

CONCORD THOREAU DEPOT PLAN



Vision + Action Plan *August 2020*



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Town of Concord

Marcia Rasmussen, Director of Planning & Land Management

Elizabeth Hughes, Town Planner

Concord Planning Board

Kristen Ferguson, Chair

Burton Flint, Vice-Chair

Nathan Bosdet, Clerk

Matthew Johnson, Member

Allen Sayegh, Member

Kate McEneaney, Member

Haley Ovedal, Member

MAPC Staff

Chris Kuschel, AICP, Project Manager, Senior Regional Planner

Ella Wise, Senior Regional Planner

To request additional copies of this document contact:

Chris Kuschel
ckuschel@mapc.org
617.933.0731



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INTRODUCTION

Overview

The Town of Concord Planning Division worked with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to conduct a study on creating a vision and associated recommendations for the Thoreau Depot neighborhood, one of the Town's village districts. Emerging from the Town's recently completed comprehensive plan ([Envision Concord: Bridge to 2030](#)) the Town's goal is to promote "smart growth development" in this area. The implementation of smart growth zoning can 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 can greatly enhance the Town's efforts to create a vibrant village district where residents will be able to live, work, and play.

As a basis for this project, the Town identified the following goals:

- 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 across the socio-economic spectrum.
- Embrace fiscally responsible decisions to achieve goals.

Through a community-driven process, the Town developed a vision for the neighborhood, principles supporting the vision, and recommendations to achieve the vision.

This memo summarizes the process and articulates the vision. It begins with a summary of existing conditions, which provide context and helped the community inform their decision-making. A discussion of this planning effort's process follows. The following section provides

the Vision, associated Principles, and a hypothetical development that illustrates the vision. Finally, the recommendations to achieve the vision over the long-term are provided. While the recommendations touch upon a number of areas, the most critical component towards realizing the vision is the development and adoption of zoning that is compatible with the vision. Zoning provides the framework that allows and encourages redevelopment in a way that is compatible with the vision. The draft zoning for the Thoreau Depot neighborhood accompanies this memo.

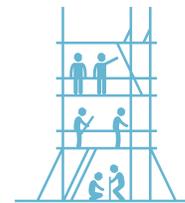
Link to the Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan (known in some communities as a long-range master plan) sets forth a community's vision for its future, along with goals and strategies to achieve those goals. Concord's long range

Thoreau Depot Plan Goals



Develop a **vision** for the Thoreau Depot area



Create the **framework** (i.e., zoning) to help implement the vision



Identify additional **recommendations** (e.g., connectivity improvements) to help implement the vision

comprehensive plan, completed in 2018, covers a diverse set of areas, including land use, transportation, open space, etc. As a long-term plan covering a wide variety of topics, a community must be proactive to begin implementing the plan's recommendations. Planning for Thoreau Depot is a major step that helps achieve multiple recommendations in Envision Concord. For example, one of Envision Concord's recommendations is to "renew and improve Concord's village centers, facilitating mixed-use development, improving public spaces, and improving connectivity."

Other recommendations in the comprehensive plan are less explicitly linked to the Thoreau Depot plan; nevertheless, the Thoreau Depot Plan can facilitate their implementation. The comprehensive plan, for example, recommends supporting strong commercial business success.

The comprehensive plan also recommends creating housing for a range of needs and income levels. Concord's population of approximately 19,000 has remained relatively stable. Yet the age cohorts within this population have changed and will continue to change. The Town's population of those aged 65 and older grew 9% over the past decade, and is projected to comprise a larger share of the population in the future. At the same time the percentage of school-aged children (approximately 20% of the population) has remained and is projected to remain flat.

These trends are not unique to Concord -- around the region and nationally, the "baby boomer" generation is approaching retirement and many are now empty nesters. People are waiting longer to have children and having fewer children when they do. These trends, however, have important implications for how a community plans for its future. As people age many wish to remain in their communities but wish to downsize to smaller homes, often in areas where they do not need to drive for all desired trips (going to the cafe, restaurant,

grocery store, etc.). This points to the need for smaller units in walkable areas, such as village centers. This type of housing in walkable areas near transit (i.e., a commuter rail station), is also extremely attractive to young professionals and others commuting to Boston for work.

By creating this type of housing, it can "free up" inventory of the Town's single family homes, allowing new families to move in, thus reversing the projected loss in school-aged children. Many young families looking to move to a community such as Concord previously lived in Inner Core communities characterized by their walkability. While many young families are attracted to suburban communities for their schools and the ability to live in a home with more space, they are also increasingly attracted to having the walkable, vibrant downtowns in their communities to which they've grown accustomed.

This discussion of the changing demographics and preferences all point to the need for additional types of housing, such as mixed-use development, which tend to be more naturally affordable than single family homes and often (and, indeed, should) include deed-restricted affordable units. This is especially important, given Concord's high cost of housing -- the majority of employees working in Concord of necessity live in other communities.

Underlying all of these recommendations is another goal from the comprehensive plan, that is to preserve the Town's New England character. All planning, therefore, must be done in a way that ensure context-sensitivity.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Understanding a neighborhood's existing conditions is important for several reasons:

- It helps set the context and provide a base-line understanding that can help plan for the future.
- Although the planning effort is largely community-driven, information from existing conditions can help residents and other stakeholders provide more well-informed input.
- An understanding of existing conditions, including the regulatory framework, help inform the recommendations by understanding what changes may need to be made to realize the future vision.

Study Area

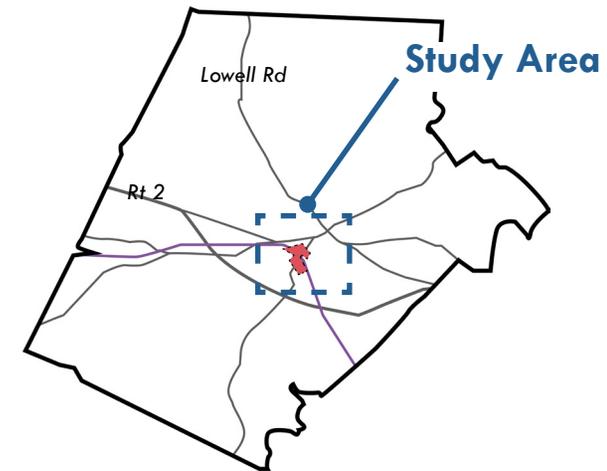
Thoreau Depot is centrally located in Town, close to Route 2 and Concord Center. The study area defined in the diagram to the right aligns with the existing Thoreau



Depot Business District. (Note the North axis has been rotated for diagrammatic purposes.) Sudbury Road and Thoreau Street are the primary roadways, which intersect near the station.

There are 28 parcels in the study area, comprising 15 acres (excluding public roadways and the MBTA right-of-way). The largest parcels under common ownership are at 195-203 Sudbury Road (the location of Crosby's Market), which together form a 5.5 acre parcel.

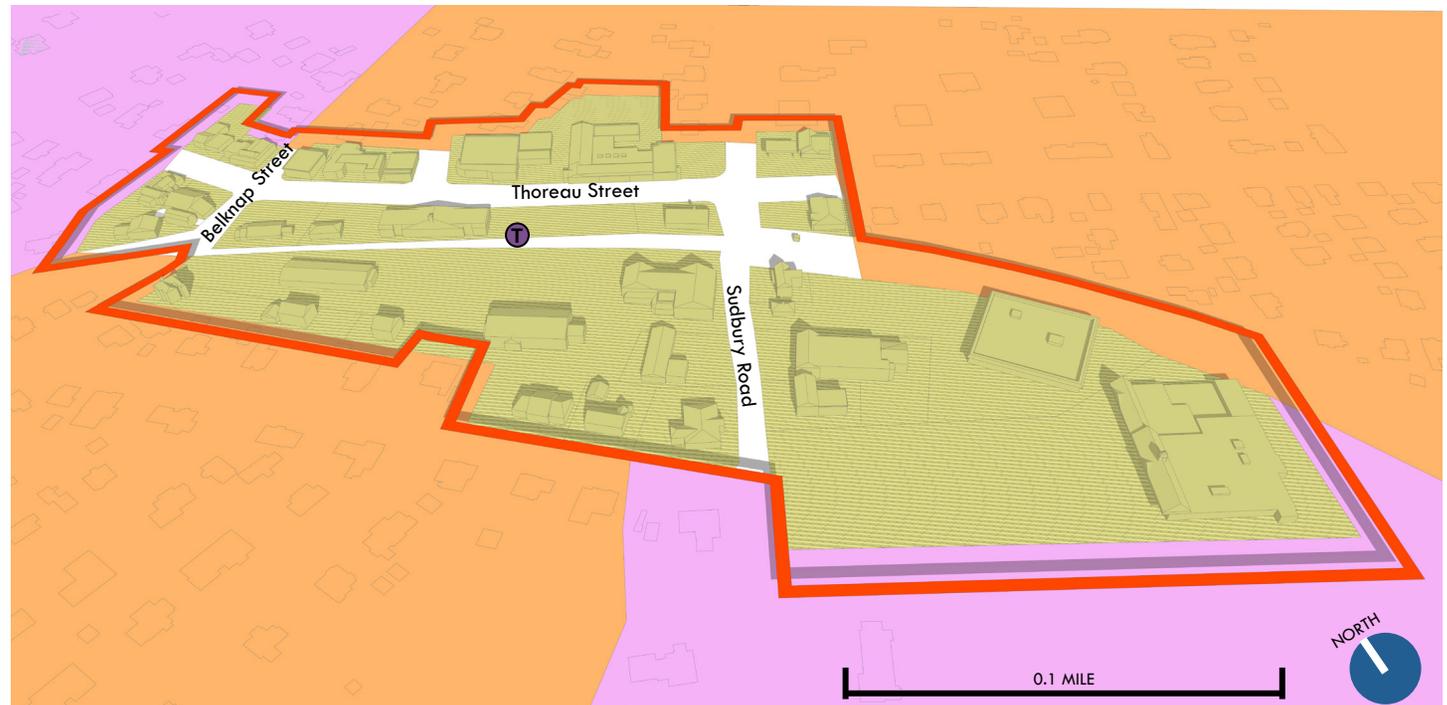
Total building area in the study area is 200,000 square feet (SF). The median building coverage per parcel is 28%, which is relatively low for a typical New England village area.



Zoning

Zoning is one of the most important tools a municipality has to help achieve the vision. Communities are divided into various zoning districts. Zoning regulates a number of aspects within each district that are critical to a neighborhood's character, including:

- Allowable uses, such as residential, office, retail, industrial, etc. and whether the use is allowed by-right or through a special permit;
- Dimensional regulations, such as heights, density, minimum lot size, building setbacks from the property lines, etc.;
- Requirements for affordable housing, if applicable;
- The amount of parking required;
- The amount of open space required;
- Increasingly often, standards for design that go beyond the basic dimensional regulations; and,
- Other requirements that are intended to ensure that



a development integrates harmoniously into the neighborhood.

While zoning can be a tool to help achieve a community's goals, unfortunately it is often a hindrance, especially in diverse, mixed-use neighborhoods. As such, a key aspect in developing the recommendations that will help implement the vision is an understanding of the existing zoning.

