# Town Center Rezoning Public Forums

Planning and Economic Development Department
Stakeholder Meeting with Board of Selectmen
February 11, 2020

# Timeline for the Town Center Re-Zoning Process

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|---|---|
| 1. Initial Draft of Town Center Zoning District Bylaw | October – November 2019 |
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# Quintessential New England Town Centers

Woodstock, VT

Newburyport, MA

Bar Harbor, ME

Durham, NH

# Characteristics Shared by Traditional New England Town Centers

- Minimum or No Front Yard or Side Yard Setbacks
- Emphasis on Traditional Architecture and the “Human-scale”
- Vertical “Top-of-Shop” Mixed Uses
- Pedestrian Accommodations
- Flexible Parking standards
- Allowances for Smaller Lots
- A Wide Variety of Allowable Uses

# Shrewsbury Town Center already has a few elements of a Traditional New England Village…

Rear of building parking

Traditional New England Design and Architecture

Vertical mix of uses

Wider sidewalk, zero setback

# …but not everywhere

# 2016 Master Plan Town Center Goals

Section LU4.1.a …**future <u>infill is complementary to the compact style of the area</u>**.

Section LU4.2: Promote the Town Center as a **<u>pedestrian-friendly shopping and service area and a neighborhood gathering place</u>**.

LU4.2.a …**<u>determine the limits of the town center</u>** and its sphere of influence [and] consider making recommendations for **<u>managing parking</u>, <u>building design guidelines</u>… [and] <u>streetscape improvements</u>.**

# 2019 Town Center Study

## Refined Town Center Goals:

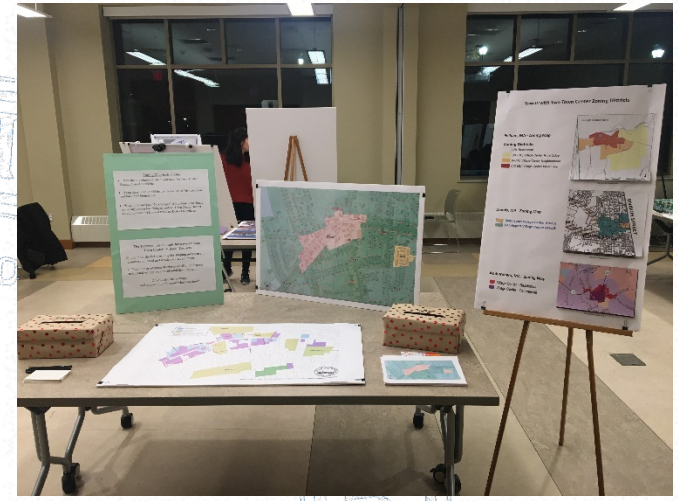
- Establish Shrewsbury's Center as a vibrant, pedestrian oriented environment with day and night vitality
- Create zoning that reflects the uniqueness of the Town Center and reduces barriers to infill development and redevelopment
- Create a more robust cultural and economic center in Shrewsbury
- Promote a traditional New England Town Center Aesthetic and Character that encourages high quality architecture and design

# 2019 Town Center Study

Provided recommendations for achieving those goals:

1. Design standards and guidelines for buildings and landscaping
2. Design standards for lighting & signage
3. Flexible parking standards that allow for public lots and shared parking arrangements to count toward parking requirements
4. Clearer and more predictable permitting processes to create certainty for developers and residents
5. Allowing a variety of “human-scale” uses and dimensions such as vertical mixed-use and zero front yard setbacks

# Public Forums - November & December 2019



# Feedback Summary from 2019 Public Forums

**Parking Station**
Support for:
More on-street & off-street parking
Public Parking behind Beal
More signs to parking
Clearer handicapped parking spaces
Shared parking agreements
Municipal parking counting
Designated Lyft/Uber/Bus space

**Uses Station**
Support for:
Condos & Apartments
Greater mix of commercial
Brewery/Tap House
Sidewalk Café & Coffee shops
"Pocket park"
Small-scale hotel
Prohibiting Marijuana sales in TC
Prohibiting Cell towers

**Design & Lighting Station**
Support for:
Dark Sky Lighting
"Period" Street Lighting
Gooseneck Lighting for Signage
Hanging/Blade Signs for Shops
Banning internally lit signs
Federal, Victorian & Colonial Styles
Building Signs not Free Standing
Builders to choose from design list

