



Seekonk Massachusetts

Seekonk Master Plan Volume II

Issues, Goals and Recommendations

April 12, 2012



Table of Contents

Introduction.....1

Land Use Element2

Economic Development Element.....13

Sustainable Energy Element.....23

Public Facilities and Services Element31

Transportation Element37

Introduction

Based on a 15-month planning process, the 2012 Master Plan presents a cohesive, publicly-vetted strategy for Seekonk's future. Balancing the desire to maintain the Town's classic rural charm with the need to economically sustain the Town into the 21st century, the 2012 Master Plan sets goals, objectives and actions unique to these complex issues in Seekonk. Public input was collected through a variety of means, the most significant being: 1) interviews with municipal officials and key stakeholders; 2) public forum discussion; and 3) a Town-wide survey. The following sections within this volume of the Master Plan begin with a review of public input, and then articulate the formative issues and policy framework that will shape decision making for individual elements. This framework is then used to list objectives and actions for meeting these challenges.

The document addresses a total of eight elements within the 2012 Master Plan; however three of these (Housing, Natural Features and Resources, and Open Space and Recreation) are incorporated by reference to separate planning documents. These documents include the Town of Seekonk Housing Production Plan and the Town of Seekonk Open Space and Recreation Plan. The eight Master Plan elements include:

- **Land Use** (Chapter 1);
- **Economic Development** (Chapter 2);
- **Sustainable Energy** (Chapter 3);
- **Public Facilities and Services** (Chapter 4);
- **Transportation** (Chapter 5);
- **Natural Features and Resources** (incorporated by reference);
- **Open Space and Recreation** (incorporated by reference); and
- **Housing** (incorporated by reference).

It is important to understand that while these key areas of community development are addressed in separate sections, many interconnections can be made between the elements and must be acknowledged. For example, transportation priorities and patterns have a direct impact on sustainable energy goals and land use decisions can obviously affect economic development initiatives. In order to limit redundancy across elements, but maintain the importance of an individual action to more than one element, several action items in one element may specifically reference action items in another.

This volume of the Master Plan builds on the foundation and existing conditions outlined in **Volume I. Seekonk Today**. The third volume, **Volume III. Seekonk Master Plan Implementation Guide: the "Little Blue Book"** summarizes the actions proposed within this volume and identifies target implementation years and responsible parties.

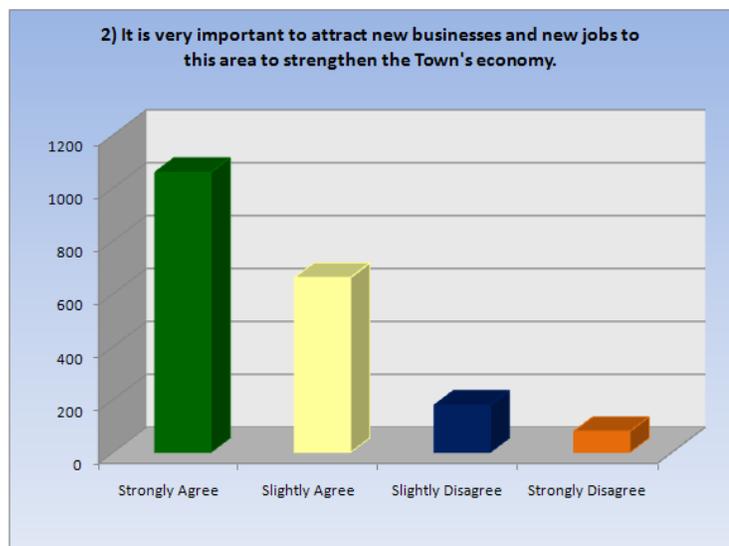
The Land Use Element

Land use is perhaps the most fundamental and “integrated” element to any community Master Plan since the policies and rules governing land impact all of the other plan elements in a very direct way. For example, land developed for commercial and industrial use can promote a Town’s goals for economic development, land developed for residential use can meet housing goals, and land conservation policies will affect a Town’s ability to meet their open space and recreation goals. However, it is important to not just consider the intended use of the land, but the manner in which the land is developed for this use. The rate of growth, the neighborhood and environmental context, transportation networks, and architectural styles are all elements of the land use discussion demonstrating that a community must develop policies not only for what it wants to have for land use, but also how it plans to get there.

Land Use and the Public Survey

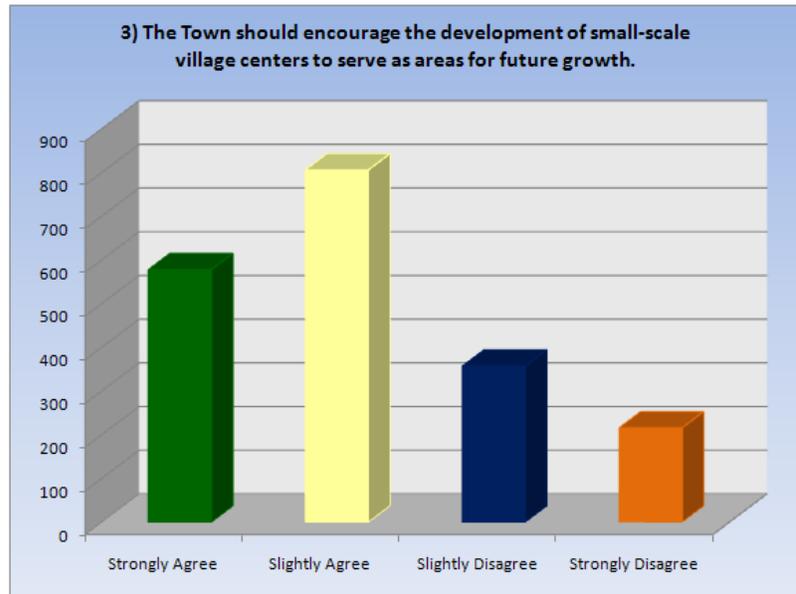
Public opinions regarding land use in Seekonk were collected as part of the Master Plan Update public survey effort. Some of the consenting opinions included respondents’ views on residential and commercial land use. With regard to residential land use, about 90% of residents agreed (and over half strongly agreed) that the Town should actively manage the rate of residential growth throughout Seekonk. Over 60% of residents felt that the Town should plan new neighborhoods with larger lots to provide each house with ample space even if it means more land will be used to build these neighborhoods. While this response contradicts some of the majority sentiments regarding environmental protection and fiscal stability (see discussion of sprawl later in this element), it speaks strongly to a desire to maintain a rural character in many areas of the community.

Speaking to commercial land use, almost 90% of residents agreed (and over half strongly agreed) that it is very important to attract new businesses and new jobs to the area to strengthen the Town’s economy. However, when residents were asked specifically about commercial growth, only half indicated that commercial growth was necessary for the health of the local economy, and over a third felt that the Town must preserve the special qualities of the community by limiting commercial growth. These sentiments acknowledge the need for a strategic approach to commercial development that concentrates these activities in carefully selected nodes of development.



With regard to industrial land use, according to the survey, the Town was divided. About 40% of residents felt that the Town should try to establish alternative uses and attract new tenants within its existing industrial zoned properties; 35% thought the Town should try to attract and maintain tenants within its existing industrial zoned properties; and 25% had no opinion one way or another. The division of opinion reflects a need to gather information and develop analyses that will help the Town set a course for future industrial development.

The Town was also divided on thoughts regarding mixed use development (mixes of residential and commercial). Half of those that had an opinion on mixed use development thought the Town should continue to encourage mixed use development to allow small-scale, “neighborhood-friendly” businesses to be located in appropriate residential areas, while the other half thought the Town should discourage mixed use developments. Despite this, about 70% of residents agree that the Town should encourage the development of small-scale village centers to serve as areas for future growth.



Land Use and the Public Forum

Land use was also discussed at the second Master Plan Update public forum on November 1, 2011. Discussions were focused on what facilitators called “strategic planning areas” in the community. These areas were prioritized for discussion primarily on the likelihood that they would undergo significant change over the next 10 to 20 years based on market pressures and/or existing zoning. The three strategic planning areas examined as part of the discussion included rural areas, village areas, and the Route 6 corridor. Residents spoke about the perceived strengths and weaknesses in these areas as well as their future visions or goals for them.

“Rural” Areas

Many participants at the forum were passionate about Seekonk’s rural character and values. They identified farmland, conservation land, and quiet scenic roads as strengths in these areas. Having yards, and connections to the land over generations were also noted as strengths. Others recognized a link between rural areas and natural resource protection, such as wildlife protection, water resource protection, and air quality.

Participants also discussed some of the challenges in rural areas. Some residents felt that many roads and intersections were dangerous to walk, and that sidewalks would be helpful in these areas. Lack of street lights was also identified as a barrier to walkability. Many liked the current character of the rural areas, and were concerned that these areas were vulnerable to encroachment and development. They suggested that stronger land protection, zoning, and enforcement may be needed to protect the rural land. Community and senior services were highlighted as needs within rural areas. To fulfill this need, participants suggested the development of a senior/community center, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and independent living facilities.

“Village” Areas

There was thoughtful discussion regarding development at Baker’s Corners in North Seekonk at the intersection of Pine Street, Newman Avenue and Central Avenue and Luther’s Corners in South Seekonk at the intersection of Fall River Avenue and County Street. Most residents enjoy the mix of uses in these areas, and identified the potential for these to be walkable areas. One resident indicated that the vacant buildings at Luther’s Corners present an opportunity to develop a mix of uses in this area.

Despite the potential, many barriers were identified for mixed use growth and pedestrian mobility at both Baker’s Corners and Luther’s Corners. The most notable obstacle was traffic. Many residents indicated that the current traffic conditions in these areas prohibited them from being pedestrian-oriented. Some suggested that the current traffic pattern fragments the village, at least in Baker’s Corners. There is also a lack of pedestrian connections between the areas within the larger area identified as Baker’s Corners. In addition to traffic, other challenges noted by residents include the unattractiveness of the buildings, signage and streetscape. Some residents also suggested that buildings that were set back from the road within these villages made them less accessible.

Despite the barriers, when discussing the future of Seekonk’s village areas, residents envisioned mixed use villages that are walkable, attractive, green, and have amenities such as benches where people can sit and gather. Participants also prioritized different types and scales of housing associated with the villages to attract people of all ages and income levels.

The “Route 6 Corridor”

The discussion at the public forum showed that the strengths of the Route 6 corridor include access to local shopping opportunities, jobs, and tax revenue for the Town. The weaknesses mainly centered on the way in which development had been designed and constructed. Many felt that the area is unattractive and that there is a lack of connectivity between stores. Some residents made recommendations for the area to be more walkable, or to provide a central parking area with shuttle service to and in-between shopping areas. One resident suggested a parking lot at the old cinema, which could serve as a hub for accessing public transportation to the villages and Route 6.

When considering the future of the Route 6 corridor, varying views were expressed by participants. One vision prioritized fewer parking spaces with more landscaping. Another focused almost exclusively on a strong employment base as the ultimate vision for this area. A mix of business uses on the western end, to include not only big box retail, but medical offices and other office uses was a vision for one resident. A few residents prioritized the idea of having a central parking area for the future of the Route 6 area. Despite the variety of priorities for the area, all participants shared the overwhelming sentiment that the corridor should remain a center for commerce in Seekonk.