A single zoning district, the Thoreau Depot Business district, comprises the neighborhood. It is surrounded on all sides by two residential districts (Res-B and Res-C), which differ slightly, primarily having different lot size requirements.

The district allows a wide range of uses, either by right or through a Special Permit. These allowable uses include single family homes, various business uses, industrial

 **Thoreau Depot Business**

 **Residence C**

 **Residence B**

uses, institutional uses, and extensive uses. Similarly, the dimensional standards are flexible, with no lot area minimum, frontage, or front setback standards. Maximum height is 35 feet.

Analysis of Zoning

The existing zoning contains a number of elements which are flexible and could allow for the walkable, mixed-use neighborhood that the community envisions. There are, however, several broad issues:

- Several aspects of the zoning are a likely hindrance to achieving the vision
- Several aspects are too flexible, allowing for development that is not compatible with the vision
- The zoning does not clearly communicate the vision and desire for the neighborhood's future.

Among elements that are a potential hindrance, parking requirements are much higher than best practices for walkable areas proximate to transit (2 spaces per unit for market rate residential and 1.5 spaces per unit for affordable units). Requiring excessive parking raises development costs, which are typically passed on to the residents. They also require a large amount of “dead” space that could be better utilized in other ways. More appropriate parking standards, as well as a clearly defined shared parking mechanism, would greatly improve the neighborhood's zoning.

In addition, the definition of mixed-use development, “combined business/residence,” may be an overly narrow manner to allow for mixed-use development. While it may be preferable for all buildings to be commercial or mixed-use, the market conditions make it unclear if the entire neighborhood can support that amount of commercial use. Allowing some buildings to be residential-only on the same parcel as commercial and/or mixed-use buildings is a way to increase the

amount of residents who would support the local businesses (likely by walking and thus, not increasing neighborhood vehicular traffic). These buildings should generally be located in the interior of parcels with commercial uses along the public rights-of-way.

Another potential issue is the threshold for requiring affordable units. Concord should continue to strive to increase the amount of its affordable housing, especially in walkable areas with transit. The existing bylaws require four or more units to have 20% designated as affordable. This may be an overly aggressive approach and may actually hinder residential development in the business districts, since no additional residential units have been constructed since this requirement was added to the Zoning Bylaw. For a small project, a developer is faced with the choice of developing four units, one of which is affordable, or only three market rate units -- from a financial perspective, the latter is clearly the better choice.

The flexible nature of the district, especially the uses, could allow for a number of uses and developments not compatible with the vision. These include single family detached homes, as well as extensive uses such as forestry, and potentially some industrial uses.

Finally, new zoning can clearly communicate the Town's vision and desires for the future of the neighborhood. Combined with other neighborhood improvements, new zoning is a major piece to the puzzle that communicates to landowners and the community that it is seeking to revitalize this area.

Land Use

Whereas understanding a neighborhood's zoning helps one understand what may be built in the future, understanding the land use provides a snapshot of what is in the neighborhood today. This snapshot helps inform whether the types and mix of uses should generally remain or evolve over time.

The neighborhood, as expected for a New England village, is primarily commercial. The commercial uses include a grocery store (Crosby's Marketplace), an asset that many communities desire for their neighborhood. It also contains a variety of businesses, an auto-repair and gas station, and several restaurants.

There is one mixed-use parcel (Concord Crossing), which contains both commercial buildings and one mixed-use building with residences



above commercial space.

Finally, there are a couple buildings defined as Civic, as well as few single family residences.

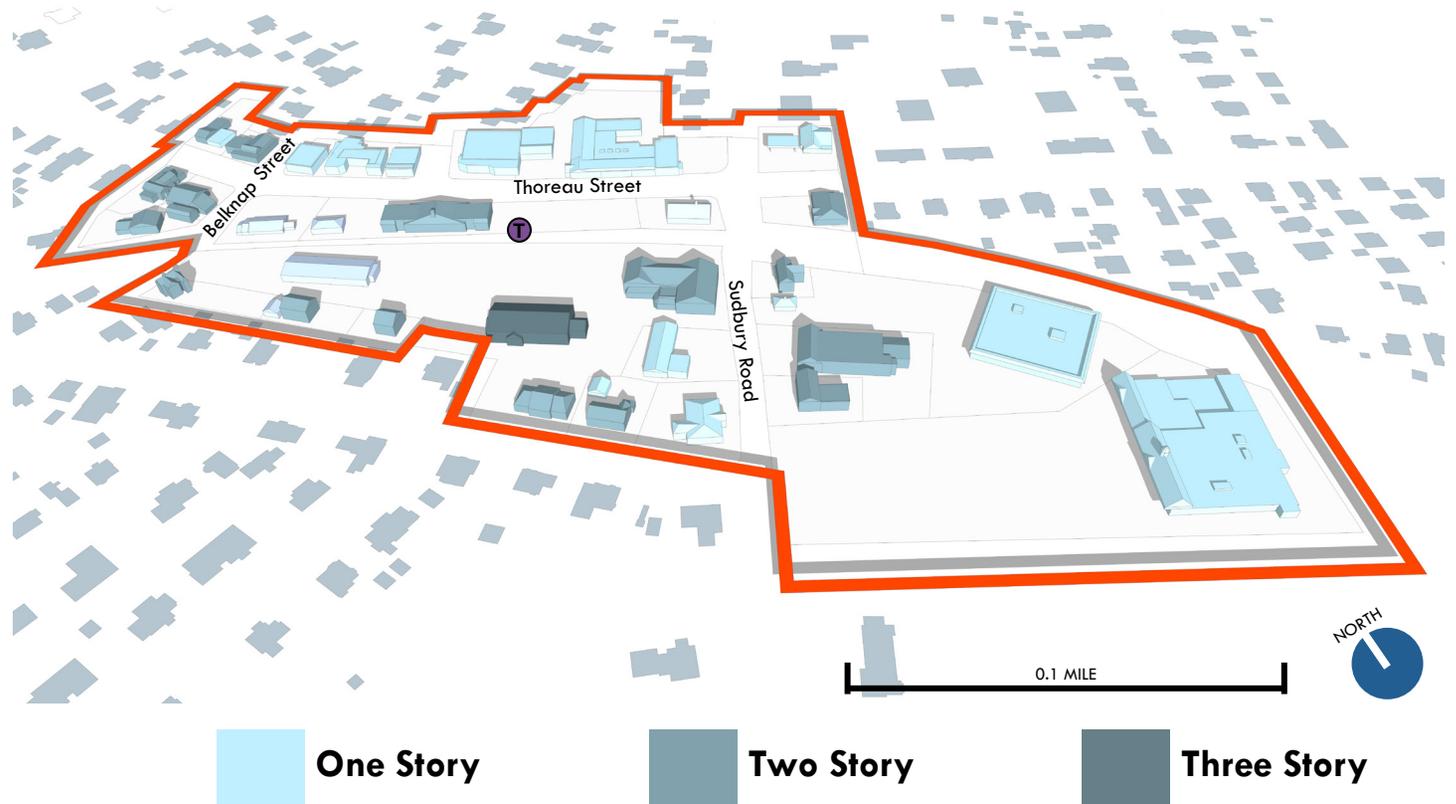
A key opportunity in the neighborhood is to increase the amount of mixed-use development.



Heights

The number of stories buildings have in a neighborhood is an indication of property utilization and a potential for future opportunities.

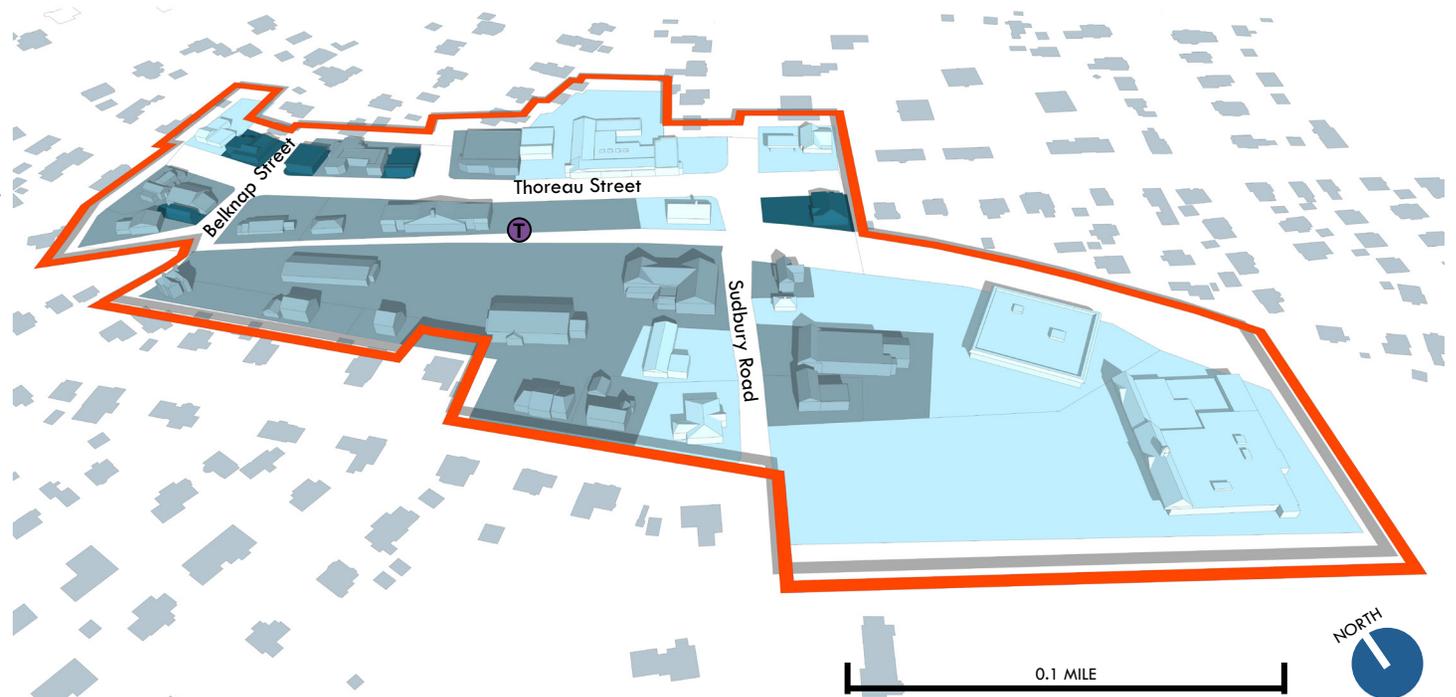
The majority of buildings are single story, with a handful of two-stories and a three-story building. The high number of single story buildings is an indication that the area may be under-utilized. Increased heights can help achieve a number of the Town's goals, including increasing the opportunities for additional housing and improving the economic development.



