

Economic Development Committee report to the Select Board

The Economic Development Committee forwards the Ironwood Report to the Select Board with the following recommendations:

- 1. The Town should coordinate with the NH Department of Transportation to improve the appearance of Route 1 within the Village Center area.**

Ironwood suggests sidewalks, bike paths, street lighting, vegetated medians and landscaping as potential measures to improve the appearance of Route 1 and define the proposed Village Center of North Hampton. The Select Board should, as soon as practicable, initiate discussions with the NH DoT and the Rockingham Planning Commission to revise plans for future modifications to Route 1 in North Hampton to create improvements and changes consistent with the designation of a section of Route 1 as within a Village Center.

The Select Board should also discuss adopting a Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and NH DoT about access management within the Village Center. Creating connections between and among Route 1 stores and services would enhance pedestrian access and the attraction of the Village Center.

- 2. Refer potential Zoning Ordinance changes to the Planning Board.**

The Ironwood Report included an extensive review of North Hampton's Zoning Ordinance, Site Plan Review Regulations, and Subdivision Regulations. A committee of the EDC analyzed those recommendations and prepared a thorough report. The EDC found that some of Ironwood's recommendations should receive further consideration by the Planning Board. However, many of Ironwood's recommendations were found to be outside the scope of their work. The complete review document prepared by an Ironwood consultant is attached, as is the EDC committee report analyzing these recommendations.

We recommend that the zoning issues be forwarded to the Planning Board, the entity with authority to amend the Zoning Ordinance, for their consideration.

- 3. The EDC recommends that the Select Board ask the Planning Board to review potential changes in the town's ordinances and explore appropriate planning tools that would allow for limited mixed-use development along the route one corridor.**

The following themes should be considered in the review:

- a. Buildings with shops and businesses on the first floor with limited apartments or condos above to create living and working spaces that are attractive to a wide range of people and business owners.
- b. The dynamics of the traditional retail landscape have changed significantly in recent years. Consideration should be given to zoning changes that allow property owners and developers the flexibility to develop a mix of uses to provide a variety of housing, employment, shopping, services, and social opportunities for the community. Design should encourage pedestrian and vehicular access between interconnecting properties and reflect the traditional character of New Hampshire downtowns.

4. Village Center rendering

The Ironwood Report failed to deliver a visual representation of what a Village Center might look like in the Town of North Hampton. Therefore, we do not have this product to recommend to the Select Board.

The Economic Development Committee does not recommend adoption of the Ironwood Report as presented. The Committee's support is for the portions noted above.

Comments by EDC Zoning Review Subcommittee (hereinafter EDC ZRS) on Zoning and Land Recommendations provided by Liz Durfee of Ironwood.

The EDC ZRS requests that the EDC share its findings and recommendations with the Select Board no later than January 2021.

I. Zoning Ordinance (ZO) – Purpose of Districts

Recommendation:

- Review the purpose statement for districts and update, as necessary, to better reflect current and desired conditions. This may require revisiting and/or updating the purposes, goals, and objectives laid out in the Town of Hampton Master Plan.

Recommend Village Center Overlay District and define requirements of Overlay District if SB supports this concept.

Recommend that the established Planning Board/EDC subcommittee appoint two EDC members to the vacant seats on this subcommittee and that this subcommittee take up the task of defining the purpose and requirements of the Overlay District.

- Revise the dimensional standards (discussed below) to reflect the desire for density

If the SB supports establishing the Overlay District, recommend that the PB/ EDC Subcommittee revise dimensional required to create this Overlay Village District for consideration by the PB and voters.

II. Zoning Ordinance – Permitted uses

A. Readability of Permitted Uses

Recommendation:

- Present this information in a table, such as in Attachment 1 of this memo.

Make use of the Ironwood recommended table to enable zoning ordinances to be more readable.

B. Types of Uses

Recommendations:

- Conduct public outreach to evaluate the types of uses that residents want in the Village District. The public input sessions conducted as part of the Village District Master Plan project revealed that there is a lack of consensus among the town's population about what uses are desired. The desired uses may conflict with the uses that are currently allowed by zoning. Amend zoning as needed.

