

# **MATERIALS for the PUBLIC FORUM on LAND USE**

**November 3, 2007**

Excerpt from the **DRAFT LAND USE CHAPTER- MASTER PLAN UPDATE:**

## **NEWBURY CENTER VISIONING PROCESS & PLAN**

The public visioning process during the summer of 2007 concluded with the crafting of the Town Center Plan for Newbury Center. This Plan is an important part of this Land Use Chapter because it provides a flexible blueprint for Newbury Center over the next 15 years. The village was examined in a larger context looking at both public and private uses throughout the village before focusing on the Town-owned lands.

At the 2007 Town Meeting there was a favorable vote to purchase the Camacho property located south of the Bald Sunapee property, the Library and the Town Offices. In the summer of 2007, the town retained Patricia Sherman, FAIA and embarked on a visioning process with the public and community board members to determine how best to use these Town owned lands and how they would relate to an overall long range plan for a Town Center.

Prior to this the town was awarded a New Hampshire Department of Transportation grant in 2006 to do a sidewalk project that would connect these newly owned Town lands westerly to the Town's Dock, Gazebo, Information Center and Historic Caboose all bordering Lake Sunapee. The Town then hired KV Partners, Engineers and Gates Leighton Landscape Architects to do the sidewalk design. They were required to do interactive public sessions throughout their design process as part of their contract. Since the sidewalk project and the Town Center Visioning Process were so closely related it was decided to combine the Sidewalk Design and Town Center Visioning Process public sessions.

There were three public Visioning Workshops conducted in June, July and August 2007.

This first work shop set the context for the specific work on the newly owned lands as it related to an overall "Big Picture" of Newbury's Town Center. The extensive base map prepared clearly showed land use opportunities to the public that they might not have been aware of as many of the lands south of Rte 103 are not accessible except thru private properties. This analysis demonstrates that the area, from just south of the Harbor easterly to the intersection of 103 and 103A, has all of the elements that attract development: the quality and natural beauty of the lake and the mountains, views, and the heavy and growing tourist traffic.

All of the planning for Town owned lands cannot protect Newbury from bad development in these vulnerable areas under private ownership. It is incumbent on the Town and creative Zoning regulations to not only protect itself from less desirable development, but to proactively seek quality development timed to the market demands.

Newbury will grow! Newbury's challenge is to contain that growth in a manner that retains its rural quality and yet provides a path to guided growth. The original New England Village had density at its core. Shop keepers lived over the store and houses were nestled in between commercial establishments. The distances between buildings were often minimal and they all were close to the street. The outlying areas were agricultural with sparse housing and there was a real contrast between "in town" and "out of town". Newbury still has some of that old New England Village character and by increasing its "in town" density it can save its "out of town" character as well.

The second work shop focused on a vision for the newly owned town lands, access to these lands and how it fit in the context of the overall Town Center Vision. There was active discussion of this proposed plan by the workshop attendees. By far, the lack of adequate parking was cited as the largest concern with the plan presented. There was considerable discussion of the parking area in front of the Town docks and the sidewalk and bridge leading to the area. There were concerns about safe and practical pedestrian access, aesthetic impacts, new landscaping respecting views of the lake, and traffic safety. There was considerable discussion of the location of existing and proposed crosswalks. The angle of the bridge drew out a lot of discussion and opinions among the group.

At the third Work Shop, the Town Center Plan was presented and discussed. It offered solutions to meet issues raised in the previous Work Shop. There was active discussion of the various elements of the Plan. There was solid public support from the workshop attendees for the increased amount and the design of the parking proposed in the Plan. The parking area in front of the Town docks received the most attention with concerns about pedestrian access being safe & practical, aesthetic issues, landscaping respecting views of the lake, and traffic safety. Those attending the workshop generally liked the Plan.

A full report on this visioning process can be found in Appendix D.

Illustration #4 from that report (Following Page) highlights the key elements of the Plan derived from the visioning process.