Formative Issues and Goals

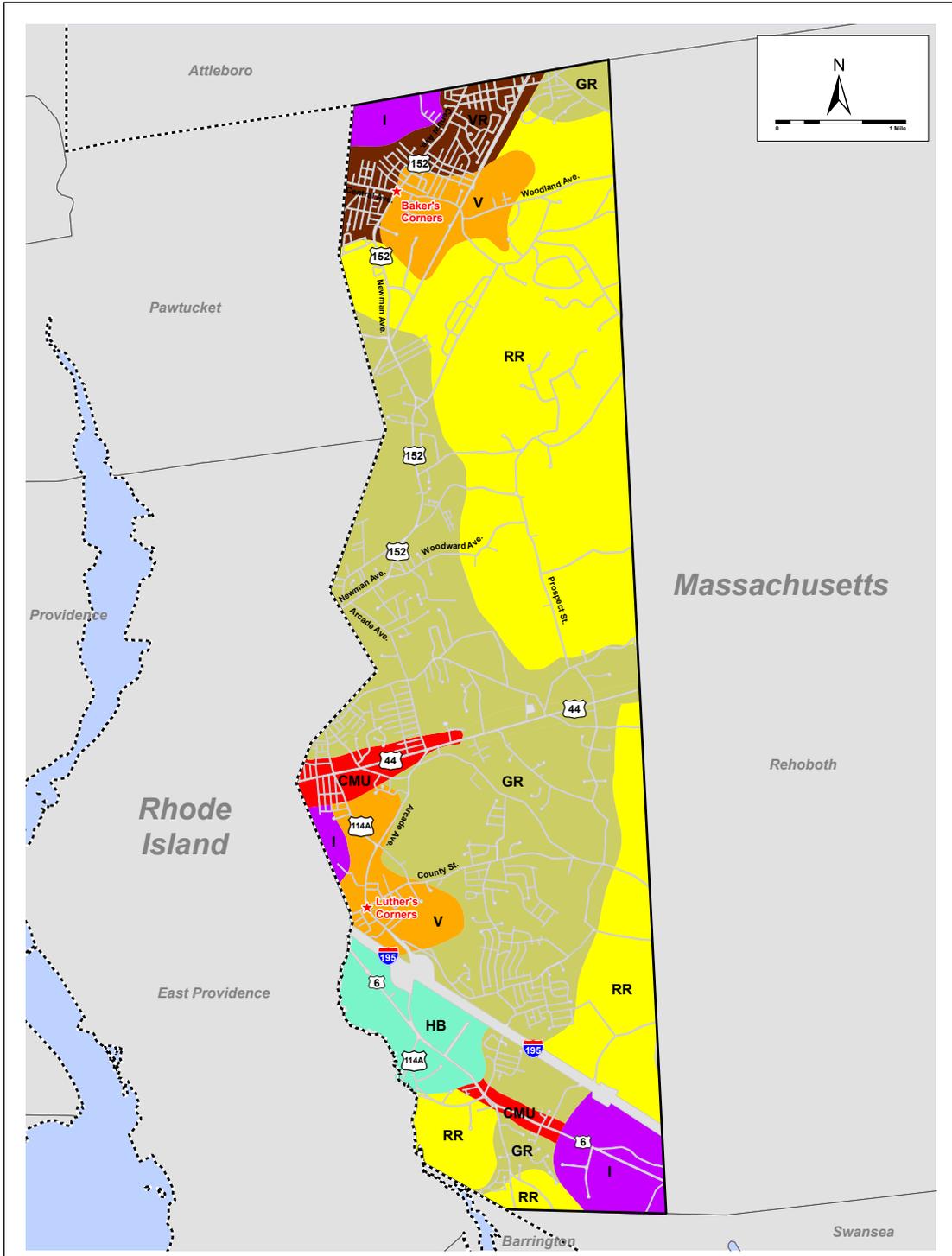
Growth and Sustainability. The pattern in which land is developed has a direct measurable impact on the resources needed to sustain that growth. For example, lower density residential growth extending into undeveloped areas, often referred to as “sprawl”, requires larger investment in roads and utility infrastructure than dense development where roads and utility infrastructure may already exist. Sprawl development puts a higher demand on public services, and can also negatively impact water resources, wildlife habitat, and agricultural resources. This is because sprawl development requires a larger amount of space, and creates higher levels of impervious surface per unit of housing than more compact forms of mixed use development.

In addition to the fiscal impacts associated with sprawl development, there is a critical link between how land is used and the resulting transportation options that can occur. In bedroom communities like Seekonk, the expansive residential areas require people to drive further to reach their destinations. This pattern of development, coupled with current land use policies that separate land uses categories into different areas, has transformed the community character of many New England towns from pedestrian-oriented to automobile-oriented communities. In discussion and surveys associated with the Master Plan Update, there was a resounding interest in alternative means of transportation, whether by bicycle, on foot, or through the use of public transportation. In order for these alternatives to be realized, Seekonk must actively pursue policies that concentrate and mix development in critical areas that will serve as “nodes” for alternative transportation options. Locating stores, restaurants, schools, recreation, homes and other land uses near to each other (as was done in historic New England downtowns) can provide the focal points and “critical mass” necessary to leverage transportation and infrastructure investment toward increased mobility for all residents.

Sustainable energy goals are also impacted by sprawl style development patterns. The creation of more roads and utility lines require more energy. Sprawl style development also leads to an increase in transportation-related energy consumption. If more people are able to choose to bike or walk to destinations instead of taking a personal vehicle, the number of vehicle miles traveled can be reduced thereby reducing the number of gallons of gasoline consumed.

Land Use Patterns and Opportunities

As part of developing the Land Use Element, the Town revisited the development of a Future Land Use Map (FLUM). This map is meant to guide the development of future policies relative



Legend

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| State Boundaries | Commercial Mixed Use | General Residential |
| Town Boundaries | Industrial | Rural Residential |
| Town of Seekonk | Highway Business | Village Residential |
| | Village | |

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**Town of Seekonk
Future Land Use Map**

Date: 12/6/2011 Figure

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to land use decisions. The new map developed for Seekonk is designed to be a conceptual land use framework that will shape more concrete decisions relative to zoning, investment in infrastructure, the provision of facilities, economic development initiatives, conservation and recreation priorities, and transportation improvements. As such, the various areas delineated on the map are not to be viewed as “hard and fast” boundaries, but more as general focus areas that can continue to develop toward the vision for each area as articulated below. The land use designations in no way replace existing regulations or programs already in place and do not remove any of the rights of property owners to continue using individual parcels in their current form. However, the policies developed for these different areas may eventually lead to the revision of local regulations for land use in order to achieve the goals of this element.

Rural Residential



The Rural Residential lands identified on the FLUM are those areas of Seekonk that most notably contribute to the rural landscapes identified by many residents as central to Seekonk’s community character. These landscapes include scenic roadways, agricultural uses, sparse residential development, preserved land, and large recreational uses. The Caratunk Preserve, Pawtucket and Ledgemont Country Clubs, Prospect Street, and Four Town Farm are a few of the notable areas within this designation that provide valuable scenic, recreational, and open space resources to the community. Land use goals for these areas will focus on the preservation of these landscapes while providing tools for property owners to realize the full value of their land. Where new development does occur, design will be focused on reducing impacts to the scenic quality of the area, the incorporation of open space, and the protection of environmental resources.

General Residential

These areas of Seekonk represent older or otherwise well-established residential areas within the community that contribute to the bedroom lifestyle that is attractive to so many residents who call Seekonk “home”. Land use policies for these areas will be designed to preserve that lifestyle and will provide opportunities for modest improvements through the allowance of home occupation business, streetscape improvements, neighborhood scale businesses and services, and accessory dwelling units where appropriate.



Village Residential

Similar to the General Residential category, the Village Residential area identified on the FLUM represents a well-established residential area in the community. What is unique about this area is that the density of residential use and the proximity to commercial areas provides unique opportunities to connect these residents to services in a more direct fashion. Land use

policies will therefore take advantage of these opportunities by enhancing the ability of residents to walk and bike to commercial areas, public spaces and other amenities. Where opportunities for new development are present, land use policies will look to provide a variety of housing types to ensure that young families, seniors, and residents with special needs can live in close proximity to everyday services that will provide a high quality of life.



Village



Village areas identified on the FLUM include Luther’s Corners, Baker’s Corner’s, Perrins Crossing and the lands immediately surrounding these focal points of the community. These older areas of settlement contain several pockets of traditional village style development, but also more recent commercial and industrial development that has fragmented and eroded the historic character of these neighborhoods. Located strategically within what is largely a bedroom community, these villages provide a significant opportunity to bolster access for all residents to local goods and services. With a more cohesive and integrated approach, these villages can also help to provide opportunities for public transportation that are conspicuously absent in Seekonk today.

Land use policies in these areas will prioritize infrastructure improvements in the public right of way and encourage a mix of uses that fosters activity “on the street” to create more of a sense of place. Quality design of future development will be critical to the success of these areas and the Town will need to consider the potential impacts of development proposals to circulation and aesthetics.

Corridor Mixed Use

Two areas on the FLUM are designated as Corridor Mixed Use: the Route 44 corridor and the smaller Route 6 corridor running between the Highway Business and Industrial areas south of Interstate 195. These areas of Seekonk, as the name suggests, function primarily as auto-dependent corridors along significant arterial roads. Land use is a mix of commercial, institutional, and residential, the intensity of which is often dependent on the size and geometry of the lots that exist today and the capacity to effectively dispose of wastewater. Land use policies in these areas will focus on providing attractive, neighborhood scale commercial use where appropriate, managing automobile access effectively, and maximizing the development potential of smaller lots through appropriate use, dimensional and parking regulations.



Highway Business



The Highway Business area of Seekonk is located along Route 6 immediately south of Interstate 195 and contains the largest concentration of commercial activity in Seekonk. As discussed in more detail in the Economic Development Element, this area is the largest focal point of economic activity in the community and is widely recognized as an indispensable resource for the Town's tax base. Land use policies in this area will build on the strong foundation for commerce here while improving on some of the perceived weaknesses of the area—namely the inability

to access multiple shops by any means other than a car, the unattractive streetscape along Route 6, and the lower quality aesthetic design of some of the buildings and parking areas. Land use policies will need to ensure the ability to continually occupy these lots with active businesses and must also provide enough flexibility for the area to “reinvent itself” as trends in regional retail continue to evolve.

Industrial

The industrial areas identified on the FLUM generally contain industrial, warehouse, and some limited commercial use. In response to an international economy that continues to globalize and the added pressure of the recent recession, Seekonk's industrial lands face the same pressures as industrial operations across the country and struggle to remain viable. Despite these pressures, many residents of Seekonk recognized the value of maintaining some industrial use to stay positioned for emerging industries, to diversify the tax base, and to provide high paying blue collar jobs. Land use policies for these areas will focus on retaining existing operations and limiting challenges associated with maintaining viable industrial uses to the extent that is appropriate.



Objectives and Actions

Objective LU-1: Encourage sustainable growth patterns throughout the community.

Actions:

- a. Educate residents, business owners, and officials on the costs and benefits of different types of development patterns.
- b. Provide a comprehensive re-write to the Zoning By-law that will help to achieve the goals associated with the different areas of the FLUM.
- c. Inventory zoning barriers to mixed use development, and other forms of compact or clustered development.
- d. Inventory vacant or underutilized properties that

As part of a Comprehensive re-write of the Zoning By-law, the Town of Seekonk would use guiding principles of sustainability to inform revisions. Standards for pedestrian and bicycle circulation, street and parking area design, the preservation of open space, landscaping, and other critical elements of land use development would be addressed.

- provide opportunities for infill and redevelopment.
- e. Inventory zoning “non-conformities” and assess whether zoning should be changed or remain intact relative to existing uses.
 - f. Develop a library of visualizations (e.g., pictures of other communities, photo-simulations, etc.) that can be used to help shape regulations for different areas within the Town.
 - g. Identify sites in residential areas that could serve as community gardens.
 - h. Incorporate the action items within the Housing Production Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan as appropriate.

Objective LU-2: Maintain Seekonk’s environmental resources and community character in Rural Residential areas.

Actions:

- a. Establish lines of communication between the Town and key owners of developable land. Ensure the Town is aware of when ownership may change hands or when development proposals may be submitted.
- b. Revisit the Town’s Conservation Subdivision Bylaw to strengthen the quality of design, the protection of natural resources, the efficiency of infrastructure, and the continuity of open space from one subdivision to another.
- c. Focus land preservation efforts and funding to rural areas to the extent that opportunities exist.
- d. Explore the use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) as a land use tool for preserving open space and agriculture in these areas.
- e. Continue to explore the designation of Prospect Street as a “Scenic Corridor”.
- f. Explore the possibility of connecting local agricultural operations to farmers markets within Village Areas.
- g. Develop zoning performance standards that may allow for a more diverse home business inventory as an incentive for large land owners not to subdivide and develop.
- h. Clarify regulations that would expand the ability for homeowners to sell vegetables at roadside stands.

Objective LU-3: Maintain a high quality of life in areas designated General Residential by providing opportunities for improving residential homes and neighborhoods.

Actions:

- a. Continue to ensure a high level of essential services for neighborhoods in the General Residential areas (e.g., right of way maintenance, etc.).
- b. Explore the potential implementation of an Accessory Dwelling Unit by-law that would allow for appropriate levels of accessory housing.
- c. Assess the effectiveness of the existing Home Occupation by-law provisions to see if adjustments need to be made (more or less restrictive).
- d. Provide educational materials related to residential landscaping to encourage low-maintenance attractive alternatives to lawns.

Objective LU-4: Maintain vibrant neighborhoods in Seekonk’s Village Residential areas.