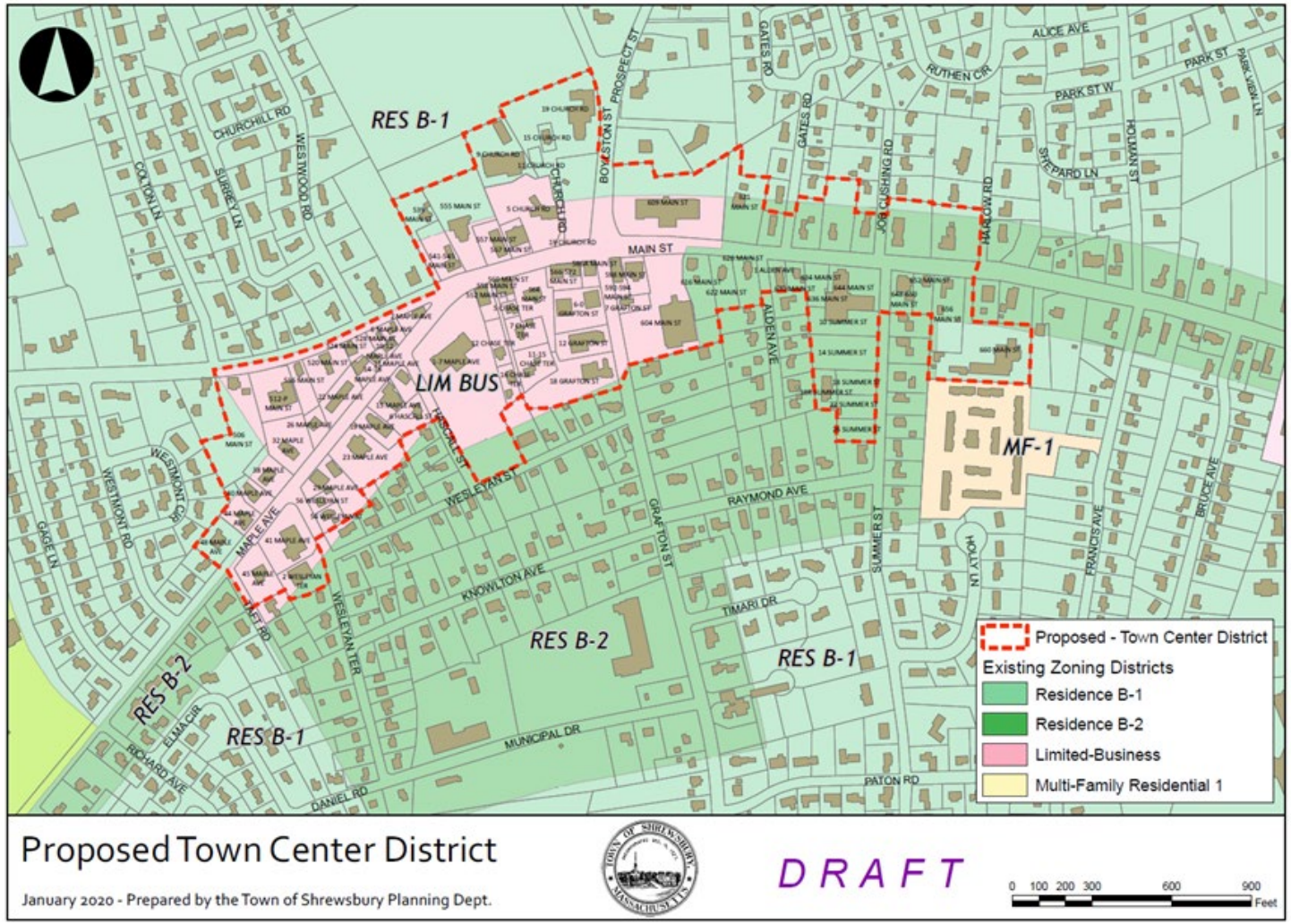
**Dimensions Station**
Support for:
Wider sidewalks
Taller buildings (between 2 and 3 stories)
Zero Lot lines, Buildings closer to the road
Tree-lined sidewalks
Pedestrian connections between Main St and Maple Ave
Recommended towns - Lenox, Montpelier, Northampton, West Hartford, Hudson, Wellesley, Concord, Rockport

**Zoning Boundaries Station**
Support for:
Expanding current LB line eastward on Main Street
OR Keeping TC line same as LB
Some interest in two TC zones

# Elements of the Proposed Town Center Zoning District

1. Town Center District Zoning Boundaries
2. Variety of Uses
3. Lighting and Signage Standards
4. Architectural Design Standards
5. Frontage and Landscaping Requirements
6. Parking Standards and Requirements

# Existing and Proposed Town Center District



# Overview of Proposed Allowable Uses

Vertical Mix of Uses
By Special Permit

**Mixed-Use Development - Vertical Mix**:
An integration of commercial and multi-family residential uses in a single structure in which the residential uses are located above the ground floor.

