

Mansfield Master Plan Update
Composite Public Comments

November 11, 2007 Master Plan Committee Comments
January 10, 2008 Public Workshop Feedback
January 12, 2008 Facilitate Workshop
Comment Sheets received at January 12 Workshop

Note:

Blue highlighted text reflects overall priority ranking / consensus from January 12 workshop

Yellow highlighted text reflects priorities from individual groups

Land Use

Zoning:

- Site plan review process needs more teeth
- Need to control retail development in industrial zones
- Design and height guidelines are needed
- Concerns about cluster zoning and the increased size of properties allowed. Open space should be contiguous to other open space/recreation parcels
- Ability to become denser downtown (zoning amendments are good)
- Consider aesthetics in the permitting process for new development
- Street parking in residential areas. There should be adequate parking on lots to support the number of vehicles per household.
- Cottage housing concerns: lot size, quality of construction, wetland threats, density issues regarding aquifer pollution.
- Limit buildable lots
- Design guidelines are needed for parking??/
- Consider developing a lighting policy (or amending zoning and subdivision bylaws) to specify that lighting should only extend to the edge of right of way, be downward casting, have the capacity to reduce lighting levels one hour after business hours, encourage pedestrian-scale low-level lighting.
- Investigate alternative access solutions to land-locked parcels to avoid 'pork-chop' lot layouts.
- Cluster development may not be appropriate in the R1 district.
- Pedestrian accessibility and the view of a building or development from the road should be considered in the review process.
- Performance standards, incentives, and an Architectural Review Board could be considered to revitalize the Downtown and to provide review in other parts of Town. Currently, buildings over 100,000 SF require a special permit, which gives the Town the ability to make specific requests for improved design. Many Downtown buildings and other infill development are smaller and therefore are not subject to this review.
- There is a concern about future development of industrially zoned land on School Street now that Mansfield Crossing has been constructed. This area is not within the Overlay zone. Retail is a 'by right' use of industrial zoned property. Unless development is over 100,000 square feet, there is limited opportunity to leverage for better design.
- Investigate Form-based zoning alternatives.
- Underground utilities are required for all subdivisions and land development projects. Although Jewell Street is a scenic roadway, four 40' poles were installed to carry current and projected electrical loads. A policy should be considered regarding future undergrounding of major utility lines.
- DHCD has encouraged amending zoning to attract increased density of development near the train station. Recommendations from the TOD study are on hold until the access issues are resolved.

- Town should be proactive regarding TOD and the Hatheway-Patterson Site, before undesirable development occurs in the North End
- Cottage style development needs to be further investigated.
- Limit building to sizable lots. Support cluster development.

Development patterns:

- Historic tax credits should be considered for building rehabilitation
- Want less development for housing, especially single family and multifamily development
- A weakness is east and west identity in town.
- Concern about growth driving property taxes
- Town is overbuilt
- Consider a building moratorium
- Past affordability led to the growth spurt in the 1990s.
- Reduce the number of housing permits.

Protection of Water Resources:

- Concern about growth in water use and managing our finite supply.
- Development in aquifer is a big concern
- Preserve more water recharge areas.
- Need to purchase and preserve wetland property

Sustainable Development:

- Town should go Green
- Market the Town as a LEED-based community through performance standards, incentives, and Site Plan Review. Encourage innovative stormwater management, green roofs, design for low energy consumption, walkable neighborhoods.
- Investigate the Dark Skies Program guidelines relative to lighting for recreational fields, streets, public parks, etc.
- Wheaton College is proposing to construct four ‘green buildings’ in collaboration with private partners. This may be considered as a local model.
- Investigate potential for grants from utility companies to encourage homeowners to consider efficient energy consumption.
- Improve “green” initiatives.

Other:

- Pursue state funding
- Town’s strength is its people with diverse backgrounds, evolving from blue-collar roots. Town has an opportunity to celebrate its ethnic heritage while welcoming new groups (Al Noor Muslim School)
- Town still maintains a country atmosphere with deep commitment to residents through civic involvement
- Highway accessibility is an asset.

