

South Hadley 2020 Master Plan Update

Prepared for the Town of South Hadley, Massachusetts
Prepared by Harriman • Tighe & Bond • RKG Associates
Completed by Innes Associates
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APPENDIX D

As South Hadley implements the recommendations of this master plan update, a key recommendation is to continue neighborhood-by-neighborhood studies. This would allow the Town to do a “deep dive” into the individual needs of each neighborhood and consider how they function individually and part of the collective whole of the Town.

The following pages provide a scope and rationale for these proposed neighborhood-based planning studies, which have a new importance given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; questions of equity around access to economic opportunities, open spaces, and community services; and the need to address the impacts of climate change on South Hadley’s significant assets: natural, social, and built. The last two pages indicate a starting point for the examination of some of South Hadley’s neighborhoods.

Scope for Neighborhood Plans

The scope for the neighborhood planning process includes a visioning phase that will help define the individual neighborhoods, a series of planning efforts for each neighborhood, and an implementation phase which should complement and supplement the implementation plan for this master plan update.

Visioning

As part of the implementation of this master plan update, South Hadley should hold a community-building exercise to define the neighborhoods of South Hadley and discuss how the topics raised by this plan affect each neighborhood.

This pre-planning process would be an excellent test of some of the actions related to communications listed under Goal 3 in **4 Implementation Plan**.

The goals for this visioning process would be as follows:

- ▶ Define the geographic criteria of a neighborhood. This includes a center and a boundary within a ten- to fifteen-minute walk of the center.
- ▶ Define the components of a neighborhood, starting with the list in the introduction.
- ▶ Identify specific neighborhoods within South Hadley.
- ▶ Understand the strengths and weaknesses of each neighborhood relative to the identified criteria.
- ▶ Develop an identity for each neighborhood that will guide the next steps of the planning process.

This process could take 6-12 months. A true community-building exercise would include schools, public and private, and students and faculty from Mount Holyoke College. Workshops could be a combination of online polls and in-person meetings, with the physical meetings held in different places throughout the town and on different days of the week and times of day.

Prior to the exercise, the Planning & Conservation Department should develop criteria that will help participants in the pre-planning process define a neighborhood.

These criteria should start with how to define the geographic boundaries of a neighborhood. The neighborhood should have both a center and an edge. The center could be a cluster of commercial development, as was done during this planning process. It could also be a school, playground, or park: in other words, a gathering place for neighborhood activity.

The edge of the neighborhood should be a demarcation line that represents a walkable distance (approximately 10 minutes) to the center. That edge may be man-made, such as a road, or natural

(for example, a brook or significant change in topography).

Once the geographic parameters are set, the next stage is to develop criteria for what should be in a neighborhood. The criteria listed at the beginning of this section would be a good starting point.

A valuable community exercise would be to have participants define their neighborhood based on the geographic criteria. Questions participants might consider include the following:

- ▶ Do neighborhoods overlap?
- ▶ Are certain neighborhoods adjacent to each other?
- ▶ Are some neighborhoods residential only, with no defined center of either open space, school, or commercial district?

Using the criteria in the first part of this section, participants can analyze each neighborhood, using the questions below:

- ▶ Which components are in each neighborhood?
- ▶ What is missing?
- ▶ Is the neighborhood well-connected to other parts of South Hadley?
- ▶ What can residents within the neighborhood access by walking or biking?
- ▶ What requires a car or public transit to access? Is public transit available to that neighborhood?
- ▶ What do residents value about the neighborhood? Is it a certain feel to the streets? Historic buildings? A local park or other gathering spot? A neighborhood school?
- ▶ What is a source of discomfort or distress? For example, are existing sidewalks in disrepair? Is

there a building that is consistently vacant? Are there missing components that people would like to have?

- ▶ Why would someone want to live, work, or visit here?