This proposed plan incorporates the sidewalk location as proposed by the Sidewalk Design Team. It does not however represent the tree locations proposed by that Team as more study is required for such locations so the trees do not interfere with the utility lines and lose their shape.

**Illustration #4**

**Town Center Plan**

It was also noted that the entry drive to the Town Offices is set between two specimen trees and that pattern should continue with the other drives onto the other Town lands with the trees planted on each side of new drives on Town Land rather than in the highway right of way. It was also noted that the white rail fence, which borders the Town Lands, is a feature that might be included in the final presentation by the Sidewalk Design Team.

The following is a commentary regarding each of the Plan's elements identified with their corresponding letters from Illustration #4. This Plan met with approval of the attendees at the third workshop.

- A. The Town Offices have been recently expanded so they should accommodate growth for quite a while.
- B. The Library will need expansion space in the near future. It is presently constrained by the entry driveway the 75' setback from the wetlands so the only area it can use for expansion is the land directly to its east.
- C. The present diagonal parking scheme is not laid out in the most efficient manner. It is possible to retain the approximate locations of the lighting and planting islands and change the parking to the more efficient head in or 90 degree style. It is also possible to add another row of parking to the North by adding 20+ feet of pavement and moving the small trees farther back to the edge of daffodil fields. These changes increase this parking area from 18 cars to 38 cars, a substantial increase. A path from this parking area to the new sidewalk to the south would be advisable. This path could also accommodate handicapped access to the Center Meeting House.
- D. The new parking area shown at this location would add another 33 +/- cars and could be accessed either by Fishersfield Road or through the parking at letter C. This through connection could also eliminate the turning motions presently required at the Rte 103 entrance to the Town offices. The plan shows the drive cutting across the Meeting House property, but topography in that area would push the drive further to the northeast which might also decrease to total number of parking spaces

There is also the possibility that parking could be provided across Fishersfield road as it intersects Rte 103A rather than at location D if the owner of that property and the Town could come to some agreement. With signage and a sidewalk connection to Rte 103, this would be an attractive parking area for visitors as well as parking for the Center Meeting House. It would still make sense to connect area C with Fishersfield Road.

- E. This building represents a one story expansion for the Library of about 1200 square feet, which would increase the Library's area by about 40%. Expansion

could increase beyond this amount on the available site or in conjunction with the disposition of the letter M site.

- F. This is the mapped wetland area that needs to stay pristine. This area can add to the rural character of this property and act as natural background for the buildings in the foreground.
- G. Represents the 75 foot setback from the wetland that is required by the town in more recent changes to the zoning regulations.
- H. This is the 10,000 square foot Velie Memorial playground which should be completed by 2009. It is an attractive addition to the Town Center as it allows the Community's youngest children to share in Town Activities. The plan also shows two bridges, which connect the playground across the wetland to the parking area C. These bridges also allow walking trails to enjoy the wetland habitat.
- T. Walking trails would be included in this plan to enhance the use of the property beyond just the "business" of the Town. The area has much natural beauty and could attract gardeners to work with the *Newbury* Beautification Committee to enhance these areas with both natural and formal plantings.
- J. Represents a Gazebo, which serves dual purposes. One is to have a resting space for the children and the trail walkers. The other is to have a focal point for the entry drive between L and M. It is an important aesthetic feature to have such a focal point rather than just a sea of asphalt and cars. The entry between A and B already accomplishes that goal with a view to both formal and natural plantings.
- K. This is a small area where the Beautification Committee could do formal rather than naturalized plantings.
- L. This site could be an ideal location for a Police Station. The CIP indicates that the Police station will probably be the next public building that is needed as its present quarters are cramped and not in line with police standards. The building could be constructed to look more like a New England building rather than a small fortress. It could have an entry that invites citizens and visitors making the Police more accessible to the community. And vice versa. At the same time the Police Station could have a rear entry for police business suitable out of the public view. This rear entry could also be used in the future as a shared drive for non emergency fire vehicles.
- M. This is a future building site. It could be used as a location for the Veterans' Memorial Hall if it was moved from its present location. It could be left open for the Farmer's Market along with site E for the present time.
- N. This portion of the property has challenging topography. It would need extensive site work to make its use efficient so it is suggested that it not be touched until the

entire site is needed. There is a possibility that there might be gravels on the site. If that is the case an orderly plan should be put in place to remove such materials in a timely fashion and leave the site in a naturalized state until it is needed.