Micro and Nano Breweries
By Special Permit

**Microbrewery**:
A facility… for the production and packaging of malt, wine, or hard cider beverages for distribution retail or wholesale, on or off the premise, with a capacity of not more than fifteen thousand (15,000) barrels.

**Nanobrewery**: …six thousand (6,000) barrels

Small-scale "Boutique" Hotels
By Special Permit

**Boutique or Small-scale Hotel**:
A small hotel not less than ten (10) and not more than 50 rooms, typically designed to blend into the community and reflect the neighborhoods and cultures around it.

# Lighting and Signage Standards

**Lighting**:
Lighting for streets, parking areas, and civic/gathering spaces shall be decorative in shape, scale, and finish, with detailed, articulated treatments for the base, post, fixture, and crown.

**Light poles**:
Light poles and fixtures shall not exceed 20 feet in height.

**Dark-Sky**:
All exterior lights on private property shall be dark-sky compliant.

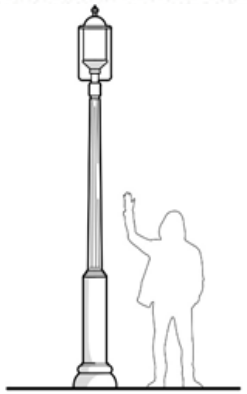


**Figure 5**
This illustration shows the proper scale and attention to aesthetic detail.

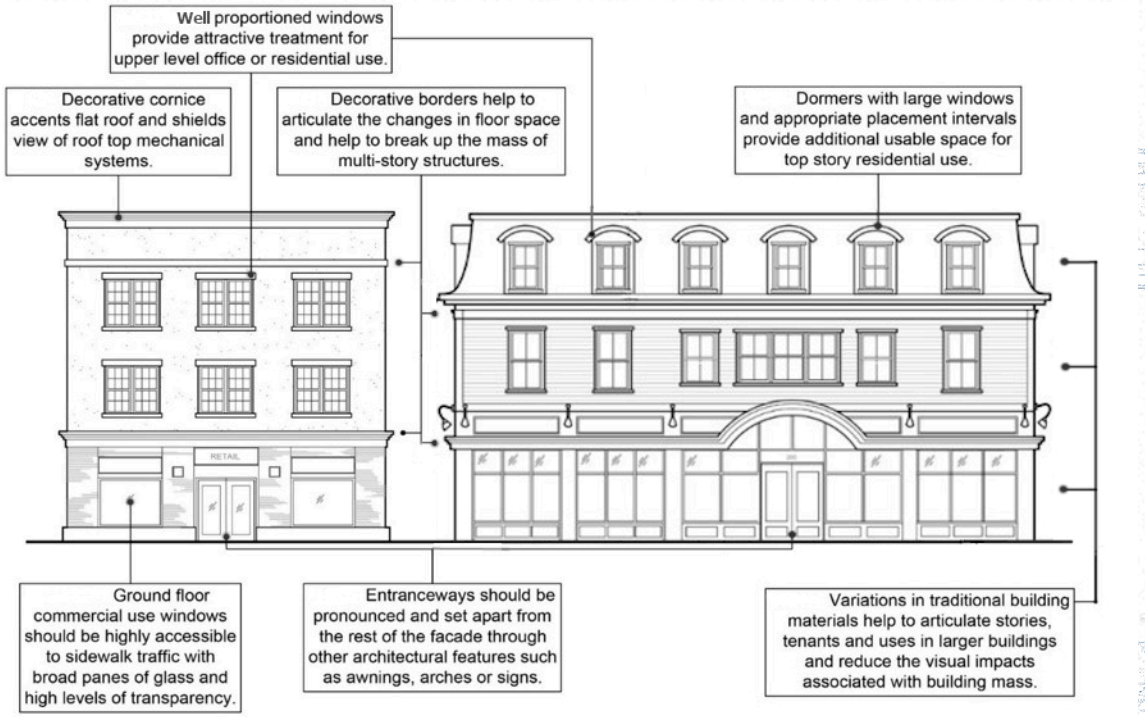
**Permitted Signage**:

