



Central Village Forum

Tuesday, June 26, 2012 / 5:00 to 7:00 pm / Macomber House (930 Main Road)



Approximately 30 people participated in this forum including members of the Planning Board, town officials, local businesspersons, Central Village landowners, and members of the general public.

Planning Board Members: John Montano, Chairman, David Emilita, Vice-Chairman, Jim Whitin, Clerk, Elaine Ostroff, Member, Bill Raus, Member

Staff: Sarah Raposa, Town Planner

Attendees:

Betsy Acheson, R	Selena Howard, C	Gail H Rodrigues, C
Don Buss, R	Lucy Keefe, C	Jan Hall, B
Joanne Kendall, C	TJ Butler, B	Shelley Cohen, B
Bill Kendall, C	Beth Aguiar, R	Matt Cohen, B
Joan Wood, B	Sam Aguiar, R	Catherine Williams, C
Jim Wood, B	Bill Napolitano, SRPEDD	Denise Squillante, B
Simone Conlon, B	Nancy Burkeholder, C	Wayne Sunderland, C
Sybil Burba, R	Judy Beavan, C	Pat Brost, B
Carole Russell, R	Richard Spirlet, BOS	John Branco, C
Peter Haley, R	Elizabeth Rulon, C	Jon Alden, B
Sandy Conaty, SRPEDD	Carl Taber, B	Marc Dion, Press

Designations: B = Business Person, R = Central Village Resident, C = Community Member



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Agenda:

5:00 to 5:15 pm – Meet and Greet

5:15 to 5:30 pm – Introductions

5:30 to 5:50 – Group Exercise: “Perspective and Preferences”

5:50 to 6:20 – Breakout Groups: “Opportunities and Challenges”

6:20 to 6:30 – Group Reports

6:30 to 7:00 – Wrap-up and Next Steps

Introductions – Planning in Central Village has been a priority for the Planning Board for several years. Recent grants from SRPEDD to refine existing land use regulations throughout Westport based on special objectives or distinct characteristics of the areas like the Science & Technology Overlay District, Narrows Area Planning and also Central Village Planning.

In March 2012 the Town received a grant award for technical assistance to complete a zoning bylaw specific to Central Village. A bylaw was prepared but unfinished in 2008. The purpose of this new grant was to assist with developing a Central Village Zoning District zoning bylaw that would aid compact "village" development in their Central Village. Recent events inspired the PB to make this process more iterative – a chance to reconnect with folks in Central Village and meet with the public.

Westport has three main zoning districts: Residential/Agricultural, Business, and Unrestricted. The same business district regulations are the same for all areas including the entire length of Route 6, most of Route 177, and Main Road/Central Village. Current dimensional regulations require:

- Minimum lot size of 60,000 sf (approximately 1 ½ acres)
- Frontage along the road of 150' linear feet
- Front setback – 25'
- Side Setback – 10'
- Rear setback – 6'

Larger lot sizes provide for onsite water and wastewater facilities (Public health and environmental protections). However, there is no connection between lot size and the setback requirements or creativity or flexibility in physical site design (building layout, parking spaces, landscaping).



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The Planning Board has undertaken several initiatives over the past few years regarding Central Village:

- Master Plan (2004)
- Central Village Decentralized Water & Wastewater Study (2006)
- Central Village Guidelines adopted at ATM (2006)
- Priority Development & Protection Areas (SRPEDD, 2008)

Master Plan (2004) – Contains multiple objectives calling for alternative dimensional and design requirements to maintain the character of Central Village

- **Objective 2:5: Reinforce character of villages. They provide a different and desirable development from traditional rural & emerging suburban patterns.**
 - 2.5.1. Adopt Central Village Plan; study plan options for other villages.
 - 2.5.2. Adopt zoning that allows continuation of existing village density within specified village areas.
- **Objective 1.2: Manage Town-owned land and resources to better protect open spaces.**
 - 1.2.b. Manage and increase public spaces in Central Village for community use.
- **Objective 2.2: Plan for circulation as part of planning for future growth.**
 - 2.2.c. Coordinate streetscape design improvement with Village Center zoning to encourage traffic calming, pedestrian-friendly villages.
 - 2.2.d. Sequentially implement Village Center zoning in the Central Village, Head of Westport, and Westport Point.

