

## Action Minutes

### **Saugatuck Transit Oriented Design Master Plan Steering Committee**

#### **Special Meeting**

Tuesday, January 16, 2018

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-Chairs Craig Schiavone and Mary Young, Matt Mandel, Cathy Walsh, Rick Guinta, Sam Levenson, Ian Warburg, Sam Arciola, Eileen Berenyi, Francis Henkel, Ward French, Bob Iannacone, Martin Fox, Peter Gold, Alicia Mozian, Katherine Daniel

Consultants in attendance: Seth Shapiro, Mark Evans

Mary Young opened the meeting and thanked the participants for attending. Seth Shapiro from BartonPartners requested feedback on the first four sections of the draft report, Executive Summary, Community Outreach, Case Studies and Technical Analysis.

The following comments were made. Cathy Walsh voiced an objection to characterization of Westport zoning as being excessively restrictive. Matt Mandel requested leading with a positive characterization of Saugatuck. Marty Fox requested rewording of Low Impact Action items as the implication is that the effect of these items would be minimal. Sam Arciola spoke regarding the low parking fees and indicated that he is not inclined to support a change in the fees. It was noted that there are roughly four times as many permits issued as there are parking spaces. The priority of the Station Square area was questioned as it would remove a number of parking spaces. Peter Gold questioned whether dependence on transit was wise given the tenuousness of State funding for transit. Sam Levenson noted the rise of car share services. Matt Mandel pointed out the title of the study includes the word Design rather than the word Development (Transit Oriented Design). Relative to the assertion that much of Saugatuck could not be rebuilt if destroyed Mary Young responded that most structures beyond Saugatuck Center development are non-conforming to the existing zoning regulations. Ian Warburg questioned whether estimated values are accurate. He questioned the predicted reduction in the population of Westport in the future. He questioned how that population reduction impacts the economic predictions? Matt Mandel stressed the projected developments in neighboring towns and the impact they will have on development in Westport. Other points made by Mr. Mandel were correction to page 57 noting that the Cribari Bridge does not cause traffic; it's the intersection that it leads to which causes the traffic congestion. He proposed the adaptive reuse of the old post office building rather than new structures. He also suggested that the motivation to develop may not exist for owners of the parcels noted in the plan as development sites.

Mary Young urged a pro-active approach to set the stage for development proposals rather than a reactive approach. Cathy Walsh echoed support for more GDB-S zones.

A discussion of the TOD Plan followed.

**Parking Improvements Plan:** Seth Shapiro discussed the Parking Improvements Plan as relates to #3 Design Principle. Concentrating permit parking near station by using hidden single story parking decks responds to the desire to remove the appearance of parking as a design principle. He discussed the three gateways to Saugatuck, in particular the roundabout at Saugatuck Ave, Treadwell Ave, and Riverside Ave was included as the traffic consultants believe it to be a viable solution to the circulation problems experienced there as well as providing an aesthetically pleasing gateway.

**Public Realm Improvements:** Among the elements of this part of the plan is the addition of on-street parking on one side of Riverside Avenue. Peter Gold asked about the need expressed for a bike lane. Seth Shapiro responded that the sharrow is the best option to provide for bikes due to the limited ability to expand the right of way. Mr. Gold noted that the RTM approved funds for Phase 2 of the Railroad Parking study which includes bike lanes in the scope. Seth Shapiro discussed the proposed change to two-way travel on Franklin, addition of a roundabout at Riverside and Railroad Place, and the widening of the sidewalk on Railroad Place. Sam Levenson suggested allowing a left from Charles onto Franklin only for jitneys. Mark Evans of BartonPartners indicated that they will add arrows to the plan to show traffic flow changes. More clarity was requested on locations for bike parking. The plan includes improvements to Ferry Lane, the addition of parking spaces in a one-story parking deck and the pedestrian crossing at Ferry Lane and Riverside Ave; these were discussed. The plan also included improvements to river access (Ferry Lane Landing and a small plaza behind the Fire House). The plan includes improvements to Luciano Park that would remove the ball field but would add an amphitheater space.

**Private Sector Developments:** Private sector developments included in the plan propose to capture 5-10% of the projected market demand for residential units. 4ward Planning's Todd Poole predicted that 320-640 units could be absorbed in Saugatuck. Only 150-200 units are proposed in the private development portion of the plan. Seth Shapiro noted that the projected return on investment is very low and is likely possible only for those who currently own the property as property values are quite high in the area. The redevelopment proposal for the Button Factory, the Rizutto's property and the Lot 1 & 2 liner buildings were discussed. It was noted that the liner building plan could be a defensive strategy with respect to what the State of CT might like to see. Developing a pro-active plan showing what would be acceptable to the town may aid in negotiating with the State of CT should that become necessary. The liner buildings proposed in the plan contain 22-28 dwelling units, 12-18K square feet of retail space, and 35K square feet of office space. The proposal pencils out to be a feasible project with a reasonable return on investment. There was continued debate and discussion on the positive and negative aspects of decked parking and how this plan would relate to state actions.

Traffic and Transportation: Improvements proposed include traditional improvements such as signalization and other improvements such as the roundabout at Treadwell Ave. Another aspect of the traffic and transportation plan is changing behavior through Transit Demand Management such as regulating parking maximums, working with employers to incentivize the use of transit, or changing office hours to maximize the potential for using of transit.

Outline for Implementation Plan: BartonPartners promotes the implementation of the plan by beginning at the Railroad Place block and moving out. The following topics were discussed: the need for an area traffic study, a Transportation Management Demand study, development of funding strategies, zoning changes to remap some parcels to GBD-S and text amendment changes to adjust some portions of the GBD-S regulations, sharing responsibility for public realm improvements with private developers. The plan includes two Village Overlays, one for the Village Center and one for the Village Edge that address front setbacks, building forms, building placement and orientation, civic space requirements, and the removal of FAR requirements. The Implementation Plan is focused on providing an approach and timing for acting on the substantive elements of the TOD plan.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 am.