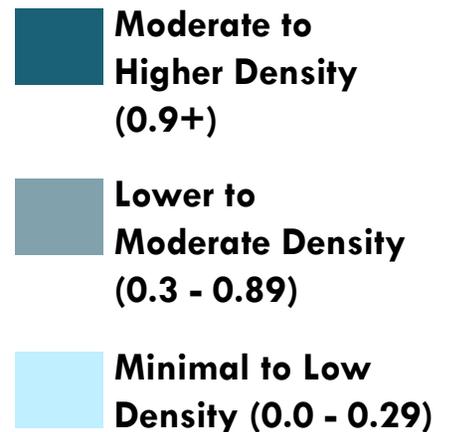
Density

In the existing conditions analysis, the observations of the high percentage of land devoted to surface parking may reflect a larger pattern of land underutilization in the neighborhood. One way to measure utilization of land is by analyzing the density of buildings on the property. The Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a calculation that is frequently used to assess density. It is calculated by measuring the total building area on a property, divided by the land area of that property.

For example, if a 10,000 square foot (SF) building were placed on a 10,000 SF property, that property would have an FAR of 1. This could be a single story building that covers the entire property, a two story building that covers half the property, a four story building covering a quarter of the property, etc. FAR, therefore, can be a useful measure when used in conjunction with other forms of analysis, but on its own does not provide adequate information on a neighborhood's character.



The FAR of each of the properties in the district has been calculated. This analysis shows that most properties have minimal and very low FAR.



Transportation Network

How people get to and travel around a neighborhood is critical for a neighborhood's success. Above all, New England villages should be walkable, which includes elements such as sidewalks and safe crossings. Ideally, sidewalks should be on both sides and wide enough to allow for multiple people to walk abreast, as well as space for street trees, seating, etc. Portions of Sudbury Road only have sidewalks on one side of the street.

Many people must drive to or through the Thoreau Depot neighborhood. Generally, traffic should be "calmed," where traffic flow is efficient but speeds are low. The intersection at Sudbury Road and Thoreau Street has been cited by Town staff and residents as challenging or dangerous.

Bike travel is an increasingly popular form of getting around. A key to increasing bike usage is the presence of safe bicycle infrastructure, ideally physically separate bicycle lanes. Currently, there are no bicycle lanes in the

neighborhood. Sudbury Road appears to have adequate room for vehicular lanes to be narrowed slightly, allowing for the remaining space to be used for bicycle lanes. Thoreau Street is potentially too narrow for bicycle lanes. In this situation, it is even more important for vehicular traffic to travel slowly through the neighborhood to improve bicycle safety.



Parts of Sudbury Road lack sidewalks on the east side of the street.



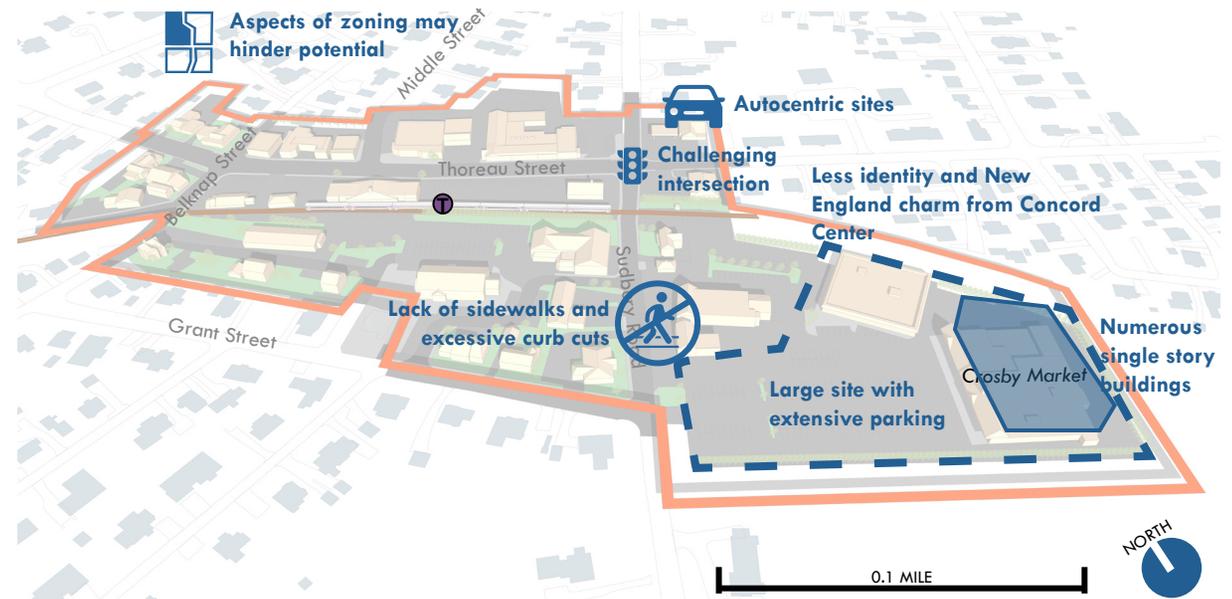
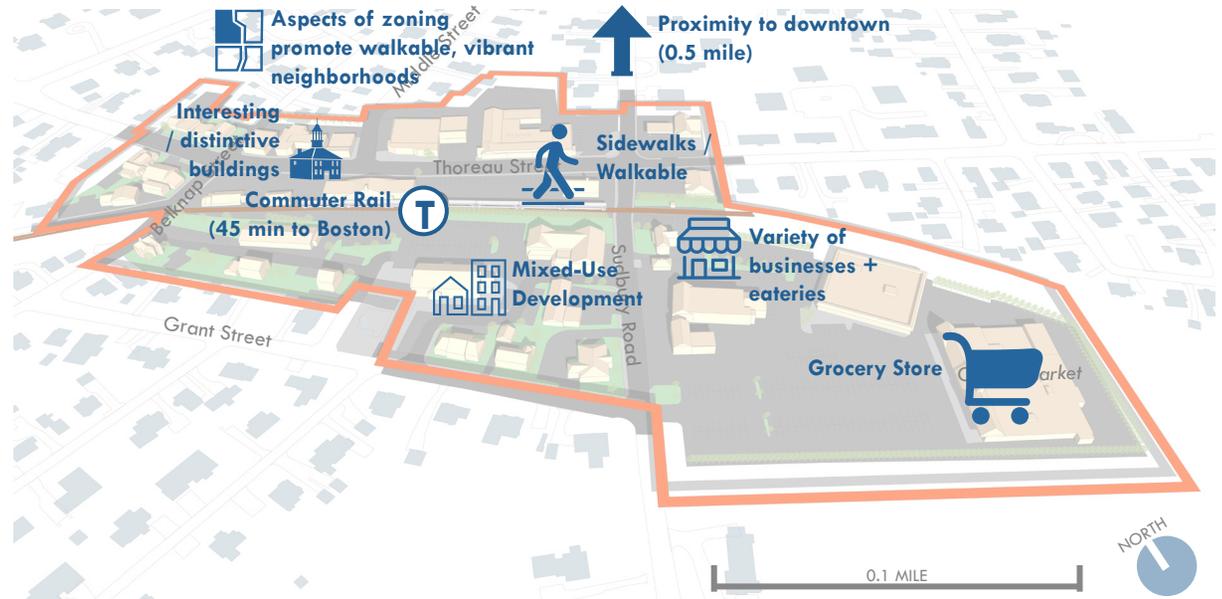
The intersection of Sudbury Road and Thoreau Street, including the adjacent Starbucks entrance, has been noted as a challenging and potentially dangerous intersection.

Area Strengths and Challenges

The diagrams on the right summarize a number of the strengths (top) and challenges (bottom) in the Thoreau Depot neighborhood.

There are a number of positive aspects to build upon. Its location, close to downtown and with a commuter rail station suggests it is a high-demand location. It has a number of interesting and distinct buildings that help provide a sense of place. There is already some mixed-use development, a key feature of vibrant villages. The area has a number of businesses, including a grocery store. Sidewalks are present throughout most of the area.

There are also challenges that has hindered the area from reaching its full potential. Despite some aspects to the zoning that are conducive to a downtown setting, there are other aspects that act as a hindrance. The setting is more autocentric than typically associated with a village setting, such as wide curb cuts, parking visible from the street, and buildings sited in a way that prioritizes vehicles.



DEVELOPING THE VISION

Process

The Comprehensive Plan set forth the overarching goals for revitalizing the Thoreau Depot neighborhood. This planning effort built upon that with a community-driven approach to further detail the vision. In January 2020 the Planning Board hosted a community forum on the Thoreau Depot neighborhood, facilitated by MAPC. After a brief presentation, the majority of the forum focused on community members providing input through a number of stations in an open-house style setting. Members of the Planning Board staffed the stations and Town Planning Staff floated throughout the forum, providing numerous opportunities for interaction and feedback.

Following the forum, MAPC staff synthesized the information, and based on the synthesis, developed a draft of the vision and recommendations. This was presented virtually to the Planning Board and public on June 23, further refined and finalized. From this Thoreau Depot Vision Plan, MAPC and the Town is further continuing to work on drafting and adopting a zoning bylaw compatible with the vision.

The following section provides a summary of the feedback, focusing on one of the most critical stations, a “visual preference” exercise that forms the basis of new zoning.



Visual Preference

One of the most important stations at the forum was a two-part visual preference exercise. First, participants rated photos that they think would be appropriate for Thoreau Depot. This helps inform style, heights, details, and building type/use (e.g., mixed-use, commercial, single family detached, single family attached, etc.). A fairly wide selection of choices were provided, although all were options that were likely to be appropriate for the context (e.g., no towers, no industrial buildings).

The photos to the right were the top six choices from the community forum. They indicate a strong desire for traditional style architecture (e.g., peaked roofs) of up to three stories. According to this exercise, there is a desire for a range of building typologies, especially mixed-use, but also multi-family and commercial-only.

The photos also point to a desire for a walkable neighborhood, with active street edges, attractive sidewalks, and sufficient open spaces.



- Mixed-Use
- Traditional architectural form and elements
- Peaked roof and shed dormers
- Front setback used for seating
- Street trees, outdoor seating, well-designed signage and lights, brick sidewalk



- Mixed-Use
- Traditional architecture with dormers
- Brick, heavily landscaped sidewalks
- Zero foot front setback



- Commercial
- Mansard roof
- Landscaped setback, outdoor seating, well-design signage
- Landscaped front setback



- Commercial
- Traditional architecture, with Mansard roof and dormers
- Large scale that has both vertical and horizontal modulation
- Zero foot front setback



- Multi-family residential
- Traditional architectural elements
- Large scale building appears likely set back from street
- Large percentage of open space



- Single family attached (i.e., townhomes)
- Traditional style homes with varying rooflines and modulation

This second aspect to the visual preference exercise was to identify where in the neighborhood people would like to see certain buildings, as well as any buildings they would like to keep. This exercise helps identify distinctions within the neighborhood to help inform the zoning.

MAPC examined the results in a number of different ways to divide the neighborhood into subdistricts. Ultimately, there was very little difference among potential subdistricts, except for a slightly greater preference for up to four story buildings for parcels along Sudbury Road, instead of three.