Central Village Decentralized Water & Wastewater Study (2006) –

- Purpose: evaluation of decentralized water and wastewater alternatives for Central Village
- Goal: to create a vibrant business and cultural center, provide affordable housing, and maintain the historic character of Central Village
- Focus: examine the alternatives available to provide the water and wastewater infrastructure necessary to support increased growth and mixed-use development
- Results of the report (further research required):
 - Some sort of decentralized wastewater treatment required, could be system serving all of CV, multiple, private I/A systems serving clusters of parcels, or traditional reliance on Title 5 systems
 - Public water supply or traditional private, on-site wells required



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Central Village Guidelines adopted at ATM (2006) – Adopted at Annual Town Meeting in 2006 along with Guidelines for development along Route 6

Consistent with recommendations in the 2004 citizen-written Master Plan, the Planning Board, in cooperation with other interested groups, has begun an in depth study of the Central Village. These guidelines are a step towards achieving the Master Plan vision for compact mixed-use growth in the village. The Master Plan endorses the creation of a place residents would want to be - a place that is safe and easy to access by car, foot or bike; a place that has a lively mix of uses; a place with thriving local businesses offering goods and services; a place that promotes interactions among residents; and a place with high quality development.

The achievement of this vision will require cooperation among the public, private and non-profit sectors, changes to zoning, investments in infrastructure, and the leveraging of public investment with private funds.

These guidelines provide the basis for implementation in phases over the coming years. *Please refer to the 'Perspectives and Preferences' section of this document for a list of the Guidelines for Development in the Central Village.*

Priority Development & Protection Areas (SRPEDD, 2008) – The report, funded by the South Coast Rail Project defines areas in Westport that are capable of handling more development versus those that contain environmental or cultural features that should be preserved. The report found that Central Village is a combination of Priority Protection and Development Areas and is identified on the map as a “Revitalization Area.”

Growth and Development in Central Village – Between Westport Commons and Adamsville Road, there are a mix of uses, such as businesses (retail and office), residences, farms, and civic uses. Since Site Plan Approval was adopted in 2006, the Planning Board estimates:

- Over 300 parking spaces
- 78 residential units
- 10,000 sf office space
- 10,000 sf retail space
- Minimum \$14 million in investments

The Planning Board wants to revive prior Central Village planning endeavors and amend the existing land use and design regulations. The Board is sensitive to the reactions to the sidewalk proposal and implemented alternative design and sees this process as a chance to revisit the fundamental planning process before proposing bylaw amendments at a future town meeting.

