

Consensus have been reached on revitalizing the Town's primary commercial area along the Route 6 corridor. This area has experienced increasing commercial vacancies over the past few years. While repurposing the vacant commercial buildings is important, it is equally critical to create a long-term vision for this commercial district, particularly the potential of mixed-use developments with a variety of land use types, scales and characters.

It's recognized that the Town's zoning bylaw is becoming outdated and needs modernization in order to support the current and future community development needs. The zoning bylaw should provide clearer provisions to regulate the proper types of business uses in the industrial zones and should also increase the flexibility to support smaller neighborhood businesses in mixed-use buildings.

Goals and Recommendations:

Goal 1: Balance growth and preservation.

Recommendations:

1. Preserve rural characteristics by protecting open spaces and supporting remaining working farms through continuous community preservation efforts, such as partnerships with the Buzzards Bay Coalition and Fairhaven Acushnet Land Preservation Trust.
2. **Encourage infill commercial and residential development in existing, established areas where water and sewer services are provided.**
3. Differentiate between industrial zones and business zones to encourage business and commercial developments in appropriate locations within the community, such as multiple commercial zones based on scale and characteristics, e.g. general commercial, highway commercial, and neighborhood commercial, etc.
4. Re-examine the purpose of the Nasketucket Overlay District (NRB), redefine the district boundaries, and amend zoning provisions to better balance the current needs for resource protection and property development.

Goal 2: Encourage strategic redevelopment in the Route 6 commercial area.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a detailed Route 6 commercial area revitalization plan to guide redevelopment. The plan should incorporate analysis of appropriate types of redevelopment, scale/dimension/design of such developments, as well as potential zoning changes and infrastructure and services needed to support such redevelopment.
2. Consider creating a Route 6 mixed-use overlay zoning district to stimulate mixed-use commercial and residential redevelopment appropriate to the characteristics of highway and automobile oriented mixed-use areas, as compared to smaller scale neighborhood mixed-use areas seen in Downtown and North Fairhaven.

Goals and Recommendations:

Goal 1: Keep future residential development in or near existing residential areas to maintain the village character.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage infill residential developments in existing residential neighborhoods that reflect the historic and cultural characters of various neighborhoods.
2. Explore possibilities of housing conversion and adaptive reuse of existing municipal and/or commercial buildings and housing rehabilitation of blighted properties.

Goal 2: Maintain and encourage a variety of housing that is affordable to non-elderly individuals and families of all income levels.

Recommendations:

1. Identify potential sites, possibility through municipal land assemblage or public/private partnership, for non-elderly affordable rental housing developments utilizing the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program.
2. Consider adopting an inclusionary zoning bylaw to require affordable housing in any residential development that requires a Special Permit.
3. Provide more flexibility and incentive in the Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw to encourage the creation of market rate or affordable rental units that support moderate to low income residents.
4. Consider allowing mixed-use residential and commercial developments in established service and employment centers as a means to expand market-rate housing stock.

Goal 3: Continue providing affordable and age-appropriate housing options for senior populations in the community.

Recommendations:

1. Pursue state and federal affordable housing programs and funding at the identified two-acre site off of Main Street adjacent to Oxford Terrace.
2. Provide more flexibility and incentive in the Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw to encourage the creation of smaller housing units that supports downsizing seniors to age in place.
3. Explore zoning tools, such as performance zoning and density bonuses, to encourage development of age-appropriate market-rate ownership units designed to serve the needs of an elderly population, e.g. attached or detached condominium units with first floor bedroom/bathroom suits, accessible grades, attached garages, and maintenance support, etc.

zoning variances issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals may be an indicator that the current zoning does not meet or reflect today's development needs of the broader neighborhoods throughout the Town, particularly some of the older residential neighborhoods such as West Island. The Town should explore effective zoning changes to address these issues.

Goals and Recommendations

Goal 1: Balance growth and preservation.

Recommendations:

1. Preserve rural characteristics by protecting open spaces and supporting remaining working farms through continuous community preservation efforts, such as partnerships with the Buzzards Bay Coalition and Fairhaven Acushnet Land Preservation Trust.
2. Encourage infill commercial and residential development in existing, established areas where water and sewer services are provided.
3. Differentiate between industrial zones and business zones to encourage business and commercial developments in appropriate locations within the community, such as multiple commercial zones based on scale and characteristics, e.g. general commercial, highway commercial, and neighborhood commercial, etc.
4. Re-examine the purpose of the Nasketucket Overlay District (NRB), redefine the district boundaries, and amend zoning provisions to better balance the current needs for resource protection and property development.