There were several buildings the community wishes to retain in the neighborhood, which can contribute to a distinct sense of place. These include the historic train depot and buildings along Thoreau Street. For these latter, single story buildings, zoning could be used to incentivize retaining the facades.



Buildings and/or facades the community wishes to retain.

Other stations sought input on what type of businesses people wish to see in the neighborhood, elements that would incentivize people to visit the neighborhood more, multi-modal transportation needs, and other general thoughts.

By far, most participants favored additional places to eat and drink, including coffee shops, restaurants, and bars. People also want the neighborhood to provide daily needs uses, such as daycare, pharmacy, etc. This input can inform both zoning uses, as well as initiatives the Town can use to recruit and retain various small businesses.

Improved connectivity was considered the top priority for improving the area. This focused primarily on improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and street lights. Bike lanes and other bike infrastructure were also noted consistently. Wayfinding, traffic-calming (i.e., slowing vehicular traffic), sufficient parking were other top concerns related to connectivity. Several participants noted, for example, that many visitors arrive to Concord by train. Although it is a fairly short distance from the station to downtown Concord, it can be difficult for visitors to orient themselves. Despite the proximity, the two areas feel disconnected and the Thoreau Depot area does not adequately act as a proper “gateway” to the Town.

From a vehicular perspective, there was a strong desire to address the intersection at Sudbury Road and Thoreau Street, including congestion caused by the nearby Starbucks.

In addition to the connectivity improvements, forum participants were in favor of planting additional street trees. They also want to increase the availability of publicly available open spaces. This includes pocket parks, playgrounds, and other gathering spaces.

Finally, outdoor seating was a high priority and desire among forum participants.

Taken together, this feedback points to a need for a dramatically improved public realm. Private development has a strong role to play by siting buildings in a manner conducive to walkability and a village setting. Front setbacks should be used for adding vibrancy to the area, through outdoor seating, as opposed to being used for parking. Development mitigation efforts should focus on increasing walking, biking, and safety for all users. Open spaces should generally be publicly accessible and convenient to the community.

The Town also has a major role to play. Investments should be made in sidewalks, intersection improvements, aesthetic improvements, and bicycle facilities. While these may be partially funded through new developments, they will also require funding from the Town and state resources (MassWorks, etc.).

In addition to the public realm improvements, the Town and stakeholders (e.g., Chamber of Commerce) can work toward recruiting, retaining, and supporting small businesses, especially eating establishments.

The Recommendations section, which follows the Vision, provides further details on helping to achieve the community’s desires for the future of the neighborhood.

THE VISION

Vision Statement

A critical aspect of this planning effort was hearing from town residents and understanding more about how they wanted their neighborhood to look and feel over the coming decades. What were the things that they valued most about the area and what was needed to change or progress in order to achieve an even better neighborhood? The following Vision Statement serves to help guide future decisions and investments.

The Thoreau Depot neighborhood is a charming, village center, an asset for Concord's residents and an inviting gateway for visitors. It's an economically vibrant neighborhood with a diversity of businesses, a place to enjoy a cup of coffee, choose among a variety of restaurants, purchase a fresh loaf bread at the local bakery or purchase the week's groceries. New, thoughtfully-designed buildings are well-integrated into the fabric of the neighborhood, providing a diversity of housing options, where empty nesters can down-size into smaller homes and young adults can easily take the train to Boston. The neighborhood is affordable across a range of incomes.

The sidewalks are wide and comfortable, lined with shade trees and landscaping. Visitors arriving by train can easily and safely walk to Concord's historic downtown. Students walk by on their way to school, residents from other Concord neighborhoods ride their bike to the Depot, and cars move smoothly through orderly intersections and neighborhood streets.

Thoreau Depot is a place to be proud of.

Principles

The vision statement is supported by a series of principles. These principles provide greater detail for how the vision will be achieved in the future.

High-quality design honors Concord's history: Regulations should ensure that new development, as well as wayfinding, signage, and lighting, contributes to creating a walkable neighborhood with context-sensitive development. Setbacks and standards should help define the public realm and create an engaging streetscape for pedestrians.

Active, commercial uses: Commercial spaces are sized to attract small businesses, and regulations encourage uses that service local residents, such as cafes, bakeries, and general stores.

Pedestrian-focused neighborhood: New development is oriented towards pedestrians—rather than cars—making it easy for new residents to walk to the train. Safe walk-ways connect the Depot to all streets and key neighborhood destinations, and bike parking is secure and convenient. Parking is available for commuters and other users and efficiently located and designed to limit large expanses of asphalt and to encourage a walkable neighborhood and vibrant economy.

Housing options and affordability: As the demographics change, rising demand for smaller units in walkable areas is met with new development in the neighborhood. Inclusionary zoning can ensure that units are affordable to a range of households.

Walkable: Continuous sidewalks that line all streets and connect the Depot to key destinations should be well-maintained. Landscaping and street tree shade canopy create a comfortable environment for pedestrians.

Traffic calming: Streets and intersections should be designed to be safe for all users. Through-traffic should be limited on residential streets.

Gathering spaces: Public benches and outdoor seating at cafes and restaurants, as well as pocket parks, courtyards, or other areas can provide gathering spaces for residents and visitors. Programming and events can help make these spaces more vibrant and well-used.

Hypothetical Development Example

This section provides an example of how a future development could occur that helps advance the vision and achieve the community's goals for the area.

The example used is the two parcels (under joint ownership) that contain the Crosby's Marketplace and other businesses. This site was chosen because at 5.4 acres it is the largest, and therefore provides the greatest opportunity for transformational change. **It is important to note that the following is a hypothetical example. It is not a proposal for an actual development.** Ultimately, it is up to landowners to choose whether to redevelop their properties within the framework of the regulations.

The site today contains slightly more than 30,000 square feet of commercial space in an autocentric setting. The hypothetical example retains approximately the same amount of commercial space, including a large footprint space to retain the highly popular grocery store, but reorganizes the space and adds a total of 63 residential units (assuming 1,200 SF gross floor area per unit).



Existing conditions (black line indicates approximate parcel boundaries of the site).



Bird's eye view of hypothetical example (white buildings indicate new buildings).



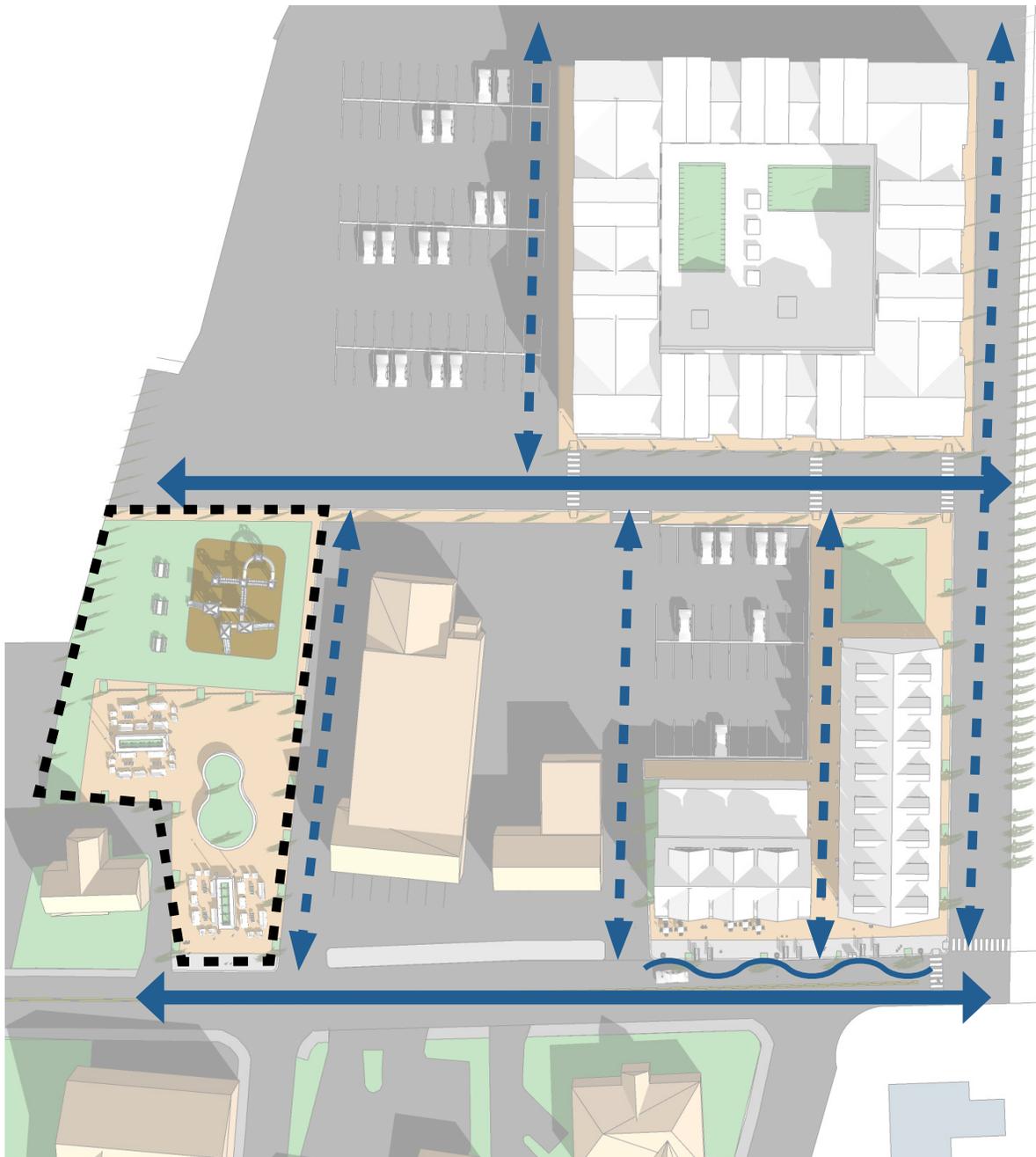
1 Building 1
 Commercial area (ground floor): 4,440 SF
 Residential units: 7

2 Building 2
 Commercial area (ground floor): 5,800 SF
 Residential units: 10

3 Building 3
 Commercial area (ground floor): 31,600
 Residential units: 46

4 Open Space
 15% of total (including seating and pathways on site)





Block structure

The buildings are organized to help develop a walkable block structure through:

- Sidewalks and vehicular circulation patterns
- Placement of buildings along street edge
- Buildings and open space oriented toward Sudbury Road
- Buildings within the development are connected through strong pedestrian connections

Open Space

The community has desired more outdoor space, including seating, playgrounds, and gathering spaces. Zoning can require a minimum percentage of usable open space for certain developments.

This example provides a large portion of the open space as easily accessible to the public (from Sudbury Road), helping to fill in a “gap” in the built environment and meeting a key community need.

Additional open space includes the plaza area/ seating along Sudbury Road and smaller area in the rear of building 2.



Sidewalks

Sidewalks along the road should be wide, comfortable and generally divided into three areas:

- 1 **Furnishing zone**
Adjacent to the curb with seating, trees, lighting, trash receptacles, etc.
- 2 **Walking zone**
An area free from clutter and hazards, wide enough for at least 2-3 people to walk abreast
- 3 **Active zone**
An area with seating and other elements to activate the space and add vibrancy to the streetscape.

