

**Technical Assistance Program (TAP) Project Concept  
Town of Concord  
Thoreau Depot Smart Growth TOD or 40R Study**

**Lead Contact**

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**Project Description**

The Town of Concord Planning Division is seeking technical assistance to conduct a study on creating a Transportation Oriented Development or Chapter 40R overlay district in one of the Town's village districts known as Thoreau Depot. The area is within the Thoreau Depot Business Zoning District and includes the Concord Center Commuter Rail Train Station (See Attached Map). The Town's goal is to use smart growth zoning to create a streamlined development process, which promotes the redevelopment of this area. The implementation of smart growth zoning will increase opportunities to diversify the Town's housing stock and create a mixed-use district, connecting commercial and residential infrastructure with the commuter rail station. The implementation of smart growth zoning or the creation of a Chapter 40R overlay district will greatly enhance the Town's efforts to create a vibrant village district where residents will be able to live, work, and play.

**Project Need and Alignment with Local, Regional, and State Goals:**

The Town of Concord is seeking to provide a streamlined process for the appropriate redevelopment of the Thoreau Depot area as recommended in the Town's 2018 Envision Concord Comprehensive Plan (Plan).

The Plan identified the following Goals and Action Items in support of this project:

**Economic Vitality Goal #1:** Renew and improve Concord's village centers as vital pedestrian-friendly, economic and social hubs that enable community engagement on a wider scale.

*Action #1:* Maintain and consider expanding zoning policies to allow mixed-use and appropriately dense development in and around village centers.

*Action #2:* Enhance the public spaces, physical connectivity, and general environment of the business centers.

**Economic Vitality Goal #2:** Build on the enhanced quality of life encapsulated in Goal 1 to support the strong commercial business successes throughout town and attract and retain a constant workforce.

*Action #2:* Support growth of existing and complementary businesses within existing industrial and commercial areas in town, and outline development guidelines for appropriate potential infill development.

**Housing Goal #1:** Develop realistic, achievable targets for preserving or creating housing of all types (beyond the Subsidized Housing Inventory).

**Housing Goal #6:** Identify regulatory tools and tax incentives to encourage developers to build housing the Town wants/needs, especially denser housing near town centers or small (5-10 unit) developments such as Riverwalk, in ways that reinforce existing historical character and support sustainable development practices.

*Action #1:* Adopt zoning provisions, such as a 40R Smart Growth Overlay District, to encourage the redevelopment of the Thoreau Street Depot Area and adjacent Crosby's Market Area to allow

mixed-use, multi-family redevelopment.

Land Use Goal #1: Preserve Concord's current combination of land uses (e.g., open space, agriculture, and historic and culturally rich village centers) and consider design standards that preserve the town's "New England Character."

*Action #4:* Research alternate zoning methods to preserve the natural and architectural characteristics of Concord while allowing appropriately scaled and designed redevelopment or development.

Additionally, the Plan conducted a preliminary residential, commercial, and mixed-use smart growth analysis on potential growth capacity within the village center and existing commercial/ industrial clusters along the main roadways, as noted by the boundaries shown in the Smart Growth Map, Concord Center/ Thoreau Depot Area, and West Concord Center Area. The parameters for the Smart Growth analysis were informed by four high priorities that emerged from the public outreach process:

- Protect the historic, natural, and agricultural character of the town, including sustainable development practices.
- Support the independent businesses, cultural and historic organizations, and character of the town commercial centers.
- Provide more housing choice to allow Concord residents to remain in Concord and provide housing for a diversity of residents, including young professionals and families, empty nesters, seniors, and those increasingly squeezed out by high housing costs.
- Embrace fiscally responsible decisions to achieve goals.

Thoreau Depot was identified as having potential for mixed-use redevelopment because of its location near the 'Concord' station, frontage onto a main street, or previous identification by the Town.

MetroFuture, MAPC's plan for our region, serves as a guide for the agency's work related to smart growth and regional collaboration. The plan comprises 65 specific goals, several of which are relevant to this project. They include:

- Goal #2: Most new growth will occur through reuse of previously developed land and buildings.
- Goal # 4: In suburban municipalities, most new growth will occur near town and village centers.
- Goal # 6: High-quality design that will help compact development enhance the region's character and livability.
- Goal # 7: Cities, towns, and neighborhoods will retain their sense of uniqueness and community character.
- Goal # 8: Historic resources will be preserved and enhanced.
- Goal #10: Growth in the region will be guided by informed, inclusive, and proactive planning.
- Goal # 35: Small business owners and entrepreneurs will play a major role in the region's economy and innovation.

## **Project Deliverables and Outcomes**

Deliverables will include:

1. An in-depth study of demographic, economic, environmental, and regional analyses, while taking into consideration the Big Ideas, Goals and Smart Growth Analysis in the Town's Envision Concord Comprehensive Plan;
2. Public processes with the residential, business, and municipal stakeholders to confirm the vision for the Thoreau Depot Business District;
3. Draft zoning text and map changes that will provide more housing choices and enhance economic development efforts. The zoning will address uses, dimensions and parking requirements appropriate for Thoreau Depot Business District.

It is expected that this information will then be presented at the 2020 Annual Town Meeting for adoption.

## **Community Engagement**

The Town just completed a 2 year public engagement process on the development of the 2018 Envision Concord Comprehensive Plan. The Town established an amazing program for outreach that worked to engage all ages in the community, as well as Town boards and committees (which there are 62), property owners, citizen groups, and the business community. The Planning Division will notify the residential, business, and municipal stakeholders and will plan on providing the outreach activities as follows: Town's social media and web platforms, newspaper releases, emails, and mailers, and community meetings. It is anticipated that there will be three public meetings; at the beginning of the process to discuss goals and objectives; in the middle to discuss findings and possible recommendations; and at the conclusion to present the agreed upon recommendations, next steps, and timeline for implementation.

## **Project Timeline**

The Town anticipates the beginning of the project to take place shortly after notice of award by the MAPC. The Planning Division will present the findings of the report and proposed TOD or 40R language to the Planning Board and Select Board immediately upon study completion.

## **Municipal support**

The level of support for smart growth and sustainability is clearly evident in the Goals and Actions Items identified in the Town's Comprehensive Plan, which focuses on increasing housing and furthering the economic enhancement of the village centers. The Concord Planning Board is in full support of this project and looks forward to assisting in development of a scope of work and discussing goals for the study and final products.

## **Municipal Contributions**

The Town can contribute between 50-60 hours of staff time between the DPLM Director, the Town Planner and Administrative Assistant. Town staff is available to assist and partner with the MAPC at each step. The Town will provide meeting locations for community meetings and events at sites as close to the target area as possible. The Town will also provide translation services if needed, and help provide public outreach through the modules listed in the **Community Engagement** response.