Circulation / Transportation

Route 106 Congestion:

- Route 106 traffic problems include congestion from train station traffic, need traffic signal at Highland Avenue (no more traffic cops!). Alternate routes are needed to avoid Route 106.
- Route 106 congestion must be addressed.
- Route 106 congestion from Hope Street to Route 140 must be addressed:
 - Access to the train station parking is poor

o Route 106 Copeland Street intersection should be improved

- Traffic congestion is a major concern, especially along the Route 106 corridor. The Town would like to see a Route 106 corridor study be included on the Mass Highway Department (MHD) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- Federal funding for design and part of construction has been allocated for replacement of the rail underpass on Route 106. Possible options discussed in the past included constructing a deck to accommodate the rail, a roadway connection, and landscaped corridor.

Train Station:

- Improve pedestrian access specifically to the train station (Route 106/North Main Street).
- Clear pedestrian routes are needed from the train station to downtown (sidewalk and crosswalk improvements)
- Additional rail crossings are needed
- Traffic and TOD should be a focus of the master plan update.
- The train station should be connected with Downtown.

Downtown Circulation, Parking, Sidewalks:

- Downtown circulation and parking plan should be conducted to assess one-way pattern and parking availability and options
- Sidewalk improvements and crosswalks are needed downtown (need more enforcement of pedestrian right of way)
- Downtown neighborhood walkability, especially from “back bay” neighborhood east of North Main Street is an asset that must be protected and improved. Downtown needs to be walkable from neighborhoods.
- Main Street should be 2-way, with angle parking on Old Colony Way
- Image of Old Colony Way should be cleaned up and striping added.
- There is a lack of parking for downtown businesses (management of parking areas is needed).
- Too much vehicular traffic and not enough pedestrian traffic limit businesses downtown.
- Unified signage is needed to identify arrival at downtown / Gateway
- Downtown one way street pattern should be reconsidered
- Employees should park away from businesses in satellite parking lots
- Covered parking should be considered under new residential development +/-??
- Downtown accessibility needs to be improved:
 - o Eliminate/reconsider one way streets
 - o Parking concerns
 - o Redesign the North Common to accommodate current street layouts
 - o Increase safety
- Municipal parking lot downtown – common parking needed – vacant lot next to fire station?
- Downtown has a lack of traffic; cars too fast
- Beautify downtown, maintain South Common integrity and enhance the North Common.
- Striped on-street parking is needed.
- Enforcement of posted speed limit is needed downtown.
- Beautify downtown with streetscape enhancements such as benches, trashcans, planters and banners.

Sidewalks (General):

- Sidewalk maintenance is an issue
- Install more sidewalks in residential neighborhoods
- Town has good sidewalk network
- Need to resolve or communicate the sidewalk snow removal policy.
- Need more sidewalks
- Enforce yield to pedestrians in crosswalk, especially at Villa Street downtown.

- Sidewalks are very important to the community, especially Downtown and in the vicinity of the schools.
 - Although the Town had a very successful sidewalk construction and maintenance program in the past, these efforts have not continued.
 - The Town plows Downtown sidewalks. A policy should be developed regarding priorities for plowing and snow removal.
 - Sidewalks need to be attractive and accessible so that people do not walk in the street. Streetscape and benches should be considered.
- More sidewalks/ crosswalks are needed to provide continuous connections.
- The Town regularly plows sidewalks within a 1 – 2 mile radius of the schools, but needs a Town-wide ordinance as well. It costs the Town \$11,000 - \$15,000 each snow event greater than 6 inches.
- The Town can undergo a betterment process if a group of abutters requests sidewalks in front of their property, as long as the sidewalks provide a continuous network, and are not fragmented.
- Would like to see sidewalks on streets like Mill, Essex and other main roads which people need to travel on in order to get from one neighborhood to another.