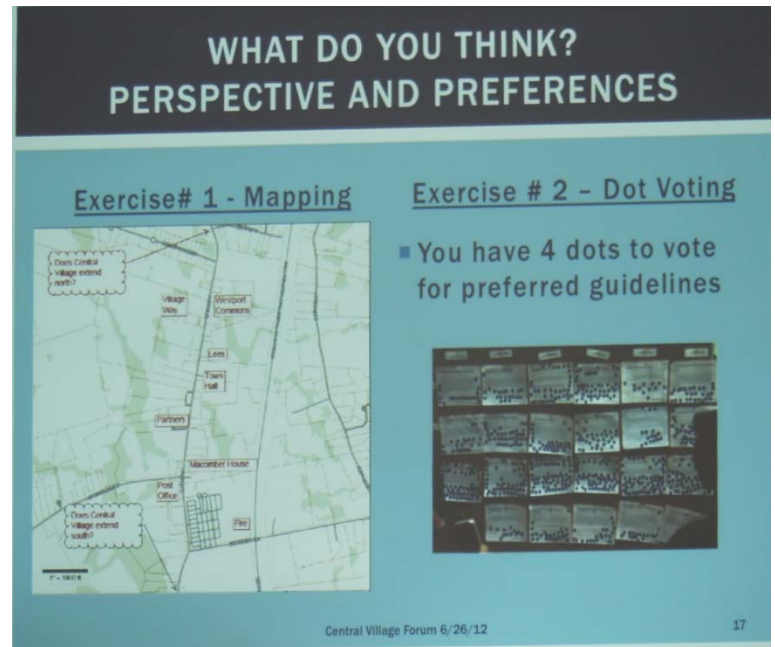


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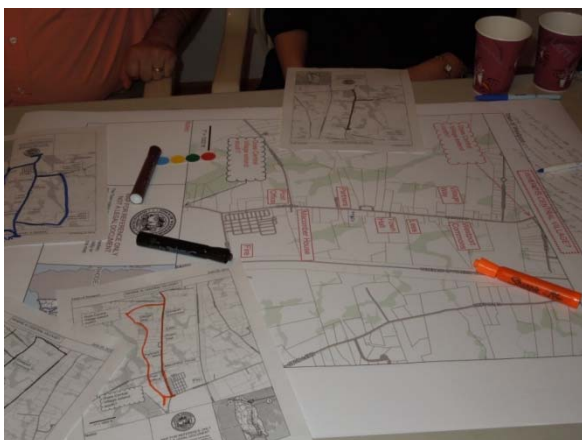
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Perspective and Preferences – Participants were asked to identify where they believe Central Village to be. The majority of respondents indicated the southern terminus of Central Village to be located at Hix Bridge Road. However, the Northern extent was indicated between Westport Commons, Brookwood Drive, and Kirby Road.

The participants were asked to identify and vote for their preferences regarding the town adopted Guidelines for Development in the Central Village. The purpose of this exercise was to not only frame the event and familiarize participants with what this Planning Board initiative, but also to let the participants feel comfortable expressing their points of view.



The top ranking initiatives promote a concept for development that integrates design standards for pedestrian friendly districts and neighborhoods that mix commercial, civic, cultural, educational, and recreational activities with open spaces and homes.





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Guidelines for Development in the Central Village	Score
1. Recognize 3 basic segments of the Central Village corridor and develop standards based on the character and function of each segment. These are: the north "core"; the historic area between Adamsville and Hix Bridge Roads; and "South Central Village" extending approximately 1000' south of Hix Bridge Road.	1
2. Develop a vibrant mixed-use area centered on the existing and growing cluster of civic, residential and neighborhood businesses in the Central Village.	3
3. Draw new customers to existing businesses by improving the physical environment and increasing the diversity of services provided, and making it easier for nearby residents to use the Village.	4
4. Plan for infrastructure improvements including: traffic calming, roadway improvements, improve street connectivity, pedestrian safety, landscaping, and future localized water and wastewater.	16
5. Create a walkable area that fosters interactions and facilitates meeting multiple needs in one trip	16
6. As changes are made to infrastructure capacity, continue to coordinate development densities with infrastructure.	0
7. Develop design standards for building orientation, mixed-use buildings, parking lots, driveways, landscaping, amenities, and signage to unify appearance in each of these areas. Include standard that respect the historic character of the area and promote traditional design features.	20
8. Use the arts to cultivate civic life and provide an economic stimulus.	6
9. Produce high-quality and varied public spaces.	4
10. Engage the business community in the planning of these areas and pursue the leveraging of private investment with public investment in roadway and public area amenities.	10
11. Adopt Site Plan Review to ensure major new or re-developed sites produce commercial (and other large scale) development that has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe access and circulation; • Buffering from neighbors; • Compatible form; and • High-quality parking areas, stormwater management, and landscaping that are designed to meet recognized construction, design, and environmental standards. 	5



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Opportunities and Challenges – Participants broke out into small groups with two Planning Board representatives as facilitators. The groups discussed general ideas in terms of challenges and opportunities for Central Village, such as:

- What makes a “good place” in Central Village?
- What do you love?
- What would you change if you could?
- What are the issues?