Actions:

- a. Develop “way-finding” analyses that illustrate the most effective pedestrian/bicycle routes between Village Residential and Village areas.
- b. Concentrate resources for right of way improvements on those areas identified in the previous action item.
- c. Ensure an aggressive program for street tree maintenance and replacement to contribute to the safety and character of busy Village Residential streets.
- d. Create opportunities for a diverse housing stock through the use of Zoning By-law amendments or strategic “friendly 40B” applications.
- e. Identify streets that may have issues with automobile speeds and install traffic calming devices.
- f. Ensure high quality landscaping for non-residential uses through the use of landscape design standards.

Objective LU-5: Revitalize Seekonk’s designated Village areas.

Actions:

- a. Develop detailed physical Master Plans for the two Village areas that illustrate different future development scenarios and streetscape concepts. Use these Master Plans to inform regulatory amendments.
- b. Consider the rezoning of the Village areas into larger more cohesive districts (consistent with the previously mentioned Master Plans), which include detailed design and circulation standards.
- c. Investigate financial incentive opportunities that could be offered to developers for infill and redevelopment.
- d. Apply elements consistent with the “Complete Streets” approach in Village areas to ensure the Town captures as many modes of circulation as possible. Apply standards developed as part of the local guidance document called for in the Transportation Element (T-2.b)
- e. Consider the provision of centralized sewer service for these areas as a tool for continued growth and resource protection.

Objective LU-6: Continue to improve conditions in Seekonk’s Mixed Use Corridor areas.

Actions:

- a. Implement the strategies developed as part of the Route 44 Corridor Study (SRPEDD, 2011).
- b. Commission a detailed development feasibility study for the southern Mixed Use Corridor area that includes an examination of market analyses, infrastructure cost/benefit analysis, and environmental constraints.
- c. Apply more prescriptive standards for traffic access management for properties along both Mixed Use Corridor areas.
- d. Consider modest design standards for corridor areas to improve the appearance of parking areas, signage, building materials, landscaping, and the street edge.

Objective LU-7: Allow the Highway Business area to continue as a premier regional commerce center.

Actions:

- a. Ensure Zoning By-law standards for use, dimension and other important site development elements are flexible enough to allow for the Highway Business area to evolve over time in response to changing markets. Research emerging trends in the transformation of so-called “big box” retail centers to inform any regulatory amendments.
- b. Develop “big-box” and/or “formula business” design guidelines to ensure the high quality design of façades, rooflines, signage, parking areas, and streetscapes.
- c. Consider the provision of centralized sewer service for this area as a tool for continued growth and resource protection.
- d. Require new tenants on older sites to provide detailed mapping of stormwater and wastewater infrastructure to ensure a continued update of information needed to maintain market viability and high levels of environmental protection.
- e. Consider development bonuses for this area that could be used as part of a TDR program.
- f. Include development standards for circulation that will allow for easier travel for pedestrians and bicyclists between sites. These standards could include the incorporation of dedicated pedestrian and bicycle ways along Route 6 frontage.
- g. Provide incentives for the inclusion of green rooftops and roof mounted solar arrays on large flat rooftops.
- h. Provide incentives for the inclusion of ground-mounted solar arrays into the design of parking areas.
- i. Incorporate considerations for heat island mitigation into the landscaping standards specific to this area.
- j. Implement the action items related to the Route 6 commercial areas that are listed in the Economic Development element.

Objective LU-8: Maintain the viability of Seekonk’s Industrial areas.

Actions:

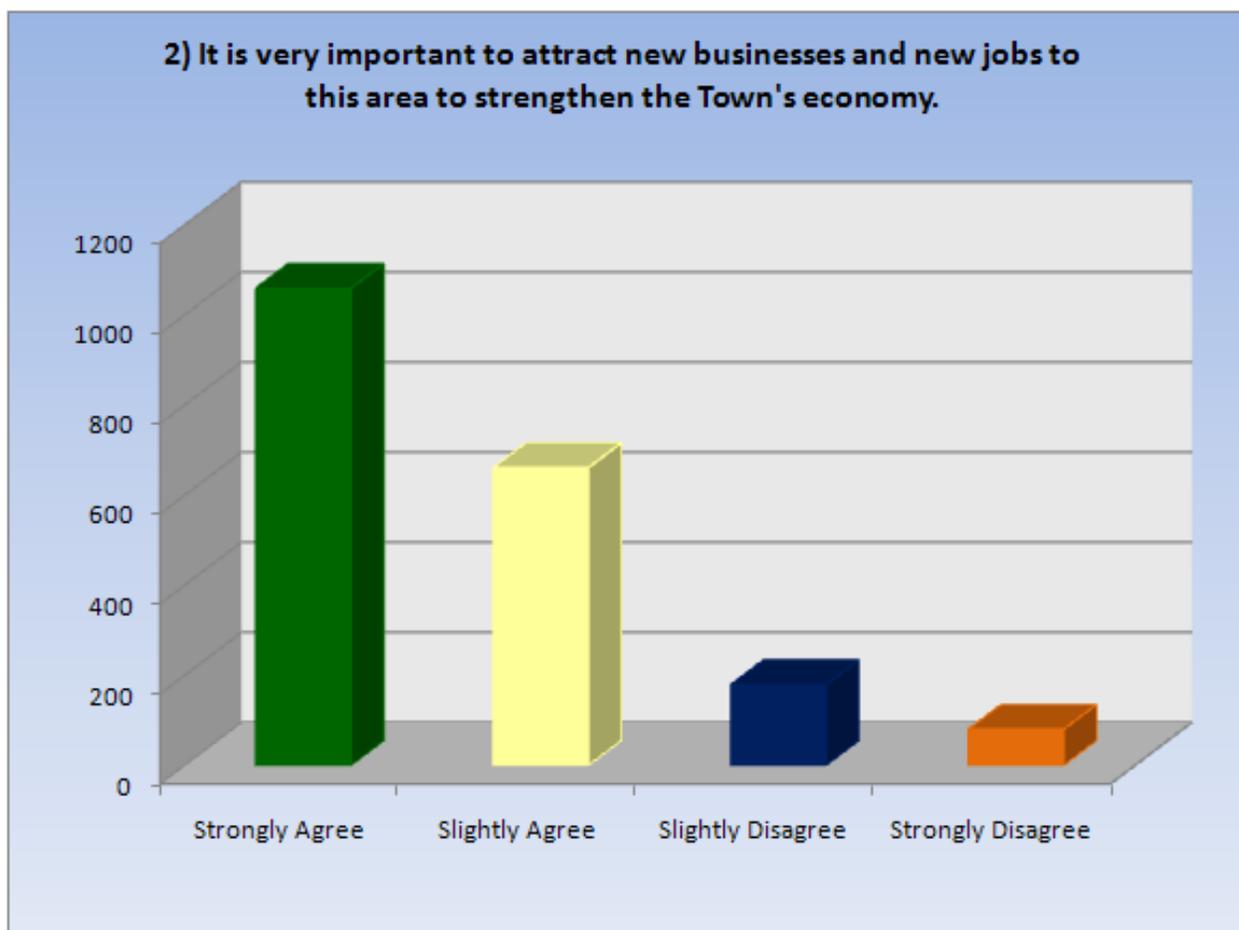
- a. Develop a clear identity for Seekonk’s Industrial areas as identified on the FLUM by not allowing uses that could lead to conflict or nuisance complaints.
- b. Consider the provision of centralized sewer service for this area as a tool for continued growth and resource protection.
- c. Require new tenants on older sites to provide detailed mapping of stormwater and wastewater infrastructure to ensure a continued update of information needed to maintain market viability and high levels of environmental protection.
- d. Protect industrial uses by prohibiting other uses that might create conflicts with industrial operations or otherwise erode the character of the industrial areas.
- e. Implement the action items related to Industrial areas that are listed in the Economic Development element.

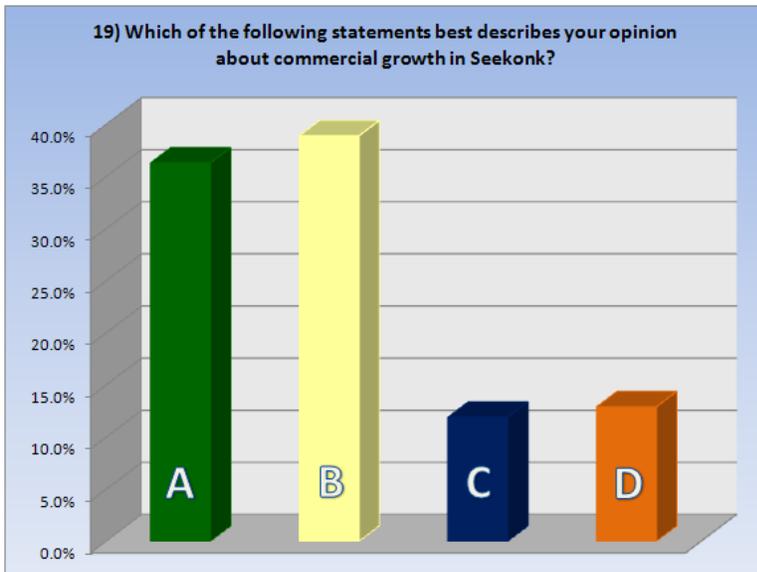
The Economic Development Element

Economic development is perhaps the most dynamic element that a community addresses in its Master Plan. Changing markets and fluctuations in development pressure create a situation in which it is difficult to be effective without dedicating significant resources toward acquiring ever-changing information. Changing regulations, property transfers, and new incentive programs from state and federal programs all come together in a volatile mix of public and private influences that requires constant attention if a community is truly going to direct economic activity.

Public perspectives on economic development issues are represented in the charts below. These were drawn from the Master Plan survey conducted as part of the formal public outreach portion of the Master Plan development process.

This chapter will focus on economic development in Seekonk and highlight some of the current formative issues for local economic development. At the end of the chapter, a list of recommended actions is provided.



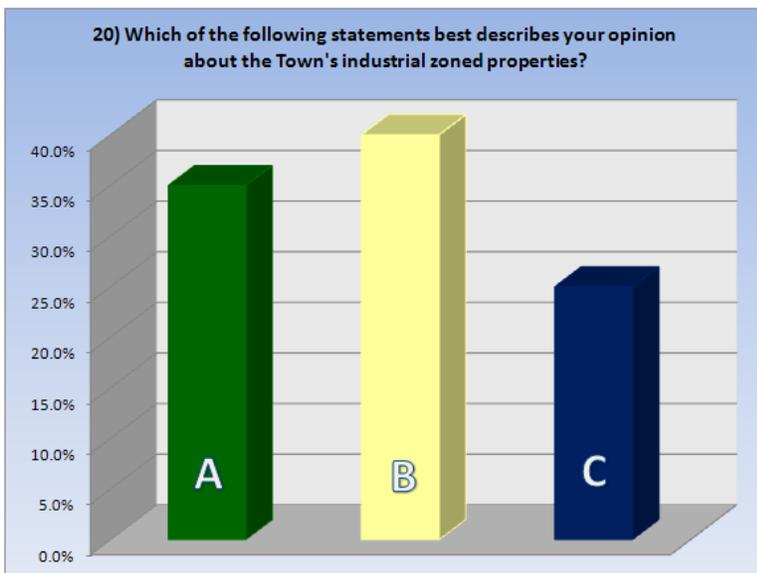


A - The Town must preserve the special qualities of our community by limiting commercial growth.

B - Commercial growth is necessary for the economy, and current regulations are satisfactory.

C - Commercial growth is necessary for the economy, and current regulations are not satisfactory.

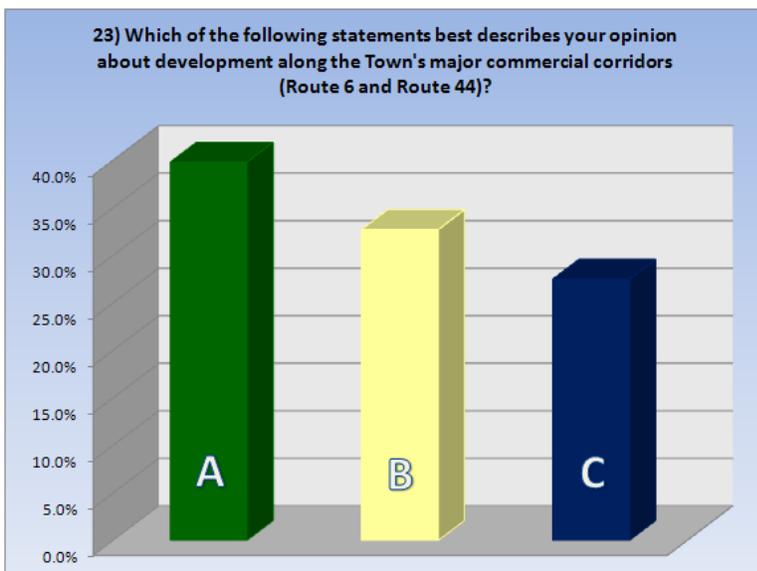
D - I have no opinion one way or another.