Bike Path:

- Bikepath extension with parking (opportunity)
- Bikepath access to downtown (weakness)
- Extension of the bike path to Norton should be reconsidered in future; expand bike path (make a loop) – finish to underpass
- Need to increase use of the bike path for transportation downtown
- There is a lack of bike path connections so use conflicts arise (Fruit Street).
- Would like to see walking and biking trail (like Easton)

GATRA:

- The Town should take advantage of existing GATRA bus service
- Public bus system is desired but is there taxpayer support. GATRA should make stops in Mansfield.
- GATRA should provide service to Mansfield Crossing, Foxboro, Tweeter Center, East Mansfield.
- Public transportation serves a purpose. The Town currently does not allow any stops in the Town, other than the one at the train station. This should be reconsidered.
- Bus service is needed
- GATRA should provide service to Mansfield Crossing and downtown
- Public transportation would be handy for kids and older residents who don't drive.
- Consider public transportation expansion.

Schools:

- Crosswalks are needed in the schools district
- Speed limit should be reduced to 15 MPH or less near the schools
- There is inadequate parking for teachers
- Better access management is needed for the schools
- Need to implement safe routes to schools to encourage pedestrian / bike access
- Suggest that it would be cheaper to bus all students than to charge a fee as this would alleviate the need for sidewalk plowing and reduce number of students who are dropped off and picked up at school.
- Pedestrian bike access is needed to schools

Other Modes/General:

- Access to Boston/Providence/ NYC is an asset via interstate, rail, air
- Highways, rail lines segregate parts of the town, act as moats.
- The industrial park and train station are an asset.

- On street parking on residential streets is a problem
- Overnight street parking is an issue of debate.
- Truck traffic should be limited in residential areas.
- Need east-west connections in town.
- The flow of traffic around Mansfield Crossing is a strength
- The Town has only two east-west and one north-south routes. Parallel roadways should be considered along Route 106 to ease traffic burden on this roadway. Emphasis should be given to preserving the character/identity of Main Street.
- Potential of the municipal airport should be maximized as a unique asset of the Town.
- Traffic circulation in and out of town should be reviewed.

Natural / Cultural Resources

Natural Resources:

- Protection of aquifer and drinking water is a priority. There should be a limitation on lawn sprinklers – they draw down too much of the aquifer
- Canoe River Greenbelt, Fulton's Pond (especially Duck Race) are strengths
- Wildlife habitat is an increasing concern since wildlife is forced into smaller areas with increased development. Big old dying street trees need replacement
- Protect all recharge areas above and beyond expected
- Groundwater quality is a weakness
- Continue trend of identifying and protecting vernal pools
- Perc rates should be increased by the Board of Health for new development to protect wetlands.
- Preserve watersheds, ponds and rivers.

Cultural Resources:

Historic

- Continue to preserve historic property. Control what is constructed in historic areas. Some new development does not tie in to historic areas. Make new downtown development look more like existing historical buildings (brick).
- Identify and preserve historical places
- Historic District should be considered

Scenic Roads

- Preserve scenic roads
- Scenic roads conflict with need for sidewalks

Arts and Culture

- Construct Arts Center at parking lot (land swap with Mansfield Bank)
- Support MMAS
- Encourage development of more cultural destinations and attractions in Town
- MMA and YMCA are a strength
- MMAS needs to move forward with plans to build a bigger art center in downtown.
- Arts Center needs support
- Provide more community pride events to maintain the town's culture.

Services & Facilities

- Town has excellent fire and police departments, infrastructure (sewer, water, electric) and schools.

Fire and Police:

- Although there are many police per capita, they aren't visible. Memorial Park needs to be better patrolled. Increased funding should be obtained through Homeland Security.
- Fire Department needs new trucks and more funding for equipment, new building and personnel.
- Fire station should be relocated from downtown to East Mansfield
- Town should maintain emergency ambulance service downtown when the fire station relocated to the DPW.
- Public safety building/service is a Town strength
- Maintain quality public services (police, fire, highway)

Water:

- Water quality in West Mansfield needs to be improved
- Upgrade water treatment plants to eliminate brown water problem.
- Where you are on the water line affects water quality
- Drinking water quality and pressure is disparate across sections of town.