Front setback

Along Sudbury Road, a modest front setback provides a buffer from the roadway. Critically, this space should be used primarily for seating, as well as landscaping. The front setback area should not be used for parking, loading, or other uses that do not contribute the vibrancy of the public realm.

These modest front setbacks also respect the context of existing buildings along Sudbury Road in the study area.

In other parts of the study area, e.g., along Thoreau Street, 0' front setbacks are appropriate (given the context) and often necessary (given the small parcel size).



Building and site planning design elements

A number of elements work together to contribute positively to the public realm and help achieve the community’s goals and vision.

1

Roof lines

Community preference indicated a desire for pitched roofs, such as front and side gable roofs. This is especially important for buildings along the frontage, which are easily visible to the public.

2

Building components

Building components such as dormers, shed dormers, etc. were present in the buildings chosen through the visual preference station. They add visual interest to buildings while also increasing the amount of usable indoor space.

3

Vertical modulation

Large buildings should be articulated with pilasters, change in materials, cornices, etc. approximately every 40 feet. This reduces the perception of a building’s bulk and mass and adds visual interest.

4

Glazing

Buildings along the frontage should have a high percentage of glazing (windows) with transparent glass to activate the street edge. Commercial buildings, especially should have a high percentage (60%).

5

Limit building length

Even when modulated, extremely long buildings along the frontage are not appropriate to the context. In this example building lengths are less than 100’ along Sudbury Road, separated by a walkway to the rear building.



Integrating existing uses into new typology

Crosby’s Marketplace is considered a major asset to the neighborhood. Increasingly, grocery stores are being developed as part of mixed-use projects. In this example, the floor plate of the ground floor is similar to the existing building.

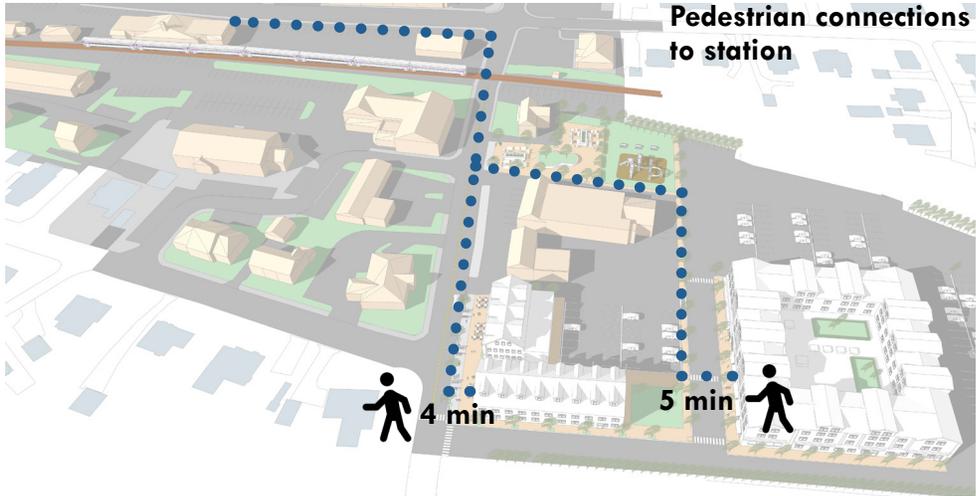
Above the grocery store are 2.5 stories of residences. Buildings sited in the rear of a deep parcel can likely be larger than along Sudbury Road without having any detrimental effects on neighborhood context.

As with buildings along the frontage, buildings in the rear should be articulated and have a high percentage of groundfloor glazing.

Crosswalks and sidewalks should provide a seamless and safe connection into the neighborhood.



Parking should be located in the rear or side of buildings to minimize the impact on pedestrian experience. The development example combines best practice standards with a shared parking mechanism, requiring 243 spaces. (The example assumes surface parking.)



Pedestrian connections to station

4 min 5 min

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

The planning work between the Town and MAPC has two main components: developing a vision and creating zoning to help implement that vision. This section summarizes the zoning recommendations. The following sections summarize other recommendations related to connectivity, economic development, etc.

These recommended changes are offered as a starting point for discussion as the Town and residents consider new options for the study area's zoning.

Zoning

There are different potential options for the format of the study area's zoning district, including an overlay district, a Massachusetts Smart Growth Overlay District (Chapter 40R) zoning district, slight modifications to the existing Thoreau Depot Business district, and a new base zoning district. For the reasons discussed below, MAPC recommends substantially replacing much of the existing Thoreau Depot Business district with zoning that will help achieve the neighborhood's vision.

The proposed zoning district, tentatively renamed as Thoreau Depot Village, is largely based on the existing Thoreau Depot Business zoning

district and will continue to allow for buildings of similar height, similar setbacks, and similar diversity of uses. However, there are substantive changes proposed in the new zoning.

Differences within the District

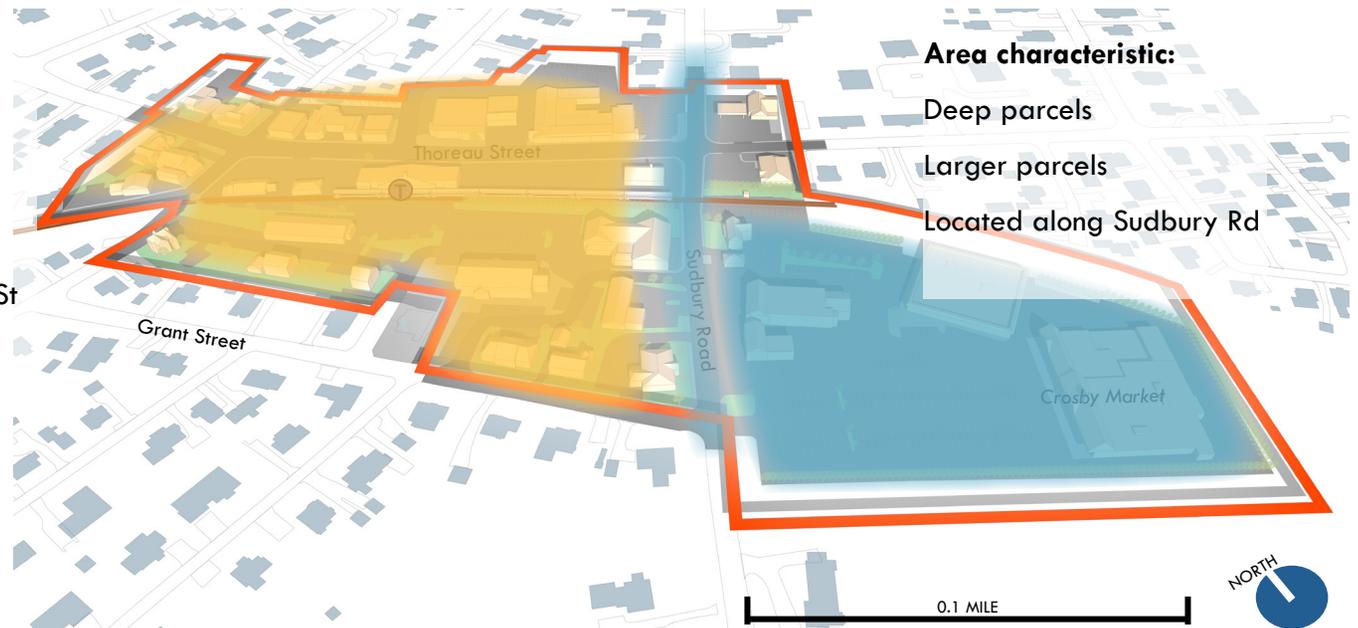
First, the recommended base district should allow for an approach that leverages the unique opportunities and challenges of different locations in the study area. Through the site analysis and the community visioning process, it is clear that the study area has two distinct, yet mutually dependent areas. One area focuses on the larger parcels on the east side of Sudbury Road. The other area focuses on the remainder of the district, primarily along Thoreau Street,

Area characteristic:

Smaller parcels

More traditional development patterns

Located along Thoreau St and quieter side streets



which contains smaller parcels and a more traditional building pattern than along Sudbury Road. (One option to distinguish these areas is through two sub-districts; however, MAPC recommends a simpler approach, outlined later in this section.

High-Quality Design

Second, because there was a strong interest in ensuring that future development promotes walkability and is of high quality design, MAPC recommends going a step beyond what is found in typical zoning districts and including standards to ensure high-quality design. This can be done by regulating the form and design of buildings and the public realm, rather than just the use and basic massing of buildings. Zoning codes traditionally provide only basic standards for controlling the form of a building, such as heights and setbacks. They may contain density standards, as well, such as floor-area ratio (FAR) or unit per acre (UPA) maximums. These measures, however, are “blunt” tools for controlling a building’s form, as extremely different types of development can result from the same FAR or UPA.

What about existing uses that are inconsistent with the new zoning?

Pre-existing, non-conforming uses would be grandfathered in and able to continue. Thus, the district would evolve gradually, over time, if and when a landowner decides to redevelop his/her property. In addition, the zoning could include language to allow an existing landowner to modify their property, e.g., to expand an existing business.

Why not an Overlay District?

An overlay district is a good approach where a community, either for political reasons and/or where the underlying uses are acceptable, wants to retain its base zoning. In Concord, based on conversations with Town staff, a meeting with local landowners in late 2019, and the public forum in January 2020, there seems to be support from a variety of stakeholders for a new, unified approach to improving the study area. Creating an overlay zone could allow landowners to build new projects that are inconsistent with the study area vision and/or in conflict with the desires of abutters (e.g., a new industrial site being constructed next to existing residences). An additional drawback is that overlay districts add complexity to the Zoning Bylaws and may cause confusion for landowners and be more difficult to administer for the Town.

Why not a Massachusetts Smart Growth Overlay District?

The Town’s comprehensive plan recommends consideration of the State’s Smart Growth Overlay District (Chapter 40R) zoning in the study area “to encourage the redevelopment of the Thoreau Street Depot Area and adjacent Crosby’s Market Area to allow mixed-use, multi-family redevelopment or live-work spaces” (Envision Concord, 2018). The vision for Thoreau Depot is aligned with Ch. 40R zoning, and Ch. 40R standards can be used for guidance in developing the new zoning. However, the particular incentives provided in the Ch. 40R program would provide little benefit to Concord in this instance. The incentive payments are based on the projected number of additional new units that could be built under the Ch. 40R zoning in excess of what would previously have been permitted under base zoning. The existing district allows for residential development, so the incentive payments would be minimal.