- Externally Illuminated or Front-lit Signs shall have downward-directed, wall mounted lights with white , steady, stationary light only, with fully-shielded decorative lamps that do not obscure the sign's graphics.
- Wall Mounted Signs and Projected Signs (Blade or Hanging Signs): One sign of each type shall be allowed per tenant on each elevation of a building with a customer entrance. The sign should be located no lower than 7'6" above the ground floor, but not higher than the top of the first floor.
- Temporary banners provided they are only used for a period of thirty (30) days prior to and following the opening of a business or other establishment.

**Prohibited Signage**:

- Free-standing signs with clearance above the ground that is more than two feet above grade.
- Internally illuminated signs of any kind and signs made of plastic or vinyl.
- Illuminated signs with exposed neon tubing or exposed LEDs.
- Box style cabinet signs or "can signs" with illuminated, translucent background and silhouette, translucent or acrylic letters.

# Design Standards




**Building Form**:
Buildings with façades longer than forty (40) feet shall articulate the façade with features common to traditional New England architecture that create visual interest. Features shall include a combination of two or more of the following: varied rooflines, distinct signage for multiple tenants, awnings, arcades, pilasters, columns, recessed spaces and/or entrances, and any other features that serve to add texture

**Building Articulation**:
Multi-story buildings shall clearly articulate the base, middle (where applicable), and top of the building using cornices, borders of distinct material, or other articulating features on every visible surface of the building.

**Building Materials**:
For finished siding and foundations, natural materials such as brick, stone, wood/concrete clapboards and shingles, and slate are allowed. Asphalt shingles or similar materials for roofing are allowed. High-quality cement-fiber siding designed to preserve the traditional aesthetic character of the district is also allowed. Vinyl siding shall be prohibited.

# Design Standards

**Roofline Form**:
The roof design for new buildings shall provide a variety of building heights and varied roofline articulation reflecting traditional New England architecture. These roof shapes include gables, gambrels, flat roofs, mansards and any jointed configuration of these styles.

**Dormers**:
On pitched rooflines, dormers shall be used to break up roof surfaces

**Building Massing**:
A complex of smaller scale buildings is preferable to a single large structure because the varied massing provides visual interest and human scale

# Property Frontage and Landscaping

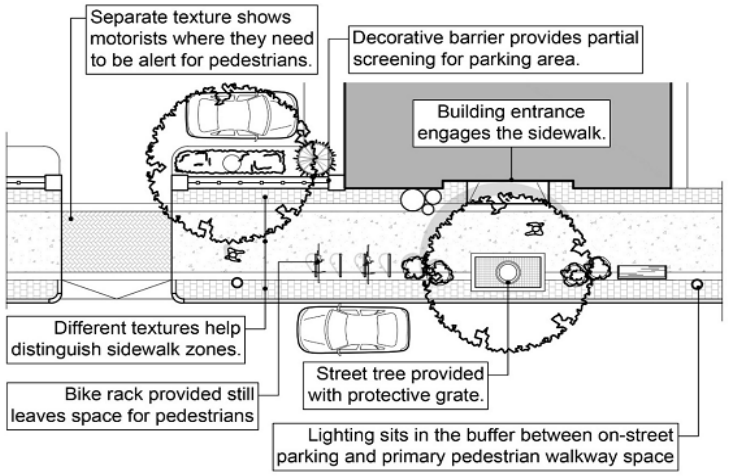



**Figure 1**

**Sidewalk Width**:
Sidewalks shall have a minimum width of eight (8) feet. Where the distance between the edge of pavement in the street and the building façade allows, sidewalks shall be greater than eight (8) feet wide.

**Sidewalk Material**:
Sidewalks should be reinforced concrete, however, the Planning Board may approve varied finishes for the concrete or a mix of materials consistent with the purposes of the Town Center District

**Setbacks**:
Front Yard – Minimum 0’ / Maximum 10’
Side Yard – Minimum 0’ / Maximum 10’
(Setbacks >10’ Require a Special Permit)

**Landscape Buffer**:
An adequate buffer shall be provided between the edge of the street and the primary pedestrian walkway in order to supply enough space for benches, lighting, landscaping, street trees, trash receptacles or other amenities.