A - The Town should try to attract and maintain tenants within its existing industrial zoned properties.

B - The Town should try to establish alternative uses and attract new tenants within its existing industrial zoned properties.

C - I have no opinion one way or another.



A - The Town should revise its current regulations along its major commercial corridors to improve the design standards for building and parking lot layout, architectural details, and landscaping.

B - The Town should NOT revise the regulations along its major commercial corridors so that the existing and incoming businesses do not have to change their approach to building/site design.

C - I have no opinion one way or another.

Formative Issues and Goals

Sustaining Economic Development Efforts in the Town

Although the Town of Seekonk is successful on many levels in retaining a healthy business community, the majority of residents and officials think that Seekonk's approach to business development is more "reactive" than "proactive". In order to develop a "vision" for economic development in the Town, and to provide a roadmap for achieving that vision, a group needs to be formed that dedicates itself to these issues exclusively. Past Master Plans called for the formation of a local Chamber of Commerce and an Economic Advisory Committee to achieve this objective.

The Chamber of Commerce model would work well in Seekonk as these groups provide essential services to the business community including, but not limited to, outreach, training/education, marketing, and advocacy. Depending on their resources and staffing, a Chamber of Commerce can also form subcommittees to review important issues. For example, a committee could be formed to assess infrastructure needs in a particular area of the Town or perhaps to focus on emerging economic opportunities such as "green energy" research and development. However it is important to note that these groups are non-governmental and the Town's role in forming a Chamber of Commerce would not be a leadership role, but rather a supporting role. Resources for sustaining a Chamber of Commerce generally come exclusively from the dues charged to its members, so the business community needs to be organized around this issue in order for it to get off the ground. Strategies provided as part of the Master Plan therefore focus on the ways in which the Town can facilitate the formation of a Chamber of Commerce that would eventually emerge as a partner in economic development.

Economic Development and Fiscal Health

An important component of discussing economic objectives is the role of economic development in the Town's overall fiscal health. The term "fiscal health" refers to the Town's ability to pay for the services it provides primarily to its residents, but also to business owners and visitors. Most residents are aware of some of the major services like public education, police and fire protection, and roadway maintenance. However, the list of services provided by typical suburban communities like Seekonk is much larger and includes services for seniors, review of development proposals, information exchange, and many other critical items. To fund these services, cities and towns rely primarily on levying property tax. Like many other communities, Seekonk applies a range of tax rates to properties based on the use (e.g., residential versus commercial) and the scale (e.g., different size commercial operations pay different rates.)

When discussing the quality of life experienced in the Town of Seekonk with its residents, it is not uncommon for them to mention the tax rate for residential property. At \$11.39 per \$1,000 of property value, the level of municipal service in the community is provided at a rate that is highly competitive in the region. At closer examination, it is interesting to examine how far the residential tax contribution goes in paying for these services. For example, as with other

communities, the most costly service provided in the Town is the public school system. Recent communication with the Director of Finance suggests that, when dividing the total number of students into the full school budget, it costs the Town just over \$13,000 per year to educate an individual student, a cost that is produced exclusively by residential development. The table below illustrates how this cost relates to the average residential tax bill in the community.

Comparing Average Residential Tax Bill to the Cost of Public Education

Assumed Enrollment in Seekonk Schools ¹	Number of Single Family Homes ²	Average Number of Students per Single Family Home	Cost of Educating Each Student / Year	Cost per single family home / Year	Typical Single Family Home Annual Property Tax ²	Deficit per Household Related to School Costs Alone per Year
2,050	4,723	0.43	\$13,059	\$5,668	\$3,200	-\$2,468

1. Source: Finance Office. Assumed number used by the Town to calculate cost for each student. Actual enrollment figures may be slightly higher or lower.

2. Source: Assessor’s Office 2011.

What the table above demonstrates is that when tax revenue and school expenses are averaged over the number of single family homes, each home produces a significant deficit. It is important to note that this example only accounts for costs related to the school system and not the myriad of other services provided by the Town including police and fire protection, roadway maintenance, permit review and others. The addition of these necessary services to the analysis above would only increase the deficit when comparing income from the residential property tax to the costs of municipal services.

This analysis is meant to underscore the importance of maintaining a healthy and diverse economic base as Seekonk continues to develop. Commercial property tax is the primary means through which Seekonk makes up for the deficits created by residential development, providing over one third of the property tax levy in the community. As the recession continues to subside and the housing market eventually recovers, the development of more homes in Seekonk will add to the tax burden of existing and new residents. To safeguard the competitive residential tax rate as this occurs, Seekonk will need to protect its existing businesses and look for ways to expand that piece of the tax base concurrent with residential growth.

Retaining the Competitive Edge of Route 6

As illustrated in the fiscal discussion above, the viability of the Route 6 retail center is critical to the quality of life for residents in Seekonk. The businesses along the Route 6 retail corridor provide more than half of the commercial property tax contribution for the whole Town (personal communication, Seekonk Assessor). If these economic engines are not maintained, the economic support structure for Seekonk residential quality of life will be at risk. The Town relies on the corridor’s vitality for services and tax revenues to the degree that this area represents Seekonk’s “biggest investment”. To protect that investment, Seekonk must see itself

as a “business partner” with owners in this area while balancing the social and environmental impacts of high intensity development. Barriers that still exist relative to redevelopment in the Route area include continued impacts to the Runnins River, the difficulty associated with increasing the number of liquor licenses allocated to the Town, and the uncertainties associated with market conditions as the country struggles to emerge from a recession. To address environmental issues, the Town will need to identify infrastructure improvements that could help redevelopment occur while improving conditions in the Runnins River. With regard to liquor license issues, the Town will need to continue communication with the State to negotiate increases. Finally, with regard to market conditions, the Town must actively research how other big box retail centers continue to thrive by either strengthening the existing business model, or by incorporating new concepts.



Seekonk's Route 6 Highway Business corridor is a cornerstone of the region's retail economy and the Town's tax base.

Infrastructure that Supports Sustainable Economic Development

As Seekonk continues to grow, higher intensity development and environmental stress will continue to place infrastructure demands on the Town. In order to maintain the viability of commercial and industrial areas, and to ensure the health of water resources, the Town will need to consider seriously the significant investment in infrastructure. The largest investments would potentially be those related to stormwater and wastewater infrastructure. As a “Phase II” community, Seekonk will need to comply with the new National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits issued through the Commonwealth. The required improvements and monitoring may require significant investment over time. Although generally considered an “environmental issue”, Phase II requirements have significant financial and economic ramifications and the Town will need to fully understand the scope of these requirements to properly budget. With regard to sewer, residents of the Town voted against the development

of a sewer system for fear that it would encourage rapid development and erode community character. The side effect of this choice is that the lack of a sewer system presents problems for the construction of new retail, office, and especially industrial buildings.

Business Diversity and Local Service

In discussions at the public forum and with local officials, the need to examine proximity to basic services was an important issue. Differences between the “north” and “south” ends of the Town were highlighted in terms of basic services and there is concern that residents in the northern area of Seekonk are leaving town to purchase many day-to-day goods. Other discussions revolved around different retail areas such as Route 44 and Luther’s Corners and the unique challenges facing each pocket of commercial activity including accessibility, character, identity, infrastructure, and general viability. The Town continues to make significant efforts in examining these areas and, in the case of Luther’s Corners, adopted regulations tailored to the needs of that district. With regard to Route 44, the Town recently finalized a study with the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) that explores the future of these commercial areas and potential improvements. Seekonk will need to continually revisit the success and failures of these smaller districts to ensure that neighborhoods are adequately served and the overall business profile of the Town remains diverse.

Commercial Development and Community Character

Residents and local officials in Seekonk almost universally describe the most valuable assets of the community in terms of “rural” or “New England” character. Although much of Seekonk is more suburban in density with some pockets of urbanization, this perception of a rural character speaks to certain design elements that should be carried over into commercial area development. Many of Seekonk’s commercial strips have developed in a manner that is inconsistent with this sense of rural or traditional New England character. Street edges have not been maintained, and buffer strips are not used or effectively designed on portions of Route 44, Central Avenue, Route 6, and Route 114A. Unattractive development along some of Seekonk’s most visible thoroughfares prevents the projection of a positive image for the community and for businesses.



These stores are well-maintained and provide essential services to the community. But better site design could improve business and contribute to community character.

Issues related to aesthetic design have a direct impact on economic development as the image of a particular development will contribute tangibly to the viability of the operation and patterns of development on adjacent properties. Over time, the development community has become much more comfortable with the concept of “design standards” within the

development process and this tool can be applied with little difficulty to commercial enterprises that range in size from corner stores to big box giants. Seekonk should begin to examine the applicability of different design standards to individual districts and adjust local regulations accordingly.

Retaining Viable Industrial Development

As with many communities across the country, Seekonk is faced with the challenge of globalized markets coupled with effects of a significant economic recession. Industrial markets are difficult to maintain under these conditions and many districts throughout New England have been re-zoned for “lower hanging fruit” such as resort, retail, or mixed use. Unfortunately, there are some negative side effects to the loss of industry within a municipality. First, maintaining this sector adds to the diversity of a local economy and can contribute significantly to the generation of jobs. Second, industrial jobs generally pay what is considered as “good middle class” wages. These wages are generally much higher than those provided in service and retail and add an income bracket to the community that helps local business diversity. Discussions within the community during the outreach process demonstrate a strong commitment among residents to maintain and strengthen the industrial lands in Seekonk today. The Town will need to closely examine the challenges faced by industrial enterprise today and actively pursue solutions if local industrial use is to be maintained.



Seekonk's Route 6 industrial lands can play a critical role in the success of the local economy but may require infrastructure investment.

Effective Municipal Coordination

One recurring theme that emerged during stakeholder discussions was the issue of communication between different staff and departments at the municipal level. While this issue affects decision making for every element of the Master Plan, it has particular significance

to Economic Development. With any organization, as the amount and level of responsibilities increase over time, members of municipal government will face challenges related to coordinating their efforts and ensuring a basic level of awareness across all departments of important issues. Where casual encounters in the hallway may once have been sufficient for keeping everyone informed of different projects and issues, new reporting requirements, technologies, and initiatives create a need for more efficient means of sharing information. Seekonk is experiencing some of these growing pains and it is essential for the Town to work toward streamlining and enhancing communication. The ability to effectively prioritize investment through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) or to coordinate permitting efforts on new projects requires well-designed systems for sharing information. These systems, in turn, will have a direct impact on Seekonk's ability to foster a sustainable local and regional economy.

Objectives and Actions

Objective ED-1: Create systems and tools for a structured economic development approach.

Actions:

- a. Create outreach materials for local businesses describing the costs and benefits of having a local Chamber of Commerce.
- b. Invite representatives from neighboring Chambers of Commerce to talk about their accomplishments to the Seekonk business community.
- c. Create a municipal Economic Advisory Committee (EAC) to sustain economic development efforts from the Town and serve as a liaison to the Chamber of Commerce.
- d. Have EAC members receive training in issues of economic development through the Massachusetts Economic Development Council (MEDC).
- e. In cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, develop a marketing strategy for Seekonk that includes highlights of business-friendly approaches within the community for commercial and industrial districts.
- f. Maintain an inventory of vacant or underutilized commercial and industrial parcels that can be easily accessed by prospective investors.
- g. Assess the feasibility of running a web-based municipal GIS that could display important economic development information.
- h. Develop a business outreach program that includes critical information in a variety of media such as web-based material, e-blast notifications, mass mailings, workshops, etc.
- i. Ensure that clear standards for parking, setbacks, allowable uses and other essential Zoning By-law elements will be adopted to address the unique purpose of each commercial and industrial district.
- j. Continue to review regulatory standards that apply to transitional areas between commercial, industrial, and mixed-use zoning districts and adjoining residential neighborhoods and identify design and performance standards that will ensure compatibility between these uses across district lines.