DPW / Roads:

- Town should better manage Route 106 construction projects
- Train overpass flooding is a major issue.
- DPW building is a weakness
- State to evaluate timing/queuing ???
- Improve and maintain infrastructure (roads and sidewalks)

Schools:

- Upward trend toward educational excellence
- Improve and enhance schools
- Bathrooms are locked during recreation functions
- Schools are a strength
- Town acknowledges another school (St. Mary's) in town. Need funding from town, local and state for this school.
- School parking safety is an issue. Parking should be a privilege for seniors only.
- Need a "walk to school bus" to encourage students to walk to school safely.
- Parking at/around the schools complex is limited and safety is a concern. Consider structured parking for the school complex.
- Temporary classrooms are being used to serve the current population bulge in the middle and high schools. This avoided the need for costly construction and future downsizing.

Trash and Solid Waste:

- Trash tax dollars should pay for barrels
- To encourage recycling, establish a "my trash is your treasure" swap house.
- Encourage recycling (1 barrel rule).
- Trash and solid waste collection is a weakness. Need more flexible options.
- To encourage recycling, residents should be able to get more than 1 bin each time they visit town hall.
- Two large pickups are needed per year to accommodate those items that do not require stickers and yet do not fit into the designated trash bins.

Other:

- Town management structure should be reviewed to consider a Town Council/Mayor structure
- Waste is created with a "spend it or loose it" government attitude in schools and town government.
- Investigate reuse of municipal buildings
- Town needs activities and programs that are accessible to seniors
- Town-owned land should be investigated for highest and best use.

- Roadways are in generally poor condition, especially in east and west sections of Town. There is a concern that infrastructure is being lost through neglect. Town has a Pavement Management Plan, but is unable to fund it. The CIP is fiscally constrained; \$0.5 million is available for roadway repair and upgrade but \$1.5 million is needed.
- The WWTF is currently functioning at 80% capacity (sometimes more) warranting updating/expanding existing facilities. Additional sewer extensions will likely target areas with threats to public health issues, in accordance with current policy.
- Hydrant painting and street signage replacement are needed (Balcom/Gilbert and High/Central are missing signs and hydrant painting is needed on Balcom and High).

Economic Development

Downtown:

- Downtown beautification is needed.
- Downtown lacks anchors – grocery store, post office, small businesses gone
- Need more unique restaurants
- Need to be patient about the development we want
- Need more diverse retail downtown. Need downtown revitalization (Melrose example)
- Route 106 congestion hurts economic development
- Downtown should be marketed as a destination
- Market study should be conducted downtown
- More support is needed from Town to Downtown businesses (better partnership/mentoring)
- Downtown issues to be resolved include deliveries on Main Street, insufficient (or unnecessary) signage, pedestrian signals, and access to the train station.
- Need to retain patronage of local residents and attract visitors downtown
- Need for more parking downtown to support and attract businesses
- Mansfield Crossings may negatively impact downtown businesses unless the Town is proactive. It is imperative that efforts proceed immediately to enhance and strengthen the Downtown commercial district.
- Need more restaurants
- High rents don't correlate with foot traffic
- Future options for downtown fire: tear down for parking or reuse (teen center, restaurant?)
- Reuse of existing buildings
- Market for specific interesting retail to attract people downtown.
- Façade Improvement Program to start-up soon (\$179,000 CDBG grant).
- Plan for \$179,000 façade improvement funding needs to be established to provide guidelines, not requirements.
- Mansfield Crossings has given the Board of Selectmen a \$30,000 gift for improvements to the downtown. The Downtown Business Association should work with the Board of Selectmen as to the best use of the gift.
- Parking, lines, signage downtown
 - Reducing parking for individual businesses
- Residents need to be educated about the importance of Downtown to the community
- Town should network/outreach to other successful downtown associations.
- Prioritize vacant lots for development of satellite parking for highest and best use.
- Parking is a concern Downtown.
 - The types of uses needed in the downtown require parking. Existing parking may not be immediately accessible to destinations.
 - Parking is ample, but underutilized as many are not willing to walk from off-street lots. Consider making Main Street one-way with angled parking, consider the feasibility of structured parking, encourage employee parking in off-street lots to free on-street parking for customer use.