The EDC ZRS believes that there is consensus on the types of uses that residents want for the Village District. There is a need to reconcile the differing preferences of the property owners in the IBR, the business community and those of the residents

- Allow multiple-family dwellings to be permitted through just the Site Plan Review process instead of requiring additional approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

If mixed-use and/or multi-family development are supported for the Village Center Overlay District, the EDC ZRS recommends that PB/EDC Subcommittee assess and recommend changes in the ZO and Site Plan Review Regulations to implement this change.

- Evaluate the standards for motor-vehicle service facilities. Consider more stringent standards or prohibiting this use from the Village District.

The EDC ZRS recommends prohibiting motor vehicle service facilities in the Village Center Overlay District. The EDC should consult with existing facilities owners/operators concerning further development with a view to reconciling any potential differences. Existing businesses to be grandfathered.

- Allow mixed use buildings and develop standards for this type of use.

The EDC ZRS supports mixed use buildings and associated standards only.

- Consider establishing an overlay district for the Village District. This would provide the Town with greater flexibility to shape development specifically within the Village District by establishing different standards and allowed uses for this area. Alternatively, a separate base zoning district could be established to encompass the Village District.

The EDC ZRS recommends establishing an Overlay Village District, rather than a new "base" zoning district. The PB /EDC Subcommittee of the PB should focus on creating an overlay district for the village center with effective provisions for developing this district.

III. Zoning Ordinance – District Requirements (Dimensional Standards)

A. District Requirements Table 203.1 and the table of frontage requirements

Recommendations:

- Reduce the variation of side and rear yard standards.

This matter to be referred to the Planning Board/EDC subcommittee for further action on setbacks etc.

B. District Requirements

Recommendations:

- Consider offering a height bonus in exchange for reduced impervious coverage.

The EDC ZRS does not support this recommendation, but believes that new height limitations should be considered in the proposed Overlay District

- Reduce minimum front setback and bring buildings closer to the street.

The EDC ZRS supports this action in coordination with other ordinance and site-plan review provisions to be considered by the Planning Board/EDC subcommittee to define an Overlay Village District.

- Reduce lot size to 20,000 (about ½ acre) or 43,560 square feet. In downtown Newmarket, for example, the minimum lot size is ¼ to ½ acre in the downtown vicinity and setbacks are as little as five feet from the right of way. In comparison, Portsmouth's minimum lot size for downtown residential development is <1/10 of an acre.

The EDC ZRS recommends that the Planning Board/EDC subcommittee examine whether smaller lots should be allowed in the Overlay Village District.

C. Sign Ordinance

Recommendations:

- Conduct a business survey to determine whether sign restrictions are having a significant impact on businesses attraction and viability. Consider amending regulations to allow for signage for all businesses while maintaining enforceable standards that protect the viewscape.

The EDC ZRS recommends that the Planning Board/EDC subcommittee should evaluate appropriate signage tailored for the needs of the Overlay Village District.

IV. Site Plan Review and Subdivision Regulations

A. Review Process

The EDC ZRS considers the existing review process to be sufficiently robust.

B. Parking, Landscaping, and Outdoor Storage

Recommendation:

- Consider reducing the parking standards, allowing shared parking, or leaving parking minimums to the discretion of the business to determine how much parking is necessary. Require that parking be located along the side and rear of the building.

The EDC ZRS supports the above-mentioned actions – except for “leaving parking minimums to the discretion of the business” – but believes that the recommendations about parking standards should be prepared by the PB/EDC subcommittee for consideration by the PB.

- Strengthen landscaping requirements and include a list of suitable species to promote better screening and visual interest.

The EDC ZRS recommends a review of current landscape requirements to ensure compatibility with the Village concept.

- Prohibit outdoor display and storage from within the front setback

The EDC ZRS recommends more active enforcement of existing regulations.

V. Town of North Hampton Master Plan (2006)

The EDC ZRS recommends that if the Overlay Village Center concept is adopted, then the Master Plan should be updated to accommodate necessary changes.