Goal 2: Encourage strategic redevelopment in the Route 6 commercial area.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a detailed Route 6 commercial area revitalization plan to guide redevelopment. The plan should incorporate analysis of appropriate types of redevelopment, scale/dimension/design of such developments, as well as potential zoning changes and infrastructure and services needed to support such redevelopment.
2. Consider creating a Route 6 mixed-use overlay zoning district to stimulate mixed-use commercial and residential redevelopment appropriate to the characteristics of highway and automobile oriented mixed-use areas, as compared to smaller scale neighborhood mixed-use areas seen in Downtown and North Fairhaven.

Issues and Opportunities

Integrate Future Housing Growth in Established Neighborhoods

While Fairhaven's population has stayed relatively stable over the past few decades and no significant population growth is anticipated in the near future, the Town should be proactive in planning for potential housing growth within the community, especially given the strong interests of community members to preserve the village characters of the Town and protect valuable open spaces. The Town could explore development regulations that would encourage new housing growth within or near existing, established residential areas of the community. This would not only help control housing sprawl and preserve open spaces, but also utilize developed land and existing municipality infrastructures more efficiently. Infill housing development and reuse or conversion of existing municipal buildings for housing purposes are two of the approaches the Town should primarily consider to foster more integrated housing growth.

Diversify Housing Stock to Enhance Affordability

Fairhaven's overall housing stock is generally considered modest by many of the town residents. However, in recent years there have been increasing concerns regarding the limited housing options and housing affordability within the community, especially the lack of smaller ownership units and rental units for the Town's lower income populations as well as younger working generations of all income levels. The Town could explore several ways to increase affordable housing stock, including utilizing state and federal low income housing programs and enacting zoning tools such as inclusionary zoning, accessory dwelling units, and residential mixed-use to incentivize the creation of more affordable housing.

Continue to Support Senior Housing Needs

Like many New England towns and cities, Fairhaven is becoming an aging community where the senior population is expected to continue growing in the next ten to twenty years in the wake of the baby boomers reaching their retirement age. As a result, the Town will be faced with increasing pressure to provide adequate and appropriate senior housing options that are not only affordable to seniors of different income levels but also supportive to their age-specific needs. The Town has made significant efforts over the years in developing affordable senior apartments in the community, but the need for additional senior housing is evidenced by long waiting lists at many of these senior housing projects. While it is important to identify more opportunities for affordable senior apartments, it is also critical to explore ways to create other types of smaller ownership units that would allow and encourage seniors to age at home.

Goals and Recommendations

Goal 1: Keep future residential development in or near existing residential areas to maintain the village character.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage infill residential developments in existing residential neighborhoods that reflect the historic and cultural characters of various neighborhoods.
2. Explore possibilities of housing conversion and adaptive reuse of existing municipal and/or commercial buildings and housing rehabilitation of blighted properties.

Goal 2: Maintain and encourage a variety of housing that is affordable to non-elderly individuals and families of all income levels.

Recommendations:

1. Identify potential sites, possibly through municipal land assemblage or public/private partnership, for non-elderly affordable rental housing developments utilizing the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program.
2. Consider adopting an inclusionary zoning bylaw to require affordable housing in any residential development that requires a Special Permit.
3. Provide more flexibility and incentive in the Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw to encourage the creation of market rate or affordable rental units that support moderate to low income residents.
4. Consider allowing mixed-use residential and commercial developments in established service and employment centers as a means to expand market-rate housing stock.

Goal 3: Continue providing affordable and age-appropriate housing options for senior populations in the community.

Recommendations:

1. Pursue state and federal affordable housing programs and funding at the identified two-acre site off of Main Street adjacent to Oxford Terrace.
2. Provide more flexibility and incentive in the Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw to encourage the creation of smaller housing units that supports downsizing seniors to age in place.
3. Explore zoning tools, such as performance zoning and density bonuses, to encourage development of age-appropriate market-rate ownership units designed to serve the needs of an elderly population, e.g. attached or detached condominium units with first floor bedroom/bathroom suits, accessible grades, attached garages, and maintenance support, etc.