Objective ED-2: Facilitate and require high quality design of commercial areas.

Actions:

- a. Develop design standards within the Zoning By-law tailored to different districts that will ensure a high quality of design in commercial development.
- b. Incorporate adequate circulation for bicycles and pedestrians into commercial site design.
- c. Create or distribute existing design manuals for the Planning and Zoning Boards as educational pieces to assist them with permit application review and allow them to easily identify design flaws.
- d. Develop standardized approaches to impact analyses that may accompany permit submittals to ensure a predictable approach to items such as fiscal impact analysis, traffic impact analysis, etc.

Objective ED-3: Support neighborhood scale business and services.

Actions:

- a. Identify a liaison within the EAC to the South Eastern Economic Development (SEED) agency in order to better connect Seekonk's small business community with technical and financial support.
- b. Develop a circulation study for Luther's Corners to identify strategies for increasing access to local businesses.
- c. Re-examine the Zoning By-law provisions that govern Baker's Corners to ensure this area can better serve residents in the "north end" of Seekonk with essential services.
- d. Implement the strategies developed as part of the Route 44 Corridor Study (SRPEDD, 2011).
- e. Continue to support home occupation business within designated zoning districts.

Objective ED-4: Maintain the viability of the Route 6 corridor.

Actions:

- a. Present a written economic development strategy to the Commonwealth that would help to leverage additional liquor licenses in the Route 6 area.
- b. Identify infrastructure improvements that could make redevelopment in the Route 6 corridor more streamlined.
- c. Identify individual sites that are critical to the health of the Runnins River and other resources and create pre-development information packets for developers clearly outlining the performance standards associated with those sites.
- d. Research other models of development that are compatible with "large pad" sites including, but not limited to, Mashpee Commons, South County Commons, Patriot Place, and Legacy Place.
- e. Incorporate design standards tailored specifically to big box and strip retail to ensure that Seekonk receives the highest quality design from local, national, and international corporations.

Objective ED-5: Maintain the viability of existing industrial lands.

Actions:

- a. Communicate directly with property/industry owners to identify challenges to re-occupation, expansion, or redevelopment in industrial districts.
- b. Continue to assess the feasibility for other non-retail uses of industrial lands including, but not limited to, renewable energy facilities.
- c. Support the development of an Industrial Subcommittee within the Chamber of Commerce.

Objective ED-6: Provide infrastructure that supports economic centers.

Actions:

- a. Continue discussions with the City of Attleboro regarding the potential to append Seekonk to Attleboro's Economic Target Area (ETA) designation.
- b. Identify areas within the community where the use of District Improvement Financing (DIF) could be used to leverage funding for necessary infrastructure upgrades.
- c. Perform feasibility/growth management studies for installing a municipal sewer system that would be targeted to economic development areas within the community.
- d. Continue to advocate for State-level transit/transportation improvements in designated economic development centers.

Objective ED-7: Maintain a housing stock suitable for a diverse workforce.

Actions:

- a. Have the Seekonk EAC identify a liaison to the Massachusetts Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) to identify ways in which this organization can assist Seekonk with economic development and housing issues.
- b. Monitor the range of housing values continually throughout the community in order to identify any demographic groups that do not have adequate access to quality housing.
- c. Implement the strategies found in the Housing Element of the Master Plan.

Objective ED-8: Support active farming as a viable source of local economic activity.

Actions:

- a. Develop an inventory of farmland in the Town and prioritize farm viability efforts based on a structured assessment of potential development pressure, farm productivity, scenic and cultural value, and other factors.

The Sustainable Energy Element

Introduction

Energy is indisputably a critical resource, and it is important to all of the other traditional comprehensive plan elements: e.g., housing, economic development, natural features and environment, and public facilities and services. For example, providing public transportation choices can reduce transportation-related energy use by single-occupancy vehicles. Energy conservation and energy efficiency are integral to any discussion on sustainable development, and there are many compelling reasons for including a sustainable energy element in a community master plan. For one, energy costs have been increasing, primarily over the last decade. When local governments, schools, households and businesses reduce energy use and associated costs, they have more disposable income to spend on other priorities. For example, schools can spend more money on education instead of heating or lighting costs. Because energy use can have negative impacts on air quality and other natural resources, energy issues are also environmental quality issues.

*Crude Oil Prices*¹



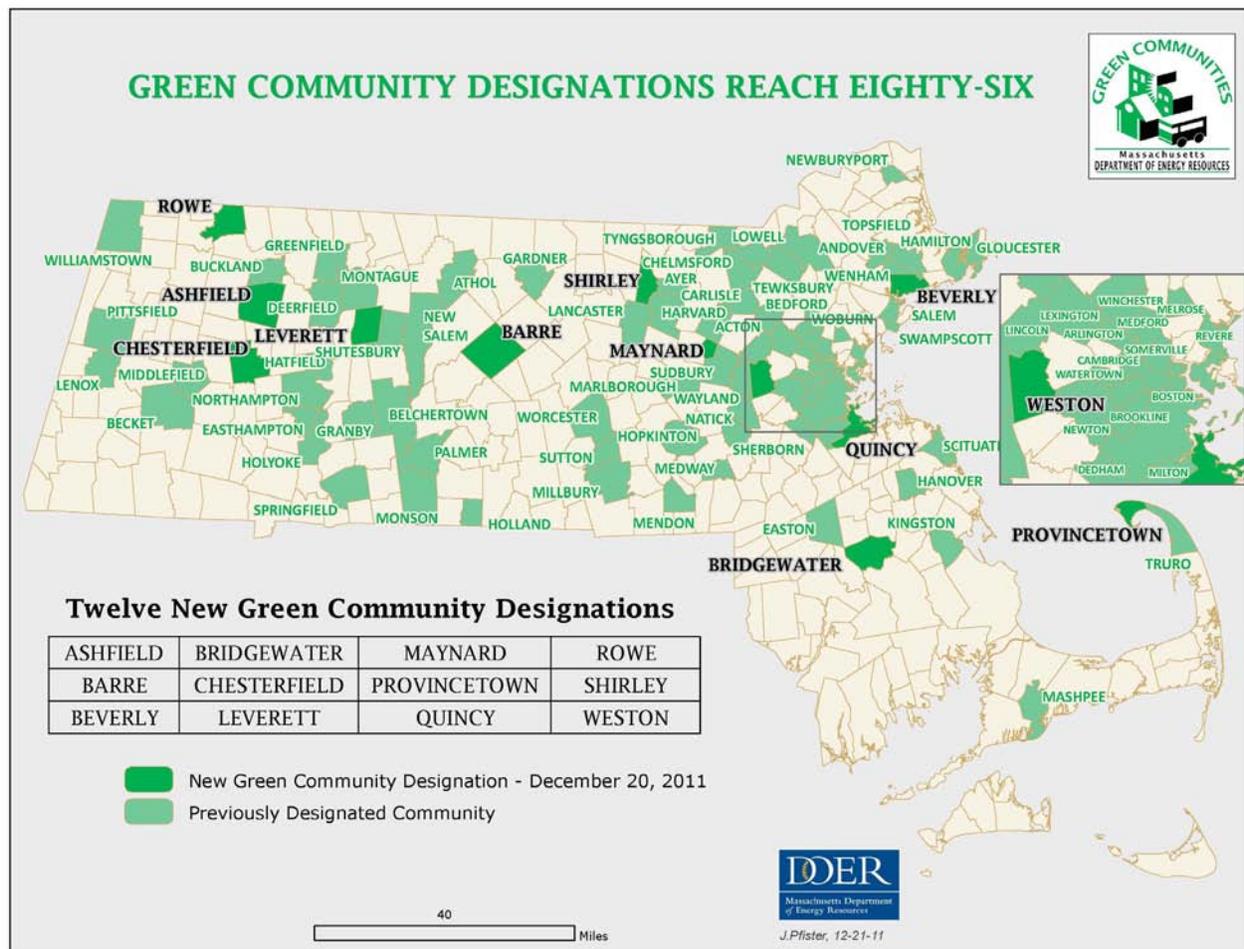
This chapter will focus on sustainable energy in Seekonk and highlight some of the current formative issues for local sustainable energy. At the end of the chapter, a list of recommended actions is provided.

¹ US Energy Information Administration (EIA). 2011a. Data: Petroleum and other liquids. <http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pet&s=rcl1&f=d>

Formative Issues and Goals

Lead by example and reduce municipal energy use

On average, municipal energy use typically accounts for about one to two percent of a municipality’s budget². When municipalities are able to decrease the amount they spend on energy, they are able to divert those funds toward other goals and priorities. Reducing municipal energy use also creates the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in energy efficiency and conservation and allows local governments to “lead by example,” so that households, businesses, industry, and institutions can learn how to cut energy use. One way to start assessing municipal energy use and planning for reduction is to create a municipal energy use baseline inventory for all municipal energy use, including buildings, vehicles, and street and traffic lights. This inventory will inform the Town of its starting point so that it can determine a goal for reduction. This inventory will also help the Town to target areas of least efficiency or greatest waste.



As of February, 2012, 86 cities and towns from all regions of the State, ranging in population from 393 to 617,594 residents, had been designated as Commonwealth “Green Communities.”

² ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. 2008. Profiting from Energy Efficiency. <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=1675>

The State of Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (MA DOER) has developed a web-based spreadsheet tool, called MassEnergyInsight (MEI), for developing an energy use baseline. The MEI tool is capable of automatically downloading utility data for all Town accounts. This would enable easier tracking of energy-use trends over time. After determining a baseline inventory, the next step for the Town would be to implement municipal energy efficiency plans and policies in order to meet the energy reduction goals.

The MA DOER Green Communities Division runs a State-wide initiative, the Green Communities Designation and Grant Program, and works with municipalities toward qualification as a Green Community and provides funding to qualified municipalities for energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. By meeting five rigorous qualification criteria, a designated Green Community demonstrates a commitment to reducing energy consumption, pursuing clean renewable and alternative energy projects, and providing economic development in the clean energy sector. Achieving these criteria, of which one is the development of a municipal energy use baseline and reduction plan, would help the Town achieve its energy goals as well as help qualify for grant funding. The Town has already achieved two of the five criteria through the adoption of a large-scale ground-mounted solar overlay zoning district in 2010.

Reduce community-wide energy use in buildings

Although it is important to reduce municipal energy use, this typically only makes up about five percent of the community's total energy use³. To reduce the remaining 95% of the community's energy use, it is important to target initiatives towards reducing energy use in residential, commercial and industrial buildings, which typically make up the majority of a community's energy use⁴. This can be more difficult, particularly in New England communities like Seekonk that have older building stock. Older buildings tend to be more inefficient, and it is more difficult to retrofit older buildings to make them more energy efficient than it is to construct new energy efficient buildings. It can also be more challenging to reduce energy use in privately-owned buildings versus public buildings since, beyond the building code, there is little that a community can do to require more stringent energy efficiency measures.

Nonetheless, there are measures – both voluntary and mandatory – that a local government like Seekonk can implement to reduce community-wide energy use. Similar to reducing municipal energy use, the first step would be to develop a baseline energy use inventory in order to determine a starting point, and analyze the different community sectors, such as residential, commercial, industrial and transportation. Once this baseline is identified, the Town can then use these data to identify strategies to reduce energy use. For example, one strategy to reduce residential energy use for heating homes may be to provide a weatherization program to Seekonk homeowners to help alleviate the costs of weatherizing a home. The Town could also investigate the implementation of an online rewards program, similar to that being implemented in other communities. For example, in Richmond, Virginia, households

3 Lerch, Joe. May, 2010. Going Greener: Local Governments Expand Programs to Reduce Community Energy Use. Virginia Town and City. http://www.gogreenva.org/assets/img/File/VTCMay10_6-9.pdf

4 US Energy Information Administration (EIA). 2011b. Use of Energy Use in the United States Explained. http://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/index.cfm?page=us_energy_use

track their energy usage online and earn points for reducing energy consumption. The rewards program would teach residents how to be more energy efficient. For the program in Richmond, households can use their rewards points for discounts and offers at local businesses. This type of program would also support local economic development.

Reduce transportation-related energy use

Transportation-related energy use makes up roughly 30% of the nation's energy use (EIA, 2011b). There are a few different approaches to reducing transportation-related energy use, such as reducing the total number of vehicles on the road (e.g. through encouraging public transportation), reducing the amount of fuel used by each vehicle per mile driven (e.g. by promoting more fuel-efficient vehicles), and reducing the total amount traveled by each vehicle (e.g. through smart growth development techniques). Local governments can reduce their own transportation-related energy use through programs and policies aimed at their own vehicle fleets (e.g., through the adoption of a fuel efficient vehicle policy). The MA DOER Green Communities program requires the adoption of such policy as one of their criteria for designation as a Green Community in the Massachusetts program.

