafting new zoning bylaw language to create a traditional New England village-style zoning district for the town center. The draft zoning is anticipated to be completed by mid-October. Once a working draft is available, the Planning Department intends to move forward with a community engagement process (see attached plan) to present, vet and discuss potential zoning changes in the town center (see attached map) with the goal of bringing the proposed changes to the Zoning Bylaw and Zoning Map to the Annual Town Meeting in May 2020.

Shrewsbury 2016 Master Plan

While recent planning reports prescribe a way forward for the town center, the impetus to revisit and rethink zoning in the town center began with the Shrewsbury 2016 Master

Plan. The Master Plan laid out several distinct tasks for Town officials, committees and boards to pursue. These tasks included:

- Goal LU4: Strengthen and preserve Shrewsbury's town center.
 - Policy LU4.1: Maintain and enhance the character of Shrewsbury's historic town center by promoting appropriate development and redevelopment.
 - a. Review the existing zoning bylaw to ensure that the remaining traditional features of the town center remain intact and future infill is complementary to the compact style of the area.
- Goal LU4.2: Promote the town center as a pedestrian-friendly shopping and service area and a neighborhood gathering place.
 - LU4.2.a Conduct a design study of the town center to help focus ideas and develop a clear vision for the area. Through the study, determine the limits of the town center and its sphere of influence. Consider making recommendations for managing parking, building design guidelines, connectivity to nearby uses (Town Hall or Prospect Park), streetscape improvements, wayfinding, and historic preservation.
 - LU4.2.b Explore the interest in developing a business association and the feasibility of an independent organization that promotes the town center as a cultural center for Shrewsbury.

Outline of the Community Engagement Process

The Planning Department has drafted a strategy and timeline that it believes will allow sufficient opportunity for town center and community-wide residents and businesses to weigh in on the proposed rezoning.

- October 2019 – Presentation and Feedback from BOS
- November 2019 – 1st Public Forum
- December 2019 – 2nd Public Forum
- January 2020 – Stakeholder meeting with Shrewsbury town center Association, Historic District Commission, Shrewsbury Development Corporation
- February 2020 – Presentation of Findings to BOS
- February 2020 – Request for Articles submitted to Board of Selectmen
- March 5, 2020 Planning Board Discuss Article at regular PB meeting
- April 2, 2020 – 1st Planning Board Public Hearing
- April 2020 – Public Hearings with Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee
- May 7, 2020 – 2nd Planning Board Public Hearing
- May 2020 – Annual Town Meeting

I would be happy to discuss any portion of this memo or answer any questions.

Bernard Cahill
Town Planner



TOWN OF SHREWSBURY

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN CENTER ZONING DISTRICT

Date Issued: October 3, 2019

Project Overview

During the past two years, the Town of Shrewsbury has gone through a myriad of planning exercises related to the town center, including a 2018 parking study of the town center, a town center visioning and master planning project that was completed in May 2019, and a town center wayfinding and branding project that began in Summer 2019.

Based upon these studies, the Planning Department and the Town have decided to move forward with a community engagement process to present, vet and discuss potential zoning changes in the town center (see attached map). The goal is to bring requested any changes to the Zoning Bylaw and Zoning Map to the Annual Town Meeting in May 2020.

Purpose of Engagement

The purpose of the strategy is to include public input in the zoning revision process in the town center and to provide a wide range of opportunities to inform the public about proposed zoning changes.

Community input and involvement are necessary to the project because of the geographic reach of the proposed zoning changes and the immediate impact such changes would have on town center businesses and residents. It is important that the voices of these community stakeholders be heard and also that the general public have the opportunity to voice their opinions about the proposed changes.

Successful engagement would include high turnout of citizens at public forums and in response to public surveys. Ultimately, community engagement could be considered successful if it leads to broad public support for the creation of a new zoning district for the town center and the specific zoning changes therein.

List of Stakeholders and Potential Concerns & Issues

There are currently two organized groups in Shrewsbury that advocate for economic, social and cultural concerns of town center residents and businesses: the Historic District Commission and the private Town Center Association. Due to their roles in supporting and overseeing the local economy and land-use across all of Shrewsbury, the Shrewsbury Development Corporation and the Planning Board would also be considered stakeholders in the rezoning of the town center.

The project may raise concerns from some stakeholders due to the potential for vertical in-fill of sites and an increase in residential density, possible changes to parking requirements, and other issues that may arise were new zoning for the town center to be considered at Town Meeting.

Education regarding “top of shop” or “up zoning” will also need to be a part of public forums to explain these professional planning definitions, their intent, and the outcome of adopting these zoning uses.