The results from the 2019 community forums for this master plan update could be used as a starting point for these discussions, but this planning process should go into more depth and into more neighborhoods. Appropriate data for these discussions would include the following:

- ▶ Detailed maps at a neighborhood scale showing land uses and circulation.
- ▶ 2020 Census data.
- ▶ Pictures of existing buildings, including historic and contemporary styles, and residential and non-residential.
- ▶ Pictures of public infrastructure, public buildings, and open spaces.
- ▶ Pictures or other examples of things participants like and don't like about their neighborhoods.

From the discussions, data, and photographs, participants in this process should begin to build an identity for each neighborhood. This identity should be rooted in existing strengths and identify missing assets.

Participants should also discuss whether each neighborhood requires all components. Are there connections (or could there be connections) that would allow adjacent neighborhoods to share elements? For example, a neighborhood centred on a commercial node and a neighborhood centred on a park could share those resources.

Finally, participants should think about how the identity of each neighborhood fits the goals of this

master plan update. How do the goals, strategies, objectives, and actions defined in **4 Implementation Plan** work with the vision for each neighborhood? In particular, how does each neighborhood address the social, environmental, and economic goals for the Town as a whole and how does the identity of each neighborhood respond to climate change and the need to build a more resilient town?

Planning for Implementation

Once the neighborhoods have been defined through this process, the next step is to begin a planning process for each neighborhood. Depending on the neighborhoods, one or more might be combined for a single planning process.

The goals of the planning process should include the following:

- ▶ Engage community members from each neighborhood, ensuring through multiple modes of outreach a demographically representative sample from each neighborhood.
- ▶ Identify the assets within each neighborhood (see list of maps below).
- ▶ Understand what is missing from each neighborhood based on initial visioning process.
- ▶ Develop a build-out scenario that looks at potential changes to the neighborhood over time. Does the existing zoning allow for the type of change the neighborhood wants? Understand when the neighborhood was built relative to the introduction of zoning; the development patterns residents value today may not be allowable under the current zoning regulations for that neighborhood.
- ▶ Create an implementation plan that builds on the strength of each neighborhood and addresses the weaknesses based on the criteria

developed in the planning process.

- ▶ Create maps on a neighborhood scale, identifying the following:
 - Existing land use.
 - Development characteristics and patterns such as building height, building setbacks, street width, age and style of buildings, and density of buildings.
 - Existing connections (pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular).
 - Current businesses.
 - Current municipal facilities.
 - Locations for open space and recreation.
 - Existing natural, cultural, and historic resources.
 - Opportunities to address weaknesses. For example, locations for a new pedestrian connection; a building that can be adapted to a new use; an area that can become a new park.
 - Define and gather additional data that is required to provide a complete picture of the neighborhood.

The planning process should develop specific goals and actions for each neighborhood with a focus on what is within the Town's responsibility and what would require action from non-Town entities (business, property-owner, community-based organizations, local institutions). The following are specific areas in which the Town could take action:

- ▶ Regulatory changes such as a zoning change.
- ▶ Infrastructure improvements, such as the

installation or repair of sidewalks.

- ▶ Enforcement actions, such as fines for buildings or sites deliberately left in disrepair or disorder.
- ▶ Policy changes, such as a decision to reallocate resources.
- ▶ Advocacy with the Town's state and federal legislative delegations for additional resources.
- ▶ Partnership with non-town resources to address components missing from each neighborhood.

The ultimate focus of the planning process for each neighborhood should be answering the question "How do we make a great place for the people who live, work, play, and learn in this neighborhood?" The answer to that question will be different for each neighborhood but should contribute to answering that same question for the entire Town.

Implementing the Plan

The goal of the planning process is a final implementation plan paired with a neighborhood map that captures the future vision of each neighborhood. The map may be a series of diagrams that define the future investment in public infrastructure and changes to the regulatory structure. Accompanying draft zoning text, funding sources for investments, and partners for action should also be part of the implementation plan for each neighborhood.

Developing a specific timeline for implementation will be particularly important because the needs of several neighborhoods may be met by a single infrastructure grant. The timeline should include an understanding of grant cycles and address how specific actions steps for individual neighborhoods might be combined in an application for a larger grant request.