Key recommended zoning changes

The following table summarizes the suggested key zoning changes, each of which are explained in the following section. *These recommendations are a starting point for continued work to develop and refine the zoning to meet the Town’s needs and with additional community input.*

Summary of Existing Zoning vs. Recommended Zoning Changes			
	Thoreau Depot Business (Existing Zoning)	Thoreau Depot Village (Potential Zoning)	
Side design	Lot size	None	No minimum or maximum. Establish design standards to achieve the block structure and building granularity of traditional walkable neighborhoods, while allowing larger lots that are easier to redevelop.
	Setbacks	None, except 10’ side and rear yards where a business or industrial use abuts a residential district	Thoreau Street and other neighborhood streets: 0’-10’ Sudbury Road: 10’-20’ Front yard should be used for seating, landscaping, or other uses that contribute to the area’s walkability and sense of place. Front setback area should generally not be used for parking.
	Density	None	Consider establishing a minimum, potentially based on Ch. 40R standards
	Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single-family dwelling: 2 spaces per unit; 1.5 spaces for affordable housing or senior housing - Retail store: 1 space / 250 square feet - Restaurant: 1 space / 3 seats capacity plus 1 space per employee on largest shift - Professional office: 1 space / 250 square feet - Joint parking facilities are allowed between certain uses, such as restaurants and banks - No required amount of bicycle parking 	Reduce parking requirements, where possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 space per 1 bedroom unit - 1.5 spaces per 2 and 2+ bedroom unit Consider adding parking maximum per unit Require 1 secure, indoor bike space per unit Maintain same commercial and office parking minimums Allow shared parking between residential and commercial uses

		Thoreau Depot Business (Existing Zoning)	Thoreau Depot, including 2 sub-districts: Thoreau Street and Thoreau Marketplace (Proposed Zoning)
Uses	Residential	By right: Single-family, boardinghouse, hotel/motel Special Permit: Two-family, accessory dwelling units, Residential Compound, Residential Cluster Development, and Planned Residential Development allowed by Special Permit.	Prohibit new single-family houses
	Commercial	By right: Retail, personal service, craft shop, restaurant, indoor amusement, outdoor amusement, funeral home, repair shop and building trade, financial and business office, professional office, medical center and lab, auto service, auto repair, vehicular dealerships, boat sales and rental, parking facility, grocery store Special permit: Transportation services	Allow uses that best meet the needs of creating a walkable, vibrant commercial village
	Industrial	By right: Warehouse, storage yard, open-air sales, R&D and Light manufacturing, packaging, process, testing	Prohibit most industrial uses
	Mixed-Use	By right: Combined business/residence*	Modify definition of combined business/residence to allow for residential-only buildings on the same lot as commercial (commercial is along the frontage) Revise inclusionary and open space requirements for mixed-use development to ensure development balances public benefits with financial feasibility
	Other	“Extensive”- by right: forestry, agriculture, conservation, private recreation; special permit: Earth removal Institutional- by right: educational, child care facility, religious, philanthropic, hospital, cemetery, lodge and club Government and utility uses- by right: Town of Concord municipal use, underground utility, aboveground utility, large ground-mounted solar voltaic installation Accessory- by right: customary home occupation, workshops and classes, gift shops, kennels, stables, farm product sales, aviation facilities, and more	Prohibit “extensive” uses and low-density “accessory” uses, such as kennels Make some “accessory” uses by right commercial uses, such as gift shops and workshops/classes Add temporary commercial uses, such as coffee stands, cut-flower stands, fresh vegetable markets, etc.

		Thoreau Depot Business (Existing Zoning)	Thoreau Depot, including 2 sub-districts: Thoreau Street and Thoreau Marketplace (Proposed Zoning)
Public benefit	Affordable housing	Combined business/residence buildings of more than 4 units need to include >20% affordable	Potentially consider adjusting the threshold and percentage requirement based on the size of the project
	Open space	Combined business/residence buildings need to have open space provided on the lot equal to twice the gross floor area of the residential area, decks can count if they are >25 square feet	Potentially consider publicly-accessible open space requirements for new development of a certain size and exempt small projects
	Climate resilience	None	Potentially add Low Impact Design guidelines Potentially add incentives for clean energy, including EV charging infrastructure and onsite renewable energy
Building design	Height	35 feet	Still 3 stories, but a slight increase to 38 feet (peaked roofs) Potential to allow up to 4 stories for buildings in deep parcels that are adequately shielded from the public right-of-way
	Design standards	None	Potential inclusion of standards to ensure high quality design, including massing, fenestration, frontage types, and building components
<p>Notes:</p> <p>* Combined business/residence requires 20% affordable units for all developments of 4 or more units, and open space equal to twice the gross floor area of the residential portion of the building. The open space and parking may be relaxed, and the height can increase to 40 feet with a Special Permit.</p>			

Setbacks

Similarly, under the existing zoning, there are no minimum or maximum setbacks, except a required 10 foot side and rear yard where a business or industrial use abuts a residential district. While this buffer helps to ensure a transition between the neighborhood center and the residential areas, further front setback guidance would also help to ensure that development is appropriate for, and contributes to, the desired streetscape.

In the Thoreau Street subdistrict, the buildings are nearer each other and the street is narrower, therefore a smaller setback is more appropriate. A setback of zero to 10 feet will help cultivate opportunities for window shopping and an active street front. In comparison, Sudbury Road is a higher speed roadway with existing buildings setback further from the street. Therefore, a larger setback of between 10 feet minimum and 20 feet maximum would be appropriate in the Thoreau Marketplace subdistrict.

Throughout the study area, parking should be prohibited from the front setback area. Instead, where front setbacks do exist they should serve to activate the space, such as with restaurant seating and landscaping, as shown on page 22.

Density

If the Town wishes to provide a residential density requirement, Ch. 40R density requirements could be used: 20 units per acre (UPA) for mixed-use and multi-family and 12 UPA for townhomes. However, to ensure these levels of density are feasible, reductions in parking requirements will likely be needed.

For commercial uses, height limitations and parking requirements will drive maximum density without the need for an explicit requirement (i.e., floor area ratio).

Parking standards

Parking standards have a large effect on new development and the feel of a neighborhood. Overly high parking requirements increase the cost of development and reduce the amount of space available for creating walkable development. Oftentimes, high parking standards result in large expanses of surface parking and encourage automobile use.

Concord's zoning bylaw requires the same parking ratios by use throughout Town (e.g., 2 spaces per single-family dwelling unit and 1.5 spaces for affordable and senior housing.) The current approach does not account for the local context of the study area; instead, they are more appropriate for neighborhoods where residents are dependent on vehicles for almost every trip. In comparison, the proximity to the train and living in a walkable area — some residents might commute by train or walk to the grocery store — can reduce the dependence on automobiles and need for the amount of off-street parking that may be necessary in other areas of Town. For example, a two-person household may only need one car that can be shared, rather than two. The Town could consider reducing the parking minimum to 1 space per 1-bedroom unit and 1.5 spaces for units with 2-bedrooms or more. For commercial uses, the parking ratios in the existing zoning are generally appropriate for the context but could be reduced if the landowner demonstrates that parking needs can be met.

To ensure efficient use of land and to reduce the cost of development, MAPC recommends updating the shared parking regulations. Currently, joint parking facilities are allowed with Planning Board approval between certain uses, such as restaurants and banks, which are not normally open during similar hours. The existing zoning allows for a reduction of up to 50 percent of the spaces required for educational, religious, lodge and club, indoor amusement, and restaurant uses. Based on the same logic of different uses needing parking at different times, MAPC recommends allowing for shared parking between residential and commercial uses.

In addition, the zoning should provide the opportunity for a landowner to reduce the parking requirements through a special permit based on several options, including:

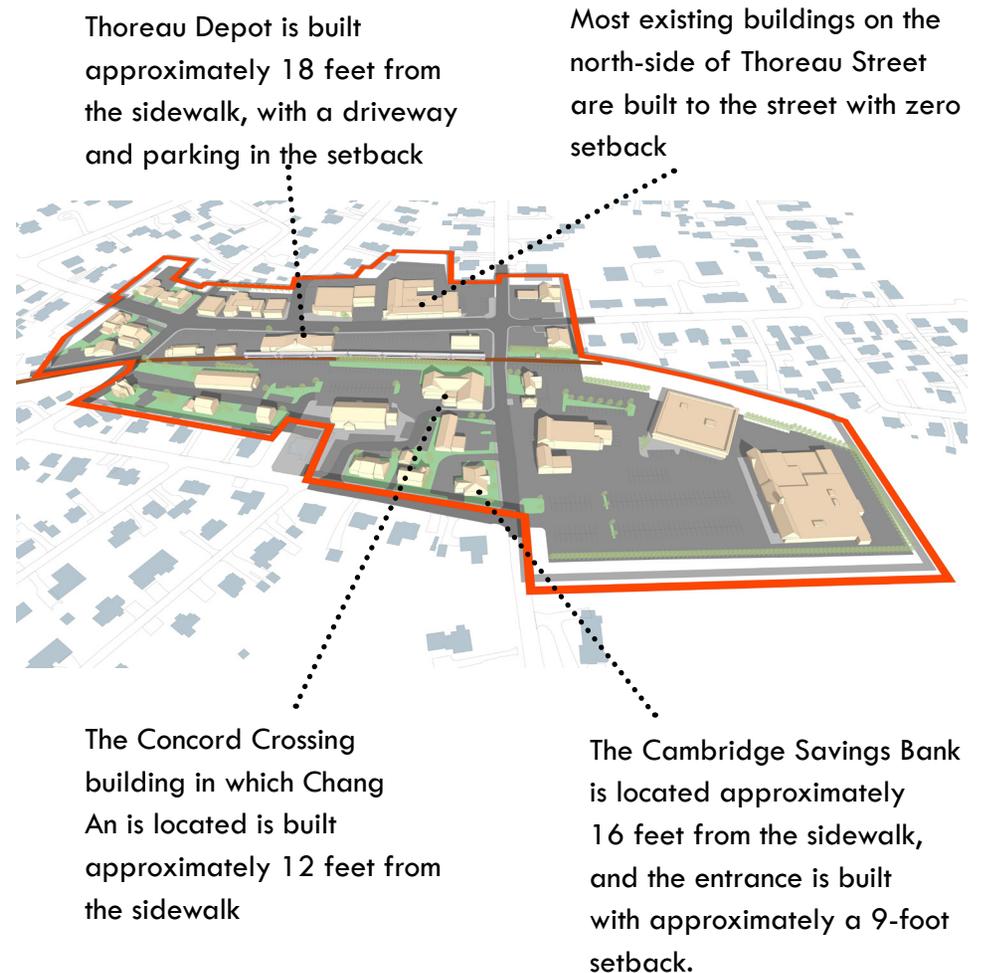
- Availability of on-street parking
- Presence of a car-sharing program
- Availability of off-site parking

Concord's zoning bylaws currently requires secure, weather-protected bicycle storage facilities for both residential and commercial uses. These facilities are necessary to make bicycling an easier, more convenient mobility option. MAPC recommends adding specific bicycle parking ratios, such as one secure, weather-protected bicycle storage space per unit.

Uses

Another important aspect to foster walkability is mixed-use development. Locating residential and commercial uses in close proximity makes walking to one's destination a viable and attractive option to driving, which attracts pedestrians and adds to the vitality of a neighborhood. Vertically mixed-use buildings typically have retail space on the ground-floor with residences or office space above. Horizontal mixed-use refers to a variety of uses within one parcel or neighborhood, allowing for a residential unit aside a commercial use.