Streetscape and Parking Improvements

Reducing community-wide transportation-related energy use can be a little more challenging, however. Proper street and parking design standards are one way that a community can promote a reduction in transportation related energy use. Unnecessarily wide streets, for example, encourage higher traffic speeds, and discourage bike and pedestrian travel. Appropriate street widths along with bike and pedestrian amenities can encourage multi-modal transport along the corridor. Poor connectivity also discourages alternative modes of transportation and can require motorists to travel longer distances to reach their destinations. Street grid networks can alleviate this problem.



Elements such as street furniture, street trees, mixed use development and dedicated pedestrian/bicycle ways encourage pedestrian activity in village centers.

In addition to street and parking design, incentives can be provided for energy efficient vehicles and carpooling/vanpooling. These could include better parking spaces, free parking, or other incentives. Many communities have also started to consider promoting electric vehicle charging stations to encourage the use of electric vehicles.

The Land Use Planning Connection

The local government can help reduce community-wide transportation-related energy use through land use planning. The way in which land uses are sited and developed is important to the overall energy demand of a community. Locating stores, restaurants, schools, recreation, homes and other land uses near to each other reduces dependence on the automobile, and encourages alternative modes of transportation. With more people being able to choose to bike or walk to destinations instead of taking a personal vehicle, the number of vehicle miles traveled can be reduced thereby reducing the number gallons of gasoline consumed.

In the community Master Plan survey, current perceptions of mixed use development were divided, with about half believing that the Town should continue to encourage mixed use, and the other half thinking that the Town should discourage mixed use developments. Community perceptions of village centers, however, are generally positive. In the Master Plan community survey, about 70% of residents agreed that the Town should encourage the development of small-scale village centers to serve as areas for future growth. Infill and redevelopment in village centers prevents sprawl, which reduces transportation-related energy use, and also allows for development utilizing existing infrastructure. Compact and cluster development patterns also reduce energy use while protecting open space. In addition to shortening vehicle trips, they also reduce infrastructures needs, and reduce heating and cooling energy needs.

Significant savings in both transportation and heating and cooling related energy use can also be achieved with higher density residential development. Despite this, residents' attitudes toward higher density residential development in Seekonk are not all that positive. According to the community Master Plan survey, currently, over 60% of residents think that the Town should plan new neighborhoods with larger lots to provide each house with ample space, even if it means more land will be used to build these neighborhoods.

There are also many non-energy related benefits of mixed use development and higher density residential development, such as conservation of open space and preservation of community character. Because of all of these community benefits, the Town should continue to consider promoting attractive, traditional mixed use development. Additionally, education and outreach are important to explain the costs and benefits to different types of development choices.

Public Transportation

Another opportunity to reduce transportation related energy use is through encouraging public transportation. In the community Master Plan survey, over half of residents felt that current conditions of alternative transportation, including public transportation as well as bike paths and sidewalks, were not adequate to handle the Town's current and future needs.



The Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) provides public transportation services within an ever-expanding area, which includes portions of Bristol County.

Encourage renewable energy sources

Since the industrial revolution, the nation's annual energy consumption has been on a significant upward trend. Conventional energy sources, such as coal, oil, and gas, are finite and can be exhausted over time. Therefore, as we continue to become more dependent on the conveniences provided by energy, such as computers and cars, the search for renewable sources of energy will become more and more important. As a nation, we also depend on foreign countries - many of which are politically unstable - for the vast majority of our conventional energy sources, which furthers the case for encouraging alternative sources of energy. In addition, the byproducts of conventional energy generation, such as carbon dioxide, contribute to the degradation of the atmosphere and the environment.

Towns have the ability to promote the development of renewable sources of energy at a local scale through planning, zoning, and economic incentives. The Town of Seekonk has already utilized this ability through the adoption of a large-scale ground-mounted solar overlay zoning district, which allows the as-of-right development of these facilities within designated locations of the Town. The Town has also incorporated a solar array on the roof of one of its municipal buildings: the Department of Public Works (DPW) garage. The electricity for this DPW facility is almost entirely provided by its rooftop solar array.

Despite the work that the Town has already done regarding renewable energy development, there are many more opportunities for the Town to further encourage the development of renewable energy sources, such as economic and regulatory incentives.



Solar array viewed from the roof of Seekonk's Public Works building.

Objectives And Actions

Objective SE-1: Reduce energy used in municipal buildings and operations.

Actions:

- a. Develop a public education and engagement campaign around energy efficiency and conservation.
- b. Form an energy committee made up of Town staff and volunteer members to support various energy efficiency initiatives.
- c. Sign up for the MassEnergyInsight program.
- d. Through the support of the energy committee, develop a municipal energy use baseline in MassEnergyInsight.
- e. Coordinate free energy audits at municipal buildings through the energy utilities.
- f. Commit to reducing municipal energy use by 20%, and through the support of the energy committee, develop a Green Communities compliant energy reduction plan.
- g. Coordinate a street lighting audit with the electric utility, and consider conversion to LED lights.

Objective SE-2: Reduce community-wide energy use in buildings.

Actions:

- a. With the support of the energy committee, develop a community energy use inventory and community-wide energy reduction strategy.
- b. Consider the implementation of a weatherization program.
- c. Provide education and outreach on energy efficiency and conservation, and promote energy audits.
- d. Consider implementation of a community energy efficiency competition or online rewards program in which residences are rewarded for energy savings.

Objective SE-3: Reduce transportation-related energy use.

Actions:

- a. Evaluate the current street and parking design standards, and determine options for improvement to promote multi-modal corridors.
- b. Prioritize projects to encourage multi-modal transportation along targeted roadways.
- c. Develop and provide regulatory incentives for developers that incorporate multi-modal design in their development applications.
- d. Inventory current bicycle and pedestrian paths and identify opportunities to upgrade them and create linkages.
- e. Prioritize municipal projects that provide direct connections and improve community connectivity.
- f. Continue to promote pedestrian activity by requiring projects to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle paths and amenities.
- g. Work with the State to improve public transportation opportunities in Seekonk.
- h. Inventory zoning obstacles to smart growth and mixed-use development, and address

them accordingly with zoning revisions.

- i. Provide priority parking in public lots for energy efficient vehicles and for carpooling and vanpooling.

Objective SE-4: Encourage renewable energy sources.

Actions:

- a. Continue to investigate opportunities (including appropriate locations as well as funding sources) to incorporate renewable energy on municipal buildings and lands.
- b. Inventory zoning obstacles to renewable energy development, such as setback requirements, height standards, lot coverage requirements, and other standards that may impede development of renewable energy as a principal or accessory use, and develop revisions accordingly.
- c. Develop zoning and regulatory standards for renewable energy systems of different types and scales as appropriate to the community.
- d. Provide education and outreach on renewable energy sources, and how home-owners and businesses can integrate these systems into their homes and businesses.
- e. Provide regulatory incentives to developers that incorporate renewable energy sources in their site plans.

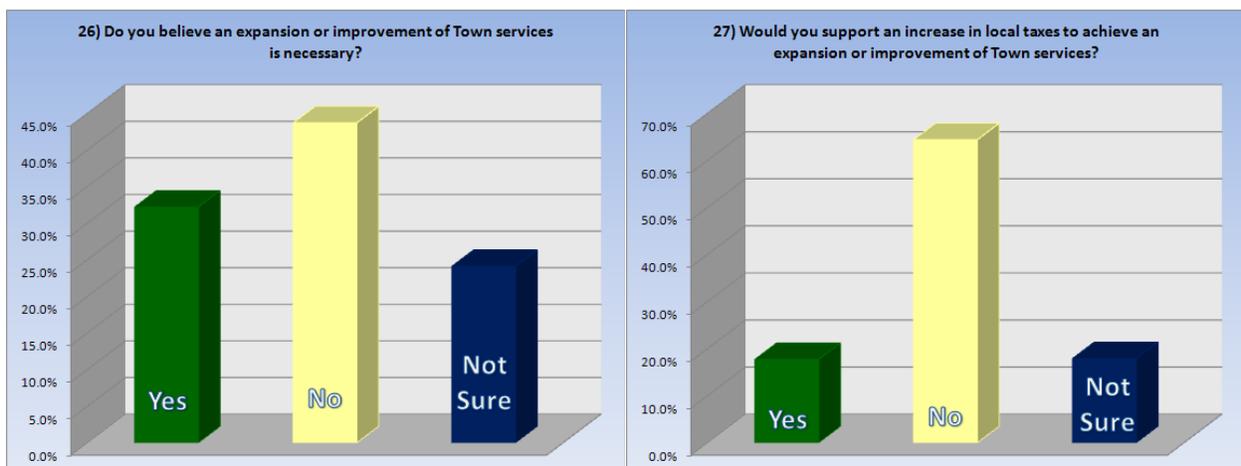
The Public Facilities and Services Element

Planning for public facilities is central to comprehensive community planning as this topic addresses the highest levels of investment that will occur from municipal funds and directly impacts the present and future quality of life for all residents and business owners. The location, capacity, and timing of new facilities will also directly shape patterns of land development in Town and can help to reverse decades of negative impacts to surface water resources. New and expanding facilities and services for Seekonk's evolving population need to be planned in a way that distributes costs equitably, with benefitted parties bearing costs consistent with the benefits to them.

The public survey distributed as part of this Master Plan Update showed general satisfaction with public facilities and services in the community including:

- Town Hall;
- Schools;
- Land Conservation;
- Recreational Facilities;
- Library Services;
- Public Safety;
- Fire Protection;
- Road Maintenance and Drainage;
- Wastewater Management;
- Water Supply;
- Social and Senior Services; and
- Education and Outreach.

Despite the general satisfaction with the level of facilities and service in the Town today, respondents were divided on how to approach the future. Specifically, 32% of respondents agreed that expansion of services would be necessary, 44% disagreed, and 24% were unsure. Also of importance, regardless of whether an increase in services does occur, 60% of respondents would not support an increase in tax rates to fund that expansion.



Public facilities and services were also discussed specifically during the second Master Plan Public Forum held on November 1, 2011. Participants suggested where public facilities and services could be enhanced in the community. A priority topic of discussion related to needs was senior facilities and services. Many community members felt that there was a great need for a senior center and/or a combined community center that provided senior services. This issue is discussed in more detail in the following section.

Another discussion item was pedestrian amenities, such as sidewalks in rural areas or in village settings such as Luther’s Corners and Baker’s Corners. Many residents felt that Luther’s Corners and Baker’s Corners were not pedestrian-friendly, although they did have the potential to be in the future. Access through and between properties in these areas as well as more pedestrian-friendly streetscapes were suggested improvements.

This chapter will focus on public facilities and services in Seekonk and highlight some of the current formative issues for public facilities and services. At the end of the chapter, a list of recommended actions is provided.

Formative Issues and Goals

The Local Tax Base

Public facilities and services are typically funded through public funding sources, the majority of which can be traced to the municipal property tax levy. The relationship between Seekonk’s tax base is examined in more detail in the Economic Development element of this Master Plan Update. The brief analysis provided in that element illustrates that the link between public services and economic development is a centerpiece of the quality of life enjoyed by the residents of Seekonk today. Outreach performed as part of the Master Plan Update showed that the level of residents’ awareness of this link is variable. Notably, the majority of residents were not in favor of increasing taxes in order to pay for increases in services. Therefore, it will be critical for Seekonk to actively pursue expansion of their commercial and industrial sectors if future increases to public services and facilities will not result in an increase to the residential tax rate.

Infrastructure Costs and Growth Patterns

One of the central issues faced by rural/suburban communities is the cost of infrastructure and services that result from a more “spread out” development pattern across the community. Most of the developed land in Seekonk today is single-family residential homes at a variety of densities, and a significant amount of this development could be added to the Town under current regulations. These residential areas, when properly designed, can provide attractive neighborhoods that contribute to



Larger lot residential development places significant levels of stress on municipal services.

the character of Seekonk as mentioned by many residents interviewed as part of the Master Plan Update process. Residents who responded to the survey reaffirmed this idea by showing a preference for “new neighborhoods with larger lots to provide each house with ample space even if it means more land will be used to build these neighborhoods.” However, one significant drawback from this pattern of development is the high service burden it places on the Town with much higher “per capita” costs for snow removal, roadway maintenance, utility installation, and emergency services. The Town will therefore need to examine different development models moving forward to consider where it may be appropriate to consider larger lots versus where the Town can reap the fiscal rewards of tighter, more efficient forms of development.