Results from Group 1 –

Challenges: Parking, traffic speed, getting in and out of Cumberland Farms, getting out of the Apothecary, temporary signage, public water supply, lack of housing, limited open land, narrow roads, bike riders riding two abreast

Opportunities: Place for children to play, gathering place “coffee shop”, bike racks, public parking, places to walk safely, more housing, more communication, more specific guidelines to avoid personal preferences, keeping agriculture and animals

What do we like?: The village the way it is; It has grown incrementally; no chain stores, all individual enterprises; diverse types of businesses; how to preserve the quaintness; We’re natural, “green”, stonewalls; Open fields and cows

Why do we want to change?: Like it the way it is; The way it is now is not the way it was; Regulations needed to keep the character

Results from Group 2 –

The lack of infrastructure protects Central Village (and also North Westport) from intense development; Commercial land is too valuable for houses; Need for civic buildings and space; Are there enough people to support businesses; Incremental changes in development; Phasing of projects; Seasonal versus year round businesses



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Results from Group 3 –

What makes for a good Central Village: slower traffic and crosswalks, town green (locations were discussed amongst the group but not shared), parking behind town hall with walkway

What do you love about Central Village: The charm and grace of the Village; How old homes have been converted to into businesses and the old Cape-style homes that provide residences in the Village



What would you change in Central Village: Increase walkability for safety, more varied businesses, more destination stores and restaurant, more cultural amenities.

Challenges: lack of publically owned property, no crosswalks, no sidewalks, no historic town hall plaque on the original town hall (St. John's)

Discussion

- Postcards sent noticing the Forum were appreciated
- Mrs. Wood likes Central Village the way it is and it sounds like the Planning Board is trying to change it. Why do we need more development and gathering space? Chairman Montano wondered if we could define “the way it is” and recognize that the way it is now is not the way it was six years ago and certainly not the way it was twenty years ago. Wood acknowledges that the new businesses are very nice but should we feel threatened by new businesses? Montano stated that the Planning Board doesn’t solicit business such as the new bank or medical facility, but market forces do that. Additionally, it’s been fortunate that the businesses that have located to Central Village have been mindful of the character even though there are no design guidelines in place regulation character. He reiterated the idea of deconstruction the idea of “the way it was” and identify the qualities associated i.e. historic buildings, size, density, landscaping, so that we can ensure new growth has these qualities.
- Civic space – Who would use it? What would people do there?





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- Betsy Acheson reminded the forum that Mrs. Trip donated the old school for a senior center and people didn't care for the idea at the time. Now the senior center is a very busy part of the community.
- Circulation – Chairman Montano discussed traffic congestion and curb cuts as they relate to the Cumberland Farms as well as circulation integration in Site Plan Approval.
- Seasonality – What can we do to facilitate traffic to businesses on the off-season?
- Language – The terms zoning or strip malls shouldn't be frightening
- Water/Wastewater – Seen as the limiting factor in controlling development but new technologies are emerging which could increase densities outside of local regulations.
- Franchises – The Forum discussed franchises and controls that could be put in place to limit such formula-based businesses.
- Business District – Discussion of business zoning and the possibilities for creativity in future zoning in Westport

Next Steps

The Planning Board is working with SRPEDD to create a 6-month program which will amend the original scope of work (to provide a new zoning bylaw for Central Village) to the deliverable being a visioning session which will be the primary tool for the Planning Board to reflect the community's goals.

The Board will invite the public to meet again this summer to review results of the forum and build upon this work to identify priorities, goals and objectives. The Board anticipates holding a visioning session in October where specific use and development components of Central Village will be identified and whether the characteristics are present or absent today.

This information will be used to provide the framework for amendments to the zoning bylaws, site plan approval regulations, or provide for a set of design standards particular to Central Village.