**Landscaping**:
Applicants shall provide a landscape plan and maintenance agreement that includes, but is not limited to, a combination of fixed and/or moveable planters, street trees, decorative plantings. Landscaped areas should be designed to remain functional and attractive during all seasons through a thoughtful selection of deciduous, evergreen, berrying, and flowering plant varieties

# Proposed Parking Standards and Requirements

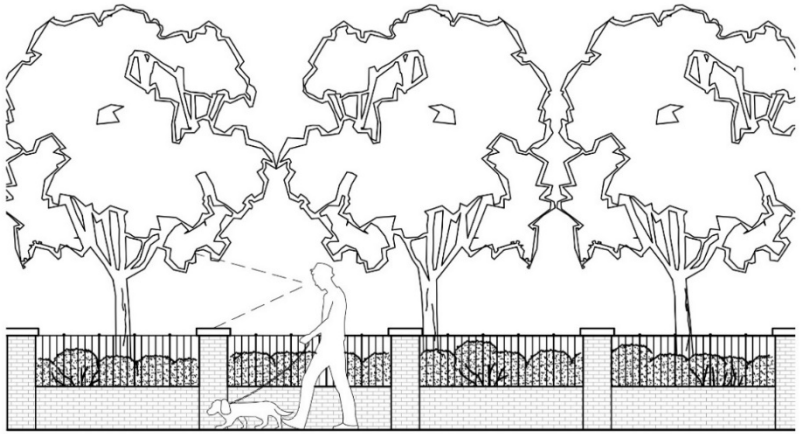
**Parking Report**:
Site Plan Approval applications in the Town Center District shall be accompanied by a Parking Report that demonstrates reasonable access to parking spaces on-site and/or off-site

**Parking Reduction**:
The permit granting authority may permit a reduction in the number of required parking spaces if the applicant provides a Parking Management Plan demonstrating that a reduction is warranted

**Remote or Off-Site Parking**:
Parking may be located off-site to substitute for some or all of the required on-site parking spaces. Must be within 800 feet of the subject property line, show a clearly defined pedestrian route between the off-site parking and the subject property, provide a binding parking agreement

**Parking Standards – Rear Parking**:
Parking shall be located behind frontage buildings on the property and shall not be located between the front plane of a building and a street or a public way.

**Parking Standards – Side Parking**:
The Planning Board may issue a ***Special Permit to allow for parking that is to the side, but applicant must provide a landscape buffer that includes a decorative barrier***, which may be designed as brick or stone finish walls, decorative fencing, or a combination of these treatments.



(Example of Decorative Barrier)

# Some Questions for Consideration

What are your thoughts about:

- The proposed uses?
- Levels of town review for each use?
- The proposed boundary of the Town Center District?
- The requirements in the design standards?
- The clarity of the signage and lighting standards?
- Allowing 2 ½ stories by-right (Site Plan Review) and 3 stories by Special Permit?

# A Note Regarding Planning and Zoning

- Zoning sets parameters for how land can be used, but it <u>does not</u> make development happen.
- Development in the Town Center <u>would</u> still require landowner support, savvy developers, financiers, skilled architects and builders.
- New Zoning <u>would</u> impact new development in the Town Center.
- New Zoning <u>would not</u> force owners of existing buildings to comply.
- New Zoning <u>would</u> provide existing and future owners with new and creative opportunities and possibilities for developing their property.

# Sample of Massachusetts Towns that already have, or have recently approved, their own Town Center Village Districts

- Ashburnham
- Auburn
- Dracut
- Maynard
- Northampton
- Orleans
- Palmer
- Pelham
- Sutton
- Upton
- Weymouth
- Yarmouth

And more…

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# Planning and Economic Development Department

Please contact us with any questions or comments:

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# Plans and Reports Recommending Zoning Changes in the Town Center

1. Shrewsbury Master Plan, Shrewsbury Master Plan Committee, 2016.

2. Shrewsbury Town Center Parking Management Plan, Stantec Inc., 2018.

3. Shrewsbury Town Center Study, Horsley Witten Group, 2019.

4. Recommendations for the Reuse of the Beal School Property, Beal Reuse Committee, 2019.

5. Wayfinding and Branding Study, Favermann Design, On-going.

6. WPI Student Intersection Design Study, On-going.