

Minutes
Saugatuck Steering Committee
Transit Oriented Development (SSCTOD)
Master Plan
Special Meeting

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

Town Hall Room 201/201A – 8:00 AM

Note: The audio of the entire meeting was recorded and can be made available by request.

Subcommittee members in attendance: Co-Chair Craig Schiavone, Co-Chair Mary Young, Matt Mandell, Ian Warburg, Eileen Berenyi, Peter Gold, Bob Iannacone, Francis Henkels, Sam Levenson.

Ex-Officio Committee Members in attendance: Carol Leahy, Sam Arciola, Alicia Mozian, Katherine Daniel.

Members of the Consulting Team Seth Shapiro and Heather Craig

Members of the public were also present.

Meeting Opened 8:00 a.m.

Seth Shapiro reviewed the schedule noting that at the July meeting the consulting team will be presenting design options.

Seth revealed that 1,372 survey responses were received by participants from a wide range of demographic groups. The ranking task yielded the conclusion that Traffic/Transit/Parking was the top priority and that Sidewalks and Walkability were also very important as this topic was lifted above the line more times than any other item although it did not attain the highest ranking.

Comments included in the survey responses highlighted the concern about cut through traffic as a cause for traffic problems in Saugatuck.

Traffic hot spots were noted north of 95 at Sunrise and Riverside Drive, at Treadwell/Riverside/Saugatuck intersection, at Bridge street and Riverside Avenue. South of 95 the intersection of Charles Street and Franklin Street as well as the off ramp of I-95 were noted traffic hot spots.

Sidewalk hot spots noted included Riverside Avenue south of Bridge Street, the link from Lot 8 to the train station and under the RR along Saugatuck Avenue.

Comments regarding the character of Saugatuck included the observation that the area is like a seaside village. Seth Shapiro noted the potential to improve what he termed a “truncated vista” along the waterfront.

Regarding Shops and Dining, the owner of Tarantino's expressed a desire for outdoor dining space and other respondents noted the lack of a grocery store in the neighborhood. Other respondents noted the need for more waterfront access and public spaces.

Regarding parking, comments included the observation that retail parking is insufficient, the suggestion for more daily, non-permitted spaces. Of those who commented on structured parking 18 made favorable comments and 6 made negative comments.

When survey respondents were asked for their own ideas, respondents offered the observation that the Franklin Street area was in need of improvement and that redevelopment is welcome as long as it can be done while keeping the character of neighborhood.

The image analysis portion of the survey seemed to suggest that vibrant, mixed-use commercial architecture of 2.5 stories was the preferred vision. Images that included shops and people did better than images of just people.

Seth Shapiro also summarized what was gleaned from the Open House. Community character was the most discussed topic. Characterizations included Saugatuck as a New England riverside hamlet. Structures of 1-3 stories were preferred.

There was discussion regarding how much of the traffic is related to local traffic and how much to cut through traffic.

There was animated discussion about the possible causes of the perceived parking problems in Saugatuck. Parking rates are lower than in other towns. There are 2.75 permits for every railroad permit parking space. There are 1427 railroad permit spaces and 4000 permits issued. There are approximately 1500 people on the waiting list. Seth Shapiro made the observation that there may be a way to effect parking availability by working with wait list and raising the fee.

The co-chairs and Seth Shapiro requested a motion to affirm the Design Principles as the benchmark to measure proposed interventions to the issues raised in the survey and the open house. Sam Levenson made a motion to affirm the principles. There was discussion about the appearance of parking as something the committee appears to agree on. Seth noted that the design principle is silent on the solution. In response to Matt Mandell's concern that there is an inferred preference for a parking deck lined with storefronts to mask the appearance of parking, Mary Young and Sam Levenson pointed out that there are other way to reduce the appearance of parking as primary land use. There was discussion about how technology could assist in improving parking availability and the safety concern due to the of distance of parking spaces from shops and the lack of safe pedestrian facilities.

Peter Gold seconded the motion.

Bob Iannacone recommended the committee not “tie the hands” of the consultants by dismissing certain interventions out of hand.

Alicia Mozian suggested the inclusion of climate change in the design principles. Seth Shapiro suggested the inclusion of the word Resiliency in #5.

Sam Levenson revised his motion. Eileen Berenyi seconded the motion. Committee members voted unanimously to approve the design principles as modified.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 AM

Next regularly scheduled SSC meeting: July 18, 2017 at 8:00 am