The existing zoning allows for a wide spectrum of uses, including residential, commercial, industrial, and vertical mixed-use (referred to in the existing zoning as "combined business/residential"). While MAPC recommends allowing residential, commercial and mixed-use development in the study area, some of the uses currently allowed may be inconsistent with the vision. For example, the



“extensive uses” allowed in the Thoreau Depot Business district, including “forestry” and “agriculture” are more appropriate for lower-density, rural areas of Concord, rather than in a village center. In addition, auto-oriented commercial uses, such as vehicular dealerships are generally more appropriate for commercial corridors rather than mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods. Similarly, industrial uses are inappropriate and potentially dangerous to locate in proximity to homes and commercial workplaces.

To help create a sense of place, temporary commercial uses, such as coffee stands, cut-flower stands, fresh vegetable markets, could be added to allowable uses. To promote a continuous, active street front, the new zoning could require commercial uses on the ground floor of buildings with frontage along Thoreau Street and Sudbury Road. Zoning for more commercial space than the market can support is a common mistake that results in vacancies and should be avoided; however, under existing conditions, all of the buildings with frontage along Thoreau Street or Sudbury Road currently are commercial uses, thus the risk is low for zoning for more commercial use than the market can support.

For residential uses, allowing for multifamily buildings help provide housing choices to meet the needs of different households, including empty-nester’s looking to downsize, families for which single-family homes are prohibitively expensive, young adults moving back to Concord, and other residents that prefer smaller units in walkable locations. Welcoming more residents to the neighborhood will also support the viability of local businesses.

In addition, MAPC recommends revising the definition and requirements of the existing “combined business/residential” use to ensure that the affordable housing and open space requirements are not so onerous that they discourage mixed-use development.

Finally, to make the most of the redevelopment opportunity in the Thoreau Marketplace subdistrict, MAPC recommends prohibiting the construction of new single-family homes.

Public Benefits

Open Space

Community residents expressed desire for public gathering spaces in the neighborhood, such as small parks, playgrounds, or courtyards. Although the current zoning requires a certain amount of open space to serve the building’s residents, changes could require new development to provide or contribute funding to publicly-accessible open space. The Town could also consider the potential of purchasing and managing land within the study area for this purpose, although this strategy would be independent of the zoning.

Sustainability

To strengthen the Town’s resiliency to climate change and prepare development to be ready for clean energy technology retrofits, the zoning could require and/or incentivize certain strategies. For example, the Town may consider the zoning to contain basic Low Impact Development strategies for effective stormwater management. Low Impact Development emphasizes the use of on-site natural features (green infrastructure) to minimize runoff and water pollution with common sense strategies, such as landscaped areas downstream of parking lots and permeable paving. In addition, the zoning can be designed to reduce energy costs and promote clean energy. For example, ensuring that multifamily buildings provide electric vehicle charging facilities provides residents the choice of owning an electric vehicle.

Building Design

As noted, MAPC recommends the proposed zoning go beyond typical zoning districts by providing greater specificity of various standards. Through the visual preference exercises, a strong preference for traditional architecture with peaked or mansard roofs, dormers, and active street-fronts emerged. This is consistent with the historical architectural style of Concord.

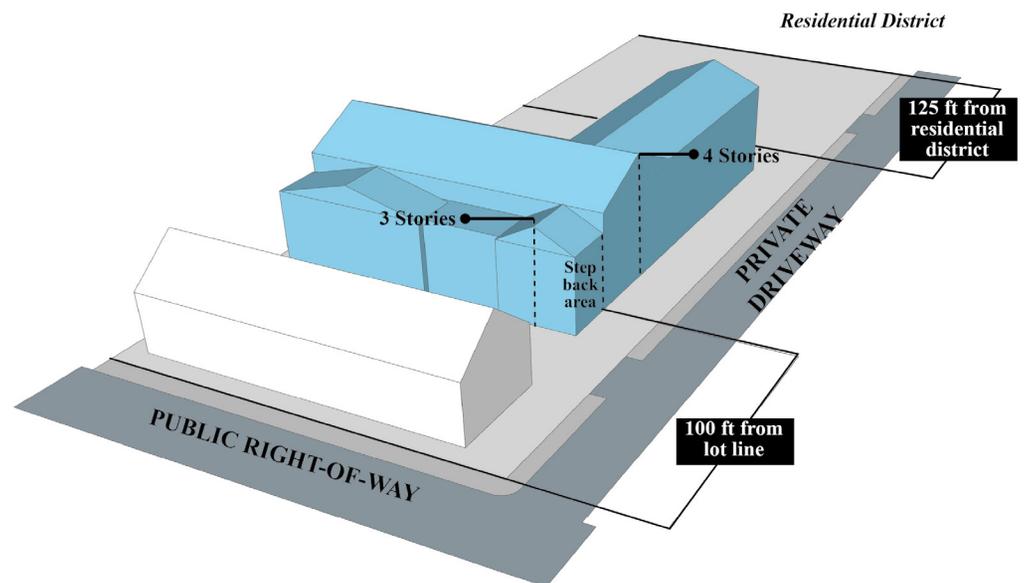
Height

During the visual preference exercise at the public forum, most participants supported 3-story buildings, although there was also some support for 4-story buildings in the Thoreau Marketplace subdistrict. The existing zoning allows for buildings up to 35 feet in height throughout the district. MAPC recommends maintaining a similar height limit, although potentially increasing it up to approximately 38 feet to allow for greater design flexibility of 3 story buildings. (See photo to the right for example of a building with 38' height.)

For buildings located in the interior of deep parcels a 4-story building may be appropriate. Clear requirements should be put in place so that these buildings are largely shielded from the public right-of-way and not located near residential areas. (See diagram on right for example of how these regulations may be put in place. This diagram would accompany written regulations to help clarify the intent of the language.



Source: Town of Ashland



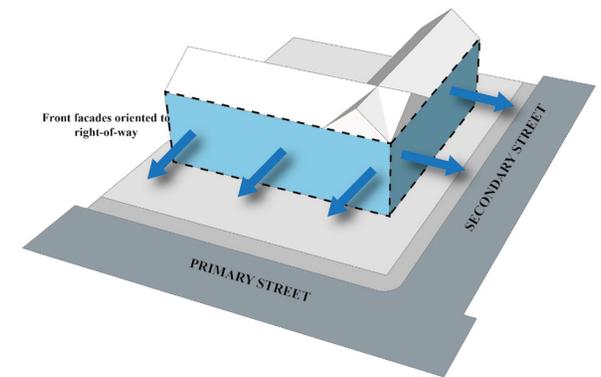
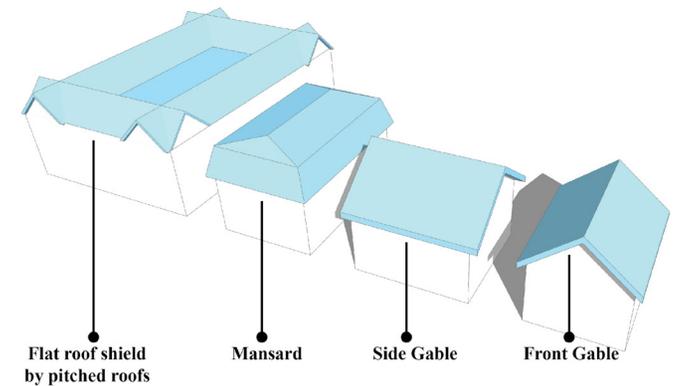
Building Development and Design Standards

Currently, a number of the buildings along Sudbury Road include suburban-style development, with large, one-story buildings surrounded by parking. These buildings are characterized by large footprints, flat roofs, and plain facades. Standards in the bylaw can set forth the expectations to ensure high quality design in any future development. (These standards are often referred to as elements from a form-based code approach.)

Based on feedback from the planning process, the recommended standards focus on principles of design, as opposed to overly prescriptive standards found in some form-based code bylaws. For example, the Town may consider building standards that specify the amount of glazing required on the front facade, especially of the ground floor of commercial spaces. Storefronts with large, clear windows help add vibrancy to a street.

The building standards can also provide details related to the general mass of buildings that would be appropriate for the neighborhood, a requirement for vertical facade modulation of dividing large buildings into multiple bays, and limiting the length of buildings. These standards help to visually and physically reduce the bulk of any larger buildings, thus creating buildings appropriate to the scale of a New England village. These standards are most important along the roadways themselves.

The diagrams to the right provide examples of the types of diagrams that provide the various standards (each of these would be accompanied by explanatory text in the regulations).



Transportation and Connectivity Recommendations

Zoning is a critical component but to fully achieve the vision, a holistic set of recommendations is needed.

Improving multi-modal connectivity is a critically important element of the Thoreau Depot neighborhood. This area has an added challenge of the commuter rail tracks bisecting the neighborhood. This can make parts of the area feel cut-off from each other. While there is not an “easy” fix to addressing this issue, there are two broad ways that this can be addressed. First, the neighborhood will feel better connected when new, future development feels cohesive throughout the neighborhood, achieved through the zoning. Second, the following recommendations can help improve connectivity.

This recommendation has two broad categories:

1. Safety improvements, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists
2. Public realm improvements within the public rights-of-way

Safety Improvements

The Thoreau Depot neighborhood should be safe to travel for pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities.

A critical aspect of improving bike-ped safety is “traffic calming,” which seeks to slow vehicular travel speeds. Slowing vehicular travel speeds through the village can dramatically improve safety, as motorists have more time to react. Additionally, studies show that if a conflict does occur with a pedestrian or cyclist, they tend to be far less severe at speeds below 25 miles per hour. Furthermore, slowing vehicular travel speeds slightly for a small area has little effect on motorists’ total travel time.

There are numerous traffic calming strategies, ranging from lower cost,

near-term solutions to more expensive infrastructure investments. As part of its Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, Thoreau Street and Sudbury Road are listed as part of a Speed Feedback Sign funding request. While this can be a helpful component, traffic calming also requires design interventions to slow vehicular speeds. A transportation planning firm, focused on bike-ped issues can assist the Town with prioritizing the neighborhood’s needs in a holistic manner, using a wide range of solutions. The Urban Street Design Guide from the National Association of City Transportation Officials also provides guidance for a number of conditions along downtown streets.

Particular attention should be given to the intersection at Sudbury Road and Thoreau Street, and design interventions should include a strong focus on ensuring vehicular safety, as well as pedestrians and cyclists.

The neighborhood should also work towards constructing sidewalks on the northbound side of Sudbury Road. This could likely occur as part of any future private development that occurs.

Where sidewalks do exist, reducing the width of curb cuts in some areas would also improve pedestrian safety. Many auto-centric sites default to wide curb cuts, as it slightly improves vehicular access; however, reducing curb cut width can improve the safety of pedestrians with only minimal inconvenience to motorist.

Highly visible crosswalks should be provided at all intersections and locations where pedestrians cross. Continental or ladder style crosswalks are more highly visible than the standard style (two parallel lines).

In the winter, requiring landowners to shovel their sidewalks in front of their properties is an important means to ensuring safety throughout the year.