Senior Services

The continued aging of the “baby boomer” population is a national phenomenon that many communities are proactively trying to address. This increase in the senior population, coupled with the housing crisis and rising health care costs, creates a situation where local governments must compare their existing senior service capacity against demands that are already rising. During the course of interviews and outreach, many participants recognized the emerging urgency of these issues and were particularly concerned with needs that may be exacerbated due to the hard economic conditions.

Interdepartmental Communication

One of the most important aspects of providing public services and facilities is the efficiency of daily government operations and the coordination of overlapping issues between departments. In interviews with municipal officials with regard to their ability to coordinate duties, one of the more challenging communication issues occurs with departments being located in different buildings. This is a very common challenge for local governments throughout New England. With Seekonk’s safety officials, the Department of Public Works, the School Department and Town Hall located in separate facilities, it can be challenging to involve all relevant agencies in a discussion as new information becomes available or as people try to coordinate busy schedules. As priorities need to be set for finite budgets and human resources, the installation of communications technology and simple “best practices” can significantly enhance the ability of groups like the Board of Selectmen, the School Department, the Recreation Department, and others set priorities and make decisions in a more informed manner.

Capital Improvement Procedures

The Town of Seekonk began using an annual capital improvements plan development process several years ago in which a Capital Improvements Committee gathers information from various municipal departments and develops recommendations for the Town Administrator. Recommendations for future funding of improvements are eventually incorporated into the municipal budget and presented at Town Meeting for approval. This procedure continues to evolve and several individuals/departments interviewed as part of the update process suggested improvements in the continuing effort to streamline important processes in local government. These suggestions are addressed in the action items below as well as a continued re-examination of this process moving forward.

Wastewater Management

The Town of Seekonk has been debating the costs and benefits to providing centralized wastewater treatment in the Town for decades. While many people see the potential economic and environmental benefits of a well-planned sewer system, others are more fearful of opening up marginal lands to development and opening the door to growth at an unsustainable rate. The tension between fostering growth in areas like the Route 6 corridor, mitigating impacts from septic systems to the Runnins River, and maintaining growth control over other areas of Town that suffer from traffic congestion is indicative of a lack of consensus in the community over the idea of investing in sewer infrastructure. Seekonk is at a critical point in its evolution and must gather the right information to make informed decisions on this matter.

Objectives and Actions

Objective PSF-1: Develop and maintain funding tools toward the continued investment of public services and facilities.

Actions:

- a. Pursue those actions within the Economic Development element of the Master Plan designed to maintain a strong and diverse tax base.
- b. Explore and encourage public/private partnerships that help to fund and maintain the viability of specific facilities similar to the Friends of the Library.
- c. Consider “placed-based” tools such as Parking Improvement Districts or Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) that can help to raise money toward infrastructure and facilities improvements.
- d. Identify areas where individual facilities could be financed through the use of District Improvement Financing (DIF).
- e. Continue to require performance guarantees and maintenance agreements for facilities created as part of subdivisions or other development proposals (e.g., stormwater treatment facilities, private roads and rights of way, photovoltaic facilities, etc.)

“Place based” tools like those mentioned here generate revenue through dues or fees. A BID uses revenue from the dues of its members, while a Parking Improvement District collects money from paid parking. In both cases, this money is then ear-marked for investment in that same district. So streetscape improvements, snow removal, signage and other features can be financed with these funds.

Objective PSF-2: Develop and maintain meaningful information that will help to prioritize investment in municipal facilities and services.

Actions:

- a. Continue to support the Capital Improvements Committee in their efforts to study individual facilities in a detailed manner and on a regular basis to inform the Capital Improvement Program.
- b. Maintain standardized facility evaluation procedures (e.g., form evaluations and updating the Five Year Capital Plan) that can be updated by department heads or department staff on facility needs and entered into Town-wide facilities database.

- c. Develop a system of regular face-to-face communication in which all departments can report important facility and service related information to the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator.
- d. Develop a fiscal impact analysis tool based on the “buildout” of the community that can show the relative impacts of different zoning by-law provisions on the fiscal budget.
- e. Continue to develop the municipal Geographic Information System (GIS) in a manner that integrates important facility-based information into the database.
- f. Develop a standard process for integrating the long-term costs of new facilities into the decision making process including, but not limited to, staffing of new facilities, accessory equipment needs, regular maintenance, and utilities.
- g. Continue to closely track school enrollment to ensure an efficient use of school building facilities.
- h. Continue to update both the Housing Production Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan as necessary to ensure that baseline data and strategies represent current conditions.

Objective PSF-3: Improve inter-departmental communication, and provide a transparent decision-making process under an efficient government structure that meets community needs.

Actions:

- a. Survey the community to determine whether Open Town Meeting style of government is adequate or if the Town should investigate other forms of government including Representative Town Meeting or Town Council.
- b. Conduct semi-annual audits of all Master Plan action items to chart progress and identify “next steps”.
- c. Set up more regular, formal meetings to share information between the Board of Selectmen and other boards and committees.
- d. Continue the example provided by the Capital Improvements Committee by stating Committees’ decision-making process in formal documents to enhance transparency.
- e. Explore the use of more “service-oriented” tools (e.g. “E-Government”) that help with public information sharing, permitting, fee collection and other essential government functions.

Objective PSF-4: Coordinate the management of water-based infrastructure in an integrated fashion to ensure a sustainable approach.

Actions:

- a. Develop an Integrated Water Resource Plan for the Town of Seekonk.
- b. Develop an audit of local regulations that looks specifically at the relationship between development standards and impacts to various water resources in the community.

An Integrated Water Resource Plan is a document that merges all of the water related issues in a community into a single comprehensive set of analyses and investigations. The relationship between water supply, wastewater disposal, stormwater runoff, wetlands, aquatic habitat, climate change, and other water-related issues are examined as a complete system. The plan serves as a foundation for policies related to land use, water conservation, strategic wastewater solutions, conservation, and habitat restoration.

- c. Examine the effectiveness of applying various scales of wastewater treatment to different areas of Town (e.g., individual septic systems, neighborhood scale systems, centralized facilities, etc.).
- d. Continue to analyze the capacity of the existing municipal water supply against community buildout analyses.
- e. Ensure the requirements of the Non-Point Source Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit issued by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are met.

Objective PSF-5: Continue to assess and emphasize the need for high quality social services in the community.

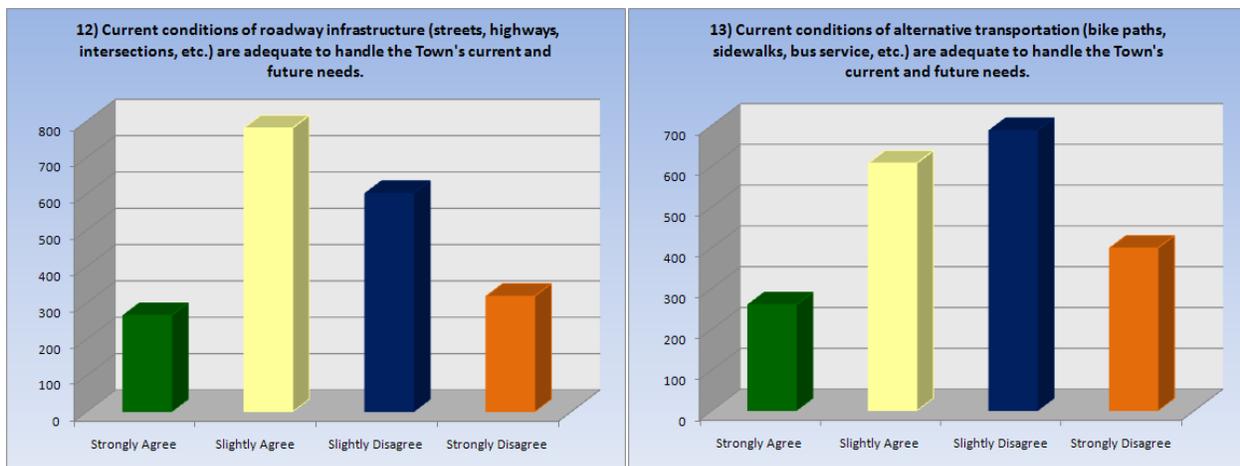
Actions:

- a. Include Human Services and the Council on Aging in regular facility updates with the Board of Selectman and the Town Administrator.
- b. Continue to explore ways of expanding transportation services for seniors in order to increase their access to healthy food, recreational opportunities, and social interaction.
- c. Coordinate the efforts and programs of the (future) Senior Center with the school system to identify opportunities to merge programs for children and seniors.
- d. Ensure that families and individuals in need of intervention due to hardship have access to adequate health care, emergency food assistance, and counseling.

The Transportation Element

The Transportation Element of the Community Master Plan deals with circulation of all types and in all areas of the Town of Seekonk. Automobiles, school and transit buses, emergency vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians are all part of a network in the Town that may include a casual stroll to the corner store or access to the highway for a morning commute. As with many suburban communities across the country, most of Seekonk's transportation network was planned and constructed during a time when the automobile was the primary focus for design. Sprawling auto-oriented development led to wide roads conducive to higher travel speeds, which moved the community further away from the more "walkable" development patterns that remain in the oldest neighborhoods. As communities begin to better understand the environmental, fiscal, and social impacts of continued suburban sprawl (and gasoline prices threaten to rise to record levels) more traditional community design and associated transportation networks are being recognized as a sustainable alternative. A balanced approach to moving automobiles along with bicyclists and pedestrians is showing significant rewards for communities across the country with strong positive indicators for environmental, public, economic, and fiscal health.

Public opinion regarding the current transportation network in Town showed moderate agreement that roadway conditions may be adequate for vehicles, but not other forms of transportation. According to the community-wide survey, a slight majority of residents (53%) agree that current conditions of roadway infrastructure (streets, highways, intersections, etc.) are adequate to handle the Town's current and future needs. Relative to "alternative" modes of transportation, over half of residents responded that current conditions of alternative transportation (bike paths, sidewalks, bus service, etc.) are not adequate to handle the Town's current and future needs.



In the public forum discussions, participants voiced strong opinions about the transportation network. The ability of the Town to maintain its roadways was commended, but participants identified many design details that need to be strengthened within the community as development and redevelopment continue. Improvements to streetscapes in the form of

better sidewalks, signage and street trees were identified as critical elements missing from places like Baker’s and Luther’s Corners. The inability to access multiple sites in the Route 6 retail district was seen as a detriment not only to the quality of the shopping experience, but also as a hindrance to economic growth. A Town-wide bicycle and trail network was identified as a future amenity and major improvement for all residents’ quality of life. The integrated “multi-modal” and “design-based” perspectives articulated in these intensive discussions clearly communicated that many residents and officials look forward to a more integrated approach to transportation planning in Seekonk.

Formative Issues and Goals

Roadway and Intersection Safety

Through review of traffic related data, several roadway and intersection areas of Seekonk demonstrated potentially hazardous conditions. The intersections of Fall River Avenue (Route 6) with Commerce Way and with Mink Street (Route 114A), both ranked high on MassDOT’s and SRPEDD’s lists of most unsafe intersections. According to a SRPEDD study of “red light running” based on 2006-2008 crash data, two intersections showed high percentages of crashes being attributed to drivers running red lights: Taunton Avenue (Route 44) and Arcade Avenue; and Taunton Avenue (Route 44) and Fall River Avenue (Route 114A). Twenty-six percent and 40% of crashes, respectively, were caused by running red lights at those intersections. ¹

Traffic Circulation

Available data indicate that traffic growth in Seekonk has slowed, with approximately 1% overall growth over the past 10 years. Despite the slowed growth, congestion continues to be an issue for some roadways and intersections in Seekonk with increased pressure on roads like Taunton Avenue (Route 44) and Fall River Avenue (Route 6). Also, north/south travel on roads like 114A continues to become more congested and make travel during peak hours very unpleasant.

SRPEDD’s Route 44 Corridor Study, completed in 2011, includes traffic recommendations to address congestion and safety problems, as well as the traffic implications of anticipated future redevelopment along the corridor. These recommendations provide a set of concrete strategies including: interconnected driveways; limited curb access; and the strategic placement of curb cuts for future development along Taunton Avenue. Notably, the neighboring City of East Providence also recently completed traffic assessments of Taunton Avenue within their jurisdiction, creating a unique opportunity for collaboration across the State line.