- A Downtown Committee has established architectural guidelines (Board of Selectmen voted to approve but no zoning bylaw amendments have been made).
- Downtown is gradually shifting towards Route 106.
- The Town should focus on making the downtown more dense, which can have negative impacts if not planned appropriately. Residential and mixed use development should not change Downtown's character.
- The north end of downtown needs revitalization, as it is disparate from newer businesses on Main Street. A plan for this area should include condominium or rentals for young professionals to capitalize on proximity to the train station. This was addressed in the TOD study.
- Encourage development that will make the downtown a destination for residents and visitors.
 - Downtown should include family-oriented activities and indoor recreation facilities.
 - Downtown should include after-school destinations for students. Although Arts Council programming is important, this may not be the highest and best use.
 - Downtown marketing could include salon and spa destinations.
- The Common is a symbol of the Town and of the Downtown. Design of adjacent buildings should reflect the historic character of this location.
- Downtown Revitalization is needed.
- Need a coffee shop, for people to meet and grab a dessert or pastry for breakfast or in the evening (i.e., Starbuck or similar). Need a variety of restaurants.
- Downtown is a pretty area with many interesting and unique businesses which attract people.
- Need more visible signage for North Main Street businesses.
- How about a personal property tax waiver for North Main Street businesses since the mall has gone in.
- There could be incentives for bringing in new and unique businesses to North Main Street.
- Capitalize on the personalized services provided by downtown businesses. Recognize that Mansfield's downtown is a regional attraction because Foxboro, Norton and Easton don't have a downtown.
- Support a vibrant downtown.

Train Station:

- Train station is an economic development engine
- Need connections from downtown to the train station
- Capitalize on use of train station for economic development
- Concerned about the future use of George's Cleaners lot.
- Proposed TOD zoning reflects the market (not "built it and they will come", there is already a demand)
- North Common pedestrian accessibility to downtown needs to be improved
- A deck over Route 106 is needed for pedestrian crossing

Industrial Development / Cabot Park:

- Industrial park is well designed and an asset to the town.
- Concern about vast conversion of industrial to retail use
 - Loose a lot, no job growth
 - Industrial is preferable to keep region prosperous
 - Industrial is way of preserving land
- Infrastructure for biotech development is a Town strength
- Planned Business Development zoning has been successful in limiting retail development in the industrial park
- Mansfield's transportation links are an asset for economic development (Interstates, rail and airport)
- It is very important to preserve and expand the tax base in the industrial park. The park previously represented a significant source of tax revenue that has now diminished as residential development has outpaced industrial development.

- Potential change of use of warehouse buildings in the industrial park may require partial building demolition to accommodate parking for use as office or manufacturing. Alternative parking strategies could be considered to facilitate reuse of these buildings to generate increased tax revenue. Efforts to promote business and industry at the Cabot Business Park have proven successful, but the Town needs a marketing plan for the downtown.

Housing

Affordable Housing (Workforce, Senior, Next Generation Housing):

- The town should continue to exceed the state goal of 10% affordable housing
- There is a concern that the next generation (kids) will not be able to afford to live in Mansfield.
- Need to provide housing and services to seniors
- There should be more over 55 developments, especially affordable housing
- More “community” based housing development is needed
- A lack of affordability for housing is a weakness.
- Provide a correlation between housing costs and pay rates in town to assure equity.
- Increase rental options
- Housing costs reflect Boston incomes so it is very difficult for those who work locally to afford to live in town.
- Need to streamline permitting for affordable housing for seniors
- A large percentage of seniors cannot afford most housing alternatives in town, and are thus, leaving town. The 55 and over developments are not affordable to blue-collar seniors.
- There is an opportunity to look at additional Friendly 40B developments (per existing zoning bylaws)
- Provide more support to the Housing Trust.
- Building permits to multi-family structures are costing the Town in the long-term, as they constantly require Fire/emergency services for faulty equipment failures.
- Support affordable housing for seniors.