Elaine Ostroff reiterated that the purpose of the meeting is to start to hear from people at an early stage and not to jump to conclusions that the Planning Board has an agenda. There will be follow up meetings as we move forward from this preliminary meeting. Ostroff stressed that the Planning Board is open to more discourse and to contact with any questions.



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Contact

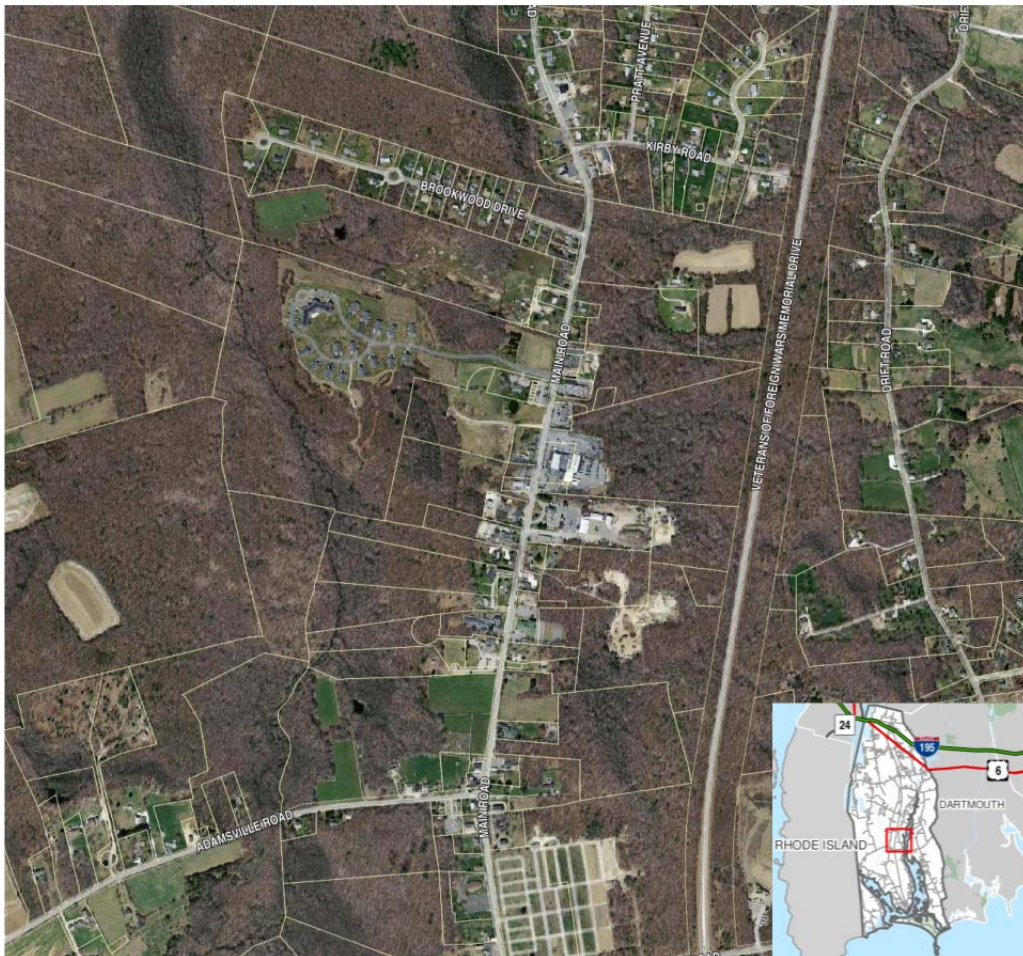
A collection of relevant information is posted on the Planning Board's webpage:

<http://www.westport-ma.com/planning>

- [Rt 6 + Cental Village Guidelines ATM 2006](#)
- [Decentralized Water and Wastewater Study 2006](#)
- [Town of Westport Priority Development and Priority Protection Areas Report \(2008\)](#)
- [Master Plan \(2004\)](#)

Send questions or comments to:

(508) 636-1037 or planning@westport-ma.gov



CENTRAL VILLAGE, WESTPORT