Speed bumps in residential areas like these can help mitigate impacts from “cut through” traffic.
www.pedbikeimages.org (Dan Burden)

¹ Red Light Running in Southeastern Massachusetts, SRPEDD, 2004.

Another significant traffic circulation issue in Seekonk comes from “cut-through travel” when motorists perceive neighborhood routes as a way to avoid congestion on adjacent roadways and decrease travel time. In these situations, traffic calming measures including vertical deflections (e.g. speed humps, speed tables) and horizontal shifts (e.g. chicanes, neighborhood traffic circles) can be effective means to deter cut-through traffic and should be considered for implementation. Driver feedback signs, e.g., radar speed limit signs, can also be effective in traffic calming. Locations in the Town identified as candidates for traffic calming measures include:

- Prospect Street and Read Street;
- Luther Street and Spring Street; and
- Olney Street, Hammond Street between Route 6 and Route 44.

Transportation Demand Management and Development Mitigation

Towns often require mitigation measures from developers for impacts to transportation facilities. Mitigation measures for development impacts to transportation facilities must be reasonably related and proportional to said impacts. A conventional example could be the Town requiring a shopping center developer to add a traffic signal (with traffic signal preemption) at the entrance of the proposed development to manage new volumes and flows of traffic. However, along with targeted traffic improvements to particular roadways and intersections, transportation demand management (TDM) is also an instrument for mitigating traffic demand related to new development. TDM considers the larger transportation profile that affects an area and associated mitigation therefore uses a more incremental and systemic approach. These mechanisms allow for transportation mitigation on a cumulative process, providing developers with an opportunity to contribute toward a larger scale transportation improvement vision. TDM shows a stronger recognition of the land use/ transportation link and integrates planning of those two elements into a single process. Development of a new park-and-ride facility, accommodations for bicyclists, and pedestrian connections to other sites are examples of TDM measures that could be integrated into a development proposal to contribute to the long-term sustainability of a transportation network.



Wherever possible, street design should take advantage of opportunities to incorporate bike lanes and pedestrian features for a more “complete street.”

www.pedbikeimages.org (Dan Burden)

Walking and Bicycling

Walking and bicycle travel are alternative transportation modes with minimal negative impacts in terms of traffic and the environment. Non-motorized modes like walking and bicycling can be a viable

mode for shorter trips² and they are key elements in the broader concept of “complete streets.” The complete streets perspective is distinct from the conventional notion of streets that are designed exclusively for automobile travel. Instead, these streets are designed in a way that responds to community context, are inclusive of users of all ages and abilities, and offer a variety of transportation options. The benefits of more complete streets are numerous; some of the most significant include: increased safety, health and accessibility, total transportation capacity, and economic competitiveness.³ Further information about the benefits of complete streets and guidance for developing policies is available from the National Complete Streets Coalition (www.completestreets.org).

A critical element to the complete streets concept is the sidewalk, which forms the backbone of an effective pedestrian network. Although some areas in Seekonk have adequate sidewalks, these pedestrian facilities are lacking in many areas throughout the Town or are inadequately designed. Pedestrian connections between adjacent developments are frequently missing, making walking less attractive or infeasible for those potentially short trips. Most existing sidewalks in Seekonk today do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

Similar to walking, bicycle travel can be a viable mode for shorter commutes and utilitarian and recreational trips. The Town’s roadways currently do not accommodate bicyclists and exclusive facilities such as dedicated bike paths do not exist. SRPEDD has identified several potential facilities on the western side of the Town. The East Junction railroad bed is suggested for construction of a multiuse path to accommodate bicyclists, along with connecting on-street facilities to the west on Newman Avenue to Brook Avenue and into Pawtucket, and on to the north on several roadways connecting to Attleboro. Newman Avenue is also a candidate for bicycle lanes, due to the width of the existing shoulders and its ability to serve north-south commuter bicycle traffic. Connections to the regional bicycle network (Mansfield bike path, the Blackstone River Bikeway, and the Ten Mile River Greenway in Rhode Island) are also identified in SRPEDD’s 2012 Transportation Plan as potentially viable opportunities for bicycle amenities.



New designs in roadway striping like these “sharrows” are becoming a common approach to increasing opportunities for bicyclists. www.pedbikeimages.org (Lyubov Zuyeva)

² According to the 2009 National Household Travel Survey conducted by US DOT, nearly 20% of total personal travel consists of trips that are 1 mile or less, and 40% are 3 miles or less. Furthermore, for each non-motorized commute trip, there are estimated to be 9 other utilitarian trips and 10 recreation trips by non-motorized modes (<http://nhts.ornl.gov>).

³ “Introduction to Complete Streets,” National Complete Streets Coalition (www.completestreets.org)

Public Transportation

In light of the elimination of the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority's (GATRA) Bus Route #19 along Route 44 and current fiscal constraints, opportunities for significant expansion of public transportation in Seekonk are limited. The extension of Route #16 or creation of a new fixed-route to bring service to other parts of Seekonk is unlikely to generate enough ridership to be cost-effective for GATRA without significant investment or subsidy by others. A more flexible route/van service may be a more efficient means of providing public transportation options in this area. The most likely ridership attractor would be the major retail centers of the Route 6 corridor.

Many Seekonk residents travel to jobs in Rhode Island, yet GATRA cannot provide service across the State border under current federal regulations. Likewise, the Rhode Island Public Transit Agency (RIPTA) cannot provide service into Massachusetts. While this reality is not ideal for communities such as Seekonk, which have substantial interstate commutes, the best available alternative is to promote coordination of routes and schedules between the two transit agencies to facilitate transfers for riders that must cross the State border. Pedestrian enhancements, including sidewalk improvements and possible wayfinding signage, should be explored to facilitate transfer between GATRA Route #16 at Central Plaza and RIPTA Routes #76 and #77 on Central Avenue and Benefit Street in Pawtucket. The possibility of locating the stops closer to one another should also be explored.

Funding for Transportation Improvements

Funding for transportation improvements is an ongoing struggle for all municipalities with many in Massachusetts relying on the State Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Current priorities for funding in Seekonk include:

- Signal and geometric improvements at Taunton Avenue (Route 44) and Arcade Avenue.
- Potential exclusive left turn lanes and protected left turn signal phasing at Taunton Avenue (Route 44) and Fall River Avenue (Route 114A).
- Study of Newman Avenue and Arcade Avenue intersection to determine if it meets warrants for signalization.

The ability to access funds through the TIP (or other federal and state grants for transportation improvements) can be enhanced through smaller investment by the community in data collection, improvement studies, or preliminary design.

Transportation Infrastructure and Place-Making

Roadways are often an integral part of how people experience a place and Seekonk has diverse opportunities to accentuate this relationship between transportation infrastructure and places of unique character. In its less developed areas, Seekonk has several roadways that communicate the rural tradition of the Town with scenic features such as specimen trees, stone walls, and "soft" street edges. Recognizing these resources, Seekonk has considered, but not

passed, a local bylaw that would provide additional protections for these roadways through a “scenic” designation. In its village areas, Seekonk manages to maintain a few streetscapes that remind visitors and residents of more traditional neighborhood streets that once served (and could serve again) as vibrant public gathering places. Further, Seekonk has several “gateway roads” where travelers from neighboring communities could be welcomed with landscaping, signs, islands or other features that establish a sense of place and identity when crossing the Town, and sometimes State, line.

Objectives and Actions

Objective T-1: Minimize frequency and severity of accidents at high-incident locations.

Actions:

- a. Coordinate with the State on projects that involve high accident locations and lobby for specific improvements to address the accident patterns.
- b. Identify high accident locations that are not part of ongoing projects and initiate studies to identify potential safety improvements.
- c. Continue to utilize and pursue the services of SRPEDD to conduct safety studies. Implement corresponding actions in response to the findings. For example, increase enforcement at high-accident locations that exhibit high red light running.
- d. Identify geometric and traffic control improvements to improve safety at high-accident locations and lobby for funding of these improvements.

Site Design standards that could improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation include:

- *Requirements for pedestrian and bicycle ways across property frontage;*
- *Requirements for building placement to be complementary to surrounding structures;*
- *Requirements for bicycle parking or storage for new development; and*
- *Striping and alternative surfaces within parking areas and travel lanes to enhance pedestrian safety.*

Objective T-2: Optimize the ability of existing roadways to service the transportation needs of the community.

Actions:

- a. Pursue intersection improvements at Route 44/Route 114A, including dedicated left-turn lanes.
- b. Review “complete streets” policies from other towns in MA and throughout the U.S. and develop a guidance document for use on local projects to allow multi-modal uses on roadways.
- c. Incorporate standards into local regulations for providing “off-street” connections within commercial centers to minimize unnecessary egress onto arterial roads.
- d. Incorporate standards into local regulations

Alternative mitigation measures for traffic impacts could include the following:

- *Constructing off-site traffic related improvements;*
- *Providing bicycle or pedestrian amenities; and*
- *Documenting car-sharing incentives;*
- *Development of transit related facilities.*

- that require site design techniques for better bicycle and pedestrian circulation.
- e. Minimize and strategically place curb cuts to minimize conflict points.
- f. Sustain rural character of roadways by implementing traffic calming strategies in appropriate locations.
- g. Use traffic calming techniques to discourage cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets.

Objective T-3: Minimize traffic demand generated by new development.

Actions:

- a. Require traffic impact studies for new developments. For large scale developments, implement peer reviews of traffic studies to be paid by developer to ensure accuracy and completeness of studies.
- b. Expand acceptable traffic management and mitigation measures to include TDM and/or non-infrastructure items and provide credits for these mechanisms through zoning and subdivision provisions.

A Town-wide sidewalk enhancement program would provide a framework for identifying deficient pedestrian links, building new sidewalks, and prioritizing improvements of existing sidewalks. The enhancement program could be staged over a ten-year period to ease the associated budget and labor requirements. In developing the program, priorities for sidewalk improvements should be set with consideration of:

- Potential use;
- ADA compliance;
- Right-of-way requirements;
- Town and regional pedestrian connections; and
- Multi-modal transportation connections.

Objective T-4: Improve pedestrian and bicycle amenities Town-wide.

Actions:

- a. Develop and implement a long-term sidewalk enhancement program.
- b. Encourage walking and biking through the school and recreation departments and through employer TDM programs.
- c. Develop walking and cycling paths that connect activity areas and link to other alternative transportation networks.
- d. Maintain prompt snow removal of pedestrian and bicycle amenities.
- e. Develop subdivision regulations to provide new neighborhood trails and improve access to existing trails.
- f. Identify key locations for new/additional bike rack and pedestrian bench installations.
- g. Identify roadways with sufficient width to stripe bike lanes; analyze these locations, and implement bike lanes where appropriate.
- h. Leverage the Safe Routes to School program to promote healthy travel to and from all schools including.
- i. Establish standard criteria for marking crosswalks, potentially referencing the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*.

Objective T-5: Increase use of the public transportation system.

Actions:

- a. Provide shelters, benches and bike racks at bus stops.
- b. Increase the number of park and ride lots to enhance connectivity to public transportation.
- c. Conduct a Town survey of public transportation needs and issues.
- d. Investigate various forms of public transportation to service the Route 6 commercial area and seek funding to implement the best option(s).
- e. Coordinate with RIPTA, GATRA, and SRPEDD to improve public transportation across the State border and facilitate connections between GATRA and RIPTA services.

Objective T-6: Aggressively pursue funding for transportation projects.

Actions:

- a. Apply for grants through SRPEDD.
- b. Enhance the ability to access funds through the TIP (or other federal and state grants for transportation improvements) through investment in data collection, improvement studies, or preliminary design.
- c. Seek grants to promote non-motorized forms of transportation.

Objective T-7: Integrate transportation infrastructure into a “place-making” approach.

Actions:

- a. Identify potential gateway locations and develop gateway design concepts.
- b. Initiate community/commercial participation to maintain gateways (e.g., Adopt-a-Spot).
- c. Provide welcome signs at gateways. Consider alternative and creative materials for the signs, such as plantings.
- d. Improve landscape design and streetscapes at gateway locations while maintaining clear sight lines.
- e. Initiate a photo inventory of potential candidates for scenic roadways using Town GIS.
- f. Establish standards and/or incentives for appropriate levels of streetscape improvements for new development and redevelopment in different zoning districts.
- g. Revisit the Scenic Roads Bylaw and reintroduce to Town Meeting.