Housing Development Patterns:

- Pressure to increase density of housing. There is a concern that this will decrease the lot size.
- There should be more apartments and condominiums downtown
- Diverse housing stock is needed Downtown. This housing could include affordable apartments and/or condominiums for Mansfield residents in transition, and for first-time buyers). Create solutions relative to providing affordable housing to single, young professionals who won't tax the Town's resources. Incentives should be considered to encourage rental management of new multifamily residential development to provide housing opportunities for those who grow up in Town and others who cannot afford a down payment on a condominium.

General:

- One of Mansfield's strengths is its diversity of housing types
- Diversify housing choice and price
- Gilbert Street industrial parcel in residential area. Is this appropriate (includes wooded wetland).
- Need Green housing codes

Open Space / Recreation

- Parks, recreation, open space and greenspace are especially important to young families in Mansfield.
- Preservation efforts on open space and recreational space need to be expanded.

Open Space:

- Connectivity is needed between open space/recreation areas with continuous trails from parcel to parcel and to the schools
- There is a demand for open space for:
 - Passive recreation with accessible and interconnected parcels
 - Water protection
 - Aquifer recharge
- Mansfield's open space is a strength
- Provide incentives to secure remaining open space
- Access to Greenbelt and Fulton's Pond are a weakness
- Purchase property with NRT support
- Great Woods is a strength
- More open space is needed that is accessible. Trails, small parking lots are needed. There are too many fences and blocked paths on open space property.
- #2 More interconnected trails are needed in existing open space, especially trails leading to schools. Emphasis should be on acquiring interconnected property for open space
- Preservation of green space is important
- Use a land sales tax for open space acquisition
- The grassy areas between parking and the roadway that developers include in their open space calculations should not be included in calculating their open space dedication.
- The Natural Resources Trust works with the Town and the Conservation Commission to preserve open space for protection of habitat, and water quality protection
- Maintain green areas and increase as much as possible the exiting new with new trees, shrubs, etc.
- Add, preserve and protect open space.

Recreation:

- Need diversity of recreation land
- Improve and expand public recreation (parks, playing fields, swimming)

Indoor Recreation Center

- Community/teen indoor recreation center is needed
- Free-standing youth center is needed. Should be accessible to schools, within walking and biking distance.
- School properties should be better used for community activities
- A community center is needed not just for kids
- Youth center needed– reuse old building on 100 Branch Street property, multi-use space.
- Indoor recreational opportunities should be investigated throughout the town, and strategically located for highest utilization.
- Consider redevelopment of building on corner of 106 & Chauncey Street (Copeland?) as a teen center.

Maple Park

- Community pool / Maple Park
- Dog Park needed
- Contamination of surface water is problem – not swimmable
- NO MORE SOCCER FIELDS!!!
 - Improve what we have – bad drainage/wetland (free loam?)
 - Space behind
- DPW not used for recreation (Maple Park)

- Maple Park issues should be addressed (past swimming use has been discontinued with development of the water supply wells).
- Need public outdoor swimming (used to have swimming at Maple Park).

Ball Fields

- Need more recreation fields
- Recreation facilities should be available to the public
- Town needs more oversight and planning in fields development to assure there are no problems with drainage.
- Town needs to develop a multi-use field complex
- Plymouth Street recreation facility is a town strength.
- Memorial park (perception of)???
- Educate public about recreational opportunities with the town website
- There is a lack of field space for number of activities.
- The Town should consider sanitary restrooms at recreational fields, (replace port-a-pots) and keep existing restroom facilities unlocked during events.
- Consider separate lighting at the high school field to reduce lighting levels for those using the track after team use.
- More permanent restrooms are needed at recreation facilities.
- Enhance facilities at recreational fields

Support for Arts

- Town should support Arts spaces as well as sports.

General

- Need more recreation for seniors
- Need a park for hanging out.
- South side of School Street ?
- Additional recreation fields are needed. Field usage is a hot topic.
- Town needs to update the Open Space and Recreation Plan, separate from the Master Plan update. The Master Plan update should provide policy guidance for this plan.
 - Recreational opportunities should be inventoried and listed for residents and visitors.
 - Specific parcel use should be identified in the plan.
 - Plan should include parking and trail access maps of public open space and include access points for small carry-top boats.