- O. The Veteran's Memorial Hall was deeded to the Town in commemoration of all Veterans. It has no utilities except for rudimentary power and the Fire Department Uses it as storage. Structurally the building is in excellent shape. It sits on granite foundations, with the exception of the front porch, and has second floor space, which is not accessible at present but might be in the future. The building can easily be relocated if the Town desires. This plan proposed that the Fire Department use it for meeting space but that was not deemed as "practical.

There are a series of outstanding issues with this building. First, if it is to be used, it needs majors interior renovations including plumbing which requires a septic system. That system cannot go on its own site, as it is too close to wetlands and ponds. The septic system previously installed for the Library and Town Offices. was designed to accommodate this building but the sewer lines would have to be tunneled under rte 103, a costly item.

Secondly, if the building stays in place there is no adequate parking to serve its new function. There would be room for handicapped parking, but all other users would have to cross Rte 103, which is a safety concern. If the Fire Department had a functional use for the facility, the existing parking for the Fire Dept would reduce the parking demand. It is possible that the building could be used as living quarters for a full time fire department. It is more than adequate in size to accommodate that use.

The third issue is the use of this building as a Veteran's Memorial. It seems that this could easily be accommodated with appropriate memorial plaques etc that could be positioned either inside or outside of the building. In its present locations such a memorial might be on the exterior of the east face of the building with appropriate landscaping to create a viewing area. This memorial could be one for all past present and future wars.

If the building was moved a similar memorial could be created or if the building was in public use an interior memorial might also be appropriate.

- P. The existing fire station occupies an ideal site for accessing all parts of Newbury with three clear turning motions to the north, east and west but the building does not presently meet current NFPA requirements re size and functions of its interior layouts. The site for the Fire Department is not expandable as it bordered by wetlands and a very valuable commercial property. The relocation of the Police Department, which presently shares space with the Fire Department, will alleviate some of the interior functional problems and should allow this site to work for the Fire Department in the near

future. Longer term solutions for the Fire Department might be accommodated on the Camacho property.

The Town should consider a renovation for the Fire Station when the Police Department is relocated. Such a renovation would greatly improve its function but should also improve its overall appearance as it occupies such a prominent space in the town Center. Interior renovations should also consider using appropriate materials suitable for the functions as well as a good working environment for the firemen.

Q, This iconic Center Meeting House is truly the heart of the Town Center. Its Architecture, location, setting and anticipated use, once again, as a meeting house anchors the Town in its historical roots. All Town Center planning must respect this building and it's setting to insure that it historic significance is honored.

When the Meeting House activities begin, after the renovation is complete, areas C and D might serve its parking needs. But there should be continued co-operation between the town and the Center Meeting House to mutually solve issues which support its reuse.

## **Summary**

The Town Center Plan dated August 25, 2007 and this Report stand as a possible vision for a Town Center rather than a fixed plan for future use. The Visioning Sessions recorded the interests of the Town and showed how disparate views can be accommodated and how parking problems can be solved without sacrificing the historic, rural and unique environmental characteristics that make up the Town of Newbury.

Newbury has demonstrated how it cares for its resources by the exceptional improvements it has made so far and the quality of it land and building maintenance. That is a tribute to the collaborative efforts of its citizen volunteers and town staff. Newbury's future is bright and the light of these Visioning sessions only made it brighter.