Resources, Opportunities & Scale of Engagement

Resources:

- Financing for this initiative will come from the Planning Department’s budget that covers salaries over the course of regular working hours as well as extra or overtime for events such as:
 - Evening Meetings and Forums (# of meetings TBD)
 - Presentations to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee
 - Staff Time for Presentation at Town Meeting
- Advertising Costs for the Events and Planning Board Hearings in preparation for Town Meeting
- Local partners in the process will include the Shrewsbury Town Center Association, Historic District Commission, Shrewsbury Development Corporation, Shrewsbury Planning Board, Shrewsbury Board of Selectmen, local business owners and residents.
- Other municipal partners will include the Building Department, the Engineering and Highway Divisions as well as the Town Manager’s Office.

Opportunities and Challenges:

- The biggest challenge will most likely be fostering a significant turnout of residents to public forums and informational meetings in order to obtain feedback from a large cross-section of the public.
- The rezoning initiative presents an opportunity for the Planning Department to establish new relationships with town center residents and businesses that it has otherwise not engaged with through other means.

Scale of Engagement:

- Due to the zoning language for the Town Center District already having been drafted, the scale of the public engagement will be moderate in nature. Stakeholder opinions will be taken into account with the overall goal of establishing a traditional New England Village zoning district for the town center.

Messaging

Community Leader Interests and Concerns:

- Board of Selectmen
The members of the Board of Selectmen are anticipated to be interested in maintaining zoning in the town center that would not overburden current business or landowners and would subsequently provide future developers with incentives to invest in underutilized and/or underdeveloped lots.
- Planning Board
 - The Board would be interested in seeing new zoning implemented that abides by planning best-practices for village zoning districts and that creates clear processes for implementation.

- Historic District Commission (HDC)
 - It is anticipated that the primary concerns of HDC will be around the preservation of historic properties and implementing zoning that ensures any future development compliments the style and architecture of older buildings in the town center.
- Shrewsbury Development Corporation (SDC)
 - The SDC’s concerns are anticipated to be around new zoning that fosters development that is economically beneficial to the Town and financially viable over the long-term.
- Shrewsbury Town Center Association (STCA)
 - STCA interests are anticipated to be around creating a zoning district that will encourage a balance between cultural and economic investments in the town center that enhance the character and functionality of the area.

Message Delivery:

The primary means to inform the public of the proposed zoning changes will be through the use of Town websites, social media accounts, and the distribution of printed fact sheets.

Community outreach is expected to include two public forums, a meeting with community stakeholders, and solicitation for feedback on the Town Website, Facebook page and Twitter feed.

Timeline & Critical Dates

Oct '19	Oct '19	Nov '19	Dec '19	Jan '20	Feb '20	Apr '20	Apr '20	May '20	May '20
Draft Zoning	Present ation to BOS	First Public Forum	Second Public Forum	Mtg w/ STCA, HDC, SDC	Request to BOS	1 st PB Hearing	BOS Finance	2 nd PB Hearing	ATM

Master Plan & Town Visioning Report

Shrewsbury’s 2016 Master Plan states the following as its goals for the town center:

- Goal LU4: Strengthen and preserve Shrewsbury’s Town Center.
 - Policy LU4.1: Maintain and enhance the character of Shrewsbury’s historic town center by promoting appropriate development and redevelopment.
 - a. Review the existing zoning bylaw to ensure that the remaining traditional features of the town center remain intact and future infill is complementary to the compact style of the area.
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 - LU4.2.a Conduct a design study of the town center to help focus ideas and develop a clear vision for the area. Through the study, determine the limits of the town center and its sphere

of influence. Consider making recommendations for managing parking, building design guidelines, connectivity to nearby uses (Town Hall or Prospect Park), streetscape improvements, wayfinding, and historic preservation.

- LU4.2.b Explore the interest in developing a business association and the feasibility of an independent organization that promotes the town center as a cultural center for Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury's 2019 Town Center Visioning Report states that, "Amending the zoning in the town center should be the highest priority strategy to emerge from this report," and recommends that the Town take the following steps:

- Develop a comprehensive zoning package that establishes a new Town Center District that includes such changes as:
 - Introducing design guidelines for new development
 - Allowing a mix of allowable "human-scale" uses such as "top of the shop" housing
 - Prescribing a framework for designing the frontage space between a building's façade and the edge of pavement on a street.
 - Changing parking requirement to allow for greater flexibility, public lots and shared agreements
 - Establishing base requirements and design standards for signage
 - Updating permitting processes to create certainty and predictability for developers