For bicyclists, the Town should examine opportunities for adding bicycle infrastructure, ideally separated bicycle lanes. Many communities have vehicular travel lanes that are wider than necessary. In many cases, travel lanes can be reduced to 11' per lane, which can provide adequate space for bicycle lanes. Working with a transportation planning firm can confirm locations for bicycle lanes and provide designs for ensuring safety when crossing intersections.

Public Realm Improvements

Ensuring pedestrian and bicyclist safety is a minimum step towards achieving walkability. The neighborhood must also be *comfortable* to walk and bike through the implementation of public realm improvements.

Public investment in the street network should be combined with private investment in property redevelopment and improvement. Public investment in the streets is a viable technique to encourage private investment in a district and can be used to strengthen walkability and bikability.

Elements include:

- *Sidewalk amenities.* Amenities include trash receptacles located in convenient locations. Seating is another important amenity.
- *Pedestrian-scale lighting.* Adequate lighting improves both comfort and feelings of safety.
- *Street trees.* Street trees can improve the visual character of the street. They can also provide shade during the summer months and various of environmental benefits.
- *Al fresco dining.* Allow outdoor dining to increase liveliness along the street.
- *Parklets.* The Town should also consider installing “parklets” in

areas with potentially large numbers of pedestrians. A parklet is a sidewalk extension that provides more space for people using the street. They generally extend out from the sidewalk and often occupy one or more on-street parking spaces. The parklets can provide seating for people frequenting nearby cafes and restaurants. With an almost limitless potential of various designs, they can help the neighborhood create a sense of place.

- *Bike parking.* Finally, bicycle parking should be provided at convenient locations throughout the neighborhood, using high quality bike racks.

Reduce Reliance on Automobiles

Finally, the Town should consider ways to further promote additional ways of getting around to reduce reliance on vehicles and, thus reduce traffic impacts.

The Town should consider adding a “bike share” program with bicycles provided at the station and other important locations in the neighborhood and throughout the Town. There are numerous different options, from “dockless” bikeshare to ones with set station locations. Transportation staff at MAPC can provide a first step to the Town to help navigate the options.

The Town has recently received funding to launch a shuttle service around area employers, creating a “last mile” connection. The Town should ensure that the shuttle provides convenient access from the station and reaches the greatest number of employment opportunities. The shuttle can also be used as a “first mile” connection, connecting Concord residents to station.

Economic Development Recommendations

The community envisions thriving small and independent businesses, especially restaurants and cafes. The following recommendations provide strategies for positively impacting economic development, especially for retailers. Note that all of the recommendations in this report, from pedestrian improvements to zoning changes play a role in economic development.

Work with Existing Property Owners to Improve Properties

Implement Façade and Sign Improvement Programs. This can be done through the Town or through organizations working to revitalize village centers. Grants to business owners can be reimbursable and can set signage guidelines. Many communities have employed local artists to work on signs.

Sponsor Workshops and Provide Resources to Existing Property Owners. Working with existing property owners can help determine why certain property owners may not be re-developing or improving their properties. Identifying these issues can help the Town and neighborhood partners to think through how to best address these issues. There are many potential issues that might come up in these conversations including the cost of renovation versus the market rents that property owners can charge, etc.

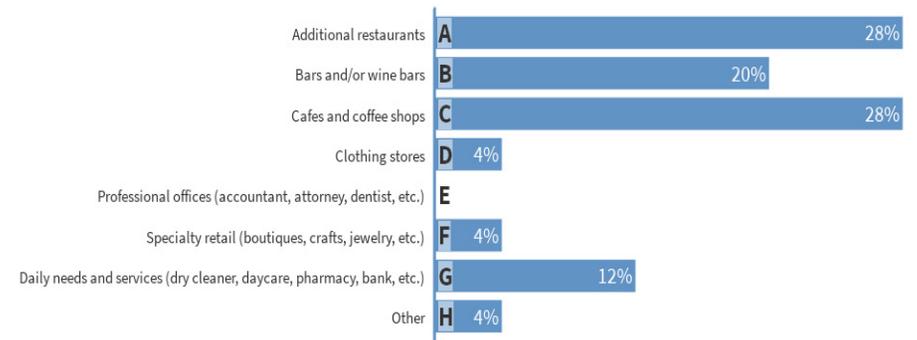
Support Existing Local Businesses

Work with Current Retailers to Implement Retail Best Practices.

There are many resources available that can help individual retailers to employ best practices related to different aspects of their business, including window displays, colors, lighting, and arranging space. The

What types of businesses would you like in Thoreau

Depot



Poll Everywhere

Massachusetts Downtown Initiative often awards technical assistance related to working with individual retailers.

Utilize Revolving Loan Fund. A small loan fund (e.g., the existing Bridge Street Neck Commercial Corridor fund) can be used to support local businesses in a variety of manners.

Encourage Businesses to Take Advantage of Existing Resources. There are many state programs, such as the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, as well as nationwide marketing campaigns, such as Small Business Saturdays, that can provide technical assistance to small businesses.

Market Thoreau Depot to Attract Interest from Developers, Commercial Establishments, and Potential Customers

Create Cohesive Brand and Marketing Materials for Thoreau Depot.

Emphasizing the neighborhood's assets can help create a place close to but distinct from Concord's downtown.

Identify and Recruit Retail Stores That May Be Interested in Opening in the neighborhood. Steps include:

- The Chamber of Commerce or similar group can hold networking events for existing and prospective neighborhood business owners.
- Maintain a list of interested/prospective retailers that can be matched up with space in the neighborhood once it becomes available.
- Focus on recruiting restaurants as they are often a top attractor to an area, consistently cited in studies as a top reason why people want to visit a new place. Restaurants also tend to do better when there are many of them located in one place as they create more of a dining destination that can draw people in.

Provide Retail Incentive Programs to Attract Retailers. Incentive programs that offer grants or seed money to new retailers can be an effective way to bring in new business. In Beverly, the Main Streets program granted new retailers a small amount of money for first year rent assistance and also offered free/discounted services (legal, printing, website, light pole banners, etc.). Tenants had to agree to certain terms including a longer term lease and applications for the program were based on business type, impact on the downtown, experience of the owner, as well as a number of other factors. This could be a model for groups working in Thoreau Depot to explore.

Work with Real Estate Brokers. It is important for real estate brokers to understand the vision and the advantages of attracting particular

types of tenants to difference spaces in the neighborhood. They are the ones who are showing space to potential tenants. Communicating the benefits of a thriving neighborhood with quality tenants can help them to more efficiently fill up additional space and attract future tenants. Brokers are a critical partner in helping to revitalize a mixed-use neighborhood.

Utilize Town Website to Post Economic Development Resources. The Town should consider working with or supporting organizations in the community that maintain databases of available commercial properties and/or vacant properties that may be available for redevelopment. A copy of the Concord Thoreau Depot Vision plan should also be available for developers and potential tenants to easily access.

Expand the Market

Increase Residences in the Study Area. In order to increase the market opportunities for additional retail establishments, it is important to increase the housing supply in the neighborhood. Creating additional housing, can increase the customer base for businesses. Retailers often look for locations that have a higher number of residences because it promises a better customer base and the opportunity for higher sales.

Other Recommendations

There are several other recommendations that can help revitalize the neighborhood and achieve the vision.

Create a “sense of place” through physical interventions. Thoreau Depot should have its own identity that complements but is distinct from the Town’s other villages. There are several distinct buildings in the area that contribute to this. Public art, such as mural(s) can contribute to the sense of place. Well-designed buildings, public realm improvements, etc. also contribute to a strong sense of place.

Create a “sense of place” through programming. Programming through various events can be a critical element in both placemaking and positively impacting economic development. Thoreau Depot stakeholders should plan events that attract people to the neighborhood and help to boost the customer base for existing local businesses.

Wayfinding. Consistent, high quality signage can help visitors navigate the neighborhood and how to travel to downtown Concord. Wayfinding can also point motorists to various parking locations within the neighborhood. Adequate parking is a consistent concern among business owners. Often, a neighborhood has adequate parking supply but its “management” can be improved. One way to improve parking management is signage to various locations.

Station area improvements. A number of community members expressed an interest in improving the station itself. It is both the gateway for numerous visitors, as well as used each day by numerous residents. Many recommendations in this report apply here. In particular, the station is an important location for bicycle parking, wayfinding signage, and public realm improvements. The station is also a prime location for a kiosk providing information about Concord’s history and attractions. Finally, the Town should work with the MBTA to ensure that the station is fully ADA accessible.

Review fees for water and sewer. Any project that produces 1,000 gallons per day must pay a fee of \$40.07 per gallon per day. The Town should facilitate a discussion among various stakeholders, including developers, Town staff, and Town officials, to assess a) whether there is adequate capacity for new development and b) whether the fees are appropriate or could be a hindrance to redevelopment.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Town of Concord is actively preparing for its future. Its long-range comprehensive plan set forth a number of goals and strategies. This plan, the Concord Thoreau Depot Plan, helps implement several of the comprehensive plans goals and provides a more detailed vision for this important area of town.

The Town envisions Thoreau Depot as a mixed-use village, an area that is both an asset for residents, as well as a welcoming gateway for visitors arriving by train. It will build off its existing strengths and incrementally grow into a charming, walkable, mixed-use New England village.

In addition to setting forth the neighborhood's vision, this plan had a primary focus on zoning recommendations. Ensuring proper zoning creates the framework to allow private development to occur in a manner that is compatible with the vision. Supplementing these regulations are a number of public realm improvements and economic development strategies that should go hand-in-hand with any future private development (and, indeed, can help spur desired private development).

The following are next steps as the Town works towards implementing its vision for the Thoreau Depot neighborhood:

Draft and adopt zoning. The Town's zoning already allows mixed-use development in Thoreau Depot, an essential element for creating a walkable, village-like neighborhood. New zoning for the area can help spur the desired development by a) clearly communicating the area's vision, b) modifying areas that may inhibit growth, and c) refining the requirements to ensure development occurs in a context-sensitive manner. As of the writing of this report, the Town and MAPC are working on developing zoning for this area.

Work with local landowners. Once the regulations are in place, it is ultimately up to individual landowners to choose whether or not to develop their properties. In many cases, development does not occur because local landowners are unaware of the opportunities presented by redevelopment. For example, a parcel with a single story development may be underutilized and be able to be redeveloped with multiple stories (often residential or potentially office) above ground-floor commercial space. In some cases, a landowner would benefit collaborating with a professional developer to provide the expertise and financial resources required for these larger, complex projects.

Review public realm recommendations. Ensuring the neighborhood is safe and comfortable for all users of the road is critical to realizing the vision. The Town's Planning Department should work with the Town Engineer to create a plan for implementing some of this plan's recommendations related to "complete streets." The Town can also collaborate with additional stakeholders on other recommendations, such as developing wayfinding.

Implement economic development recommendations. As with public realm improvements, the economic development recommendations are intended to be a starting point for future work. This can be done internally, in collaboration with the Town's Chamber of Commerce or other local business groups, or the Town may wish to work with a consultant on expanding upon this plan's recommendations.