For the purposes of the thematic forums, the planning process examined four neighborhoods are centered on commercial nodes, or centers of activity. This structure was chosen because South Hadley does not appear to have strong neighborhood identities beyond “The Falls” and “The Commons.”

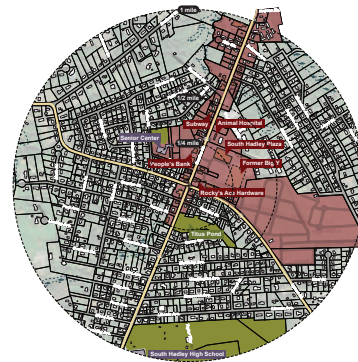
The four neighborhoods were:

- ▶ A. Neighborhood centered on the Village Commons and Mount Holyoke College at Route 47 and Route 116.
- ▶ B. Woodlawn Neighborhood (centered on the intersection of Routes 116 and 33)
- ▶ C. South Hadley Falls
- ▶ D. Intersection of Routes 202 and 33



A. Village Commons/Mount Holyoke College

- ▶ Increase economic development opportunities for small-scale businesses in the area centered on the Village Commons and Mt. Holyoke at Route 47 and Route 116.
- ▶ Enhance and expand open spaces on the periphery of the neighborhood to include a small park, a community garden, a playground, a dog park, and recreational/sports facilities.
- ▶ Increase the variety of housing choices between the neighborhood core and periphery. Housing options should meet a wide range of needs for affordability, household sizes, life-stages, and the ability to age in place within the community.

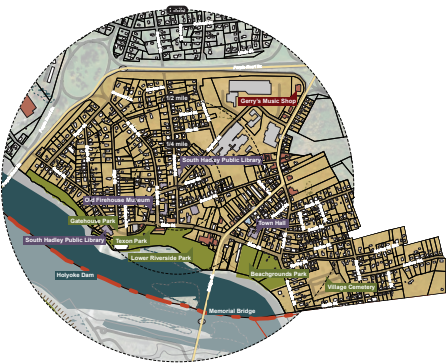


B. Woodlawn Neighborhood

- ▶ Create incentives for the re-establishment of a grocery store at this location. Study non-traditional approaches such as a co-op grocery store.
- ▶ Increase opportunities for small businesses in and around the neighborhood core.
- ▶ Provide civic/institutional facilities such as a gym and community center.
- ▶ Increase the variety of housing choices.

The maps of these neighborhood nodes allowed the participants in the forums and the supporting meetings-in-a-box to consider how housing interacted with one or more additional components of a great neighborhood: access to jobs, goods, and services; the transportation choices available; and places to learn, play, and relax. Two forums in particular – **Neighborhoods for All Ages** and **People, Prosperity, Housing and Connections** – examined what these neighborhoods had and what was missing.

These neighborhoods are not the only ones in South Hadley, but they are more likely to be great neighborhoods, as described above. Other neighborhoods tend to be less concentrated and less diverse in terms of mix of uses. As South Hadley goes into its next phase of planning over the coming ten years, the Planning & Conservation Department should undertake a process to come to a community consensus on clearly defined neighborhoods or “sub-areas” to allow opportunities for more focused planning studies.



C. South Hadley Falls

- ▶ Preserve the existing character of the neighborhood core.
- ▶ Increase the number of small businesses such as retail shops, small grocery stores or farmer’s market, ice cream shops, cafés, and restaurants near the neighborhood core.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for an art gallery and artist studios.
- ▶ Develop affordable mixed-use housing.
- ▶ Expand light industrial uses around the neighborhood periphery.

D. Intersection of Routes 202 and 33

- ▶ Preserve the existing character of the neighborhood core; consider adding more open space such as a small park, community garden, or dog park.
- ▶ Increase commercial activity such as restaurants, ice cream shops, and retail between the neighborhood core and periphery.
- ▶ Increase the variety of housing choices.

