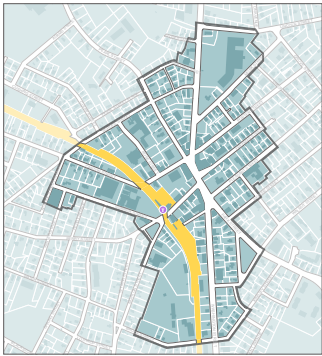


# STOUGHTON DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

## Volume I: SDRP

Stoughton, Massachusetts Final Report: August 2016



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## STOUGHTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Michael Barrett, Chairman  
Louis F. Gitto, Vice Chairman  
Forrest Lindwall, Treasurer  
Carlos Vargas

Cheryl Barrett, Secretary

## CITIZENS ADVISORY GROUP

Steven Bernstein	Sung Pak
Paul Carpinella	Nick Pirelli
Pam Carr	Katherine Price
George Dyroff	Noreen Ruggiero
Dori Frankel	Francois Sarofeen
Joyce Husseini	Michael Sullivan
Kevin Kosh	Stanley Zoll
Janice McKenna	

## Special Thanks to:

Michael Hartman, Town Manager  
Noreen O'Toole, Town Planner  
Pamela McCarthy, Economic Development Coordinator  
Marc Tisdelle, P.E. Town Engineer  
Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc. (lead consultant, Stoughton Town Square Traffic Improvements Project)  
Brown Walker Planners, Inc. (lead consultant, Stoughton Master Plan)  
McCabe Enterprises LLC (lead consultant, economic development reports)

## Prepared by:

### **The Cecil Group, Inc.**

Steven G. Cecil AIA ASLA, Principal  
Emily Keys Innes LEED AP ND, Senior Urban Planner

### **Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.**

Drew Leff, Principal  
Emily Reith, Project Manager  
Lucilla Haskovec, Project Manager

# Stoughton Downtown Redevelopment Plan

The *Stoughton Downtown Redevelopment Plan* is divided into three documents.

- **Volume I:** Stoughton Downtown Redevelopment Plan
- **Volume II:** (SDRP) Draft Urban Renewal Plan
- **Volume III:** (SDRP) Existing Conditions Memorandum, April 2015

This document, referred to as the SDRP, provides a summary of the context surrounding the study process that the Stoughton Redevelopment Authority (the "SRA") initiated in 2014, the conclusions reached by the study, and an implementation plan to guide the SRA's next steps.

The second volume is a draft urban renewal plan, in the format required by 760 CMR 12.00. This urban renewal plan is incomplete, and thus is not intended to be approved as an urban renewal plan by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The draft urban renewal plan contains a summary of the most relevant blighted conditions, additional technical information and analysis gathered to date. It also contains a record of the public process, including an analysis of the results of each public workshop and how those results affect the conclusions in the SDRP. These components are intended to be included in a full urban renewal plan, if and when the Town of Stoughton is prepared to move forward with such a plan.

The third volume, the *Existing Conditions Memorandum*, was delivered to the SRA in April 2015 and provides the complete underlying technical studies for the determination of blighted conditions required by DHCD for an urban renewal plan, and a detailed exploration of the opportunities and constraints on development in both the Downtown and the wider study area. The appendices to the Existing Conditions Memorandum include a detailed building inventory of every building and site within the study area, and additional information from state records about historic sites and environmental conditions.





# Context for This Plan

In 2014, the Stoughton Redevelopment Authority (SRA) undertook the creation of a redevelopment plan for the downtown area of Stoughton. The original intent was for the SRA to develop an urban renewal plan under Chapter 121B to meet one of the recommendations of the *Stoughton Master Plan*. The Planning Board had accepted Phase I in August 2013 and was in the process of completing Phase II of the Master Plan when the SRA began their work to support the recommendations in the Master Plan for implementation strategies.

During the study process for the *Stoughton Downtown Redevelopment Plan* (SDRP), no specific project emerged that had the consensus of the community and the other elected officials within the Town. This SDRP is thus not an urban renewal plan – although it follows the requirements of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), it does not include a specific urban renewal project or identify a public action related to land development as required by the legislation.

This redevelopment plan does provide goals, strategies, and actions that would allow the SRA to become an effective partner with the Town in revitalizing the downtown. Over the course of the study, questions arose as to what should be done within the downtown, when actions should be undertaken, and who should be responsible for those actions. This summary provides information about what a redevelopment authority is, what it can do, and how redevelopment authorities can work within the structure of town government. This summary also discusses whether the Town of Stoughton needs a redevelopment authority, what purpose the SRA could serve in the revitalization of the downtown, and who would take on those responsibilities if the SRA did not exist.



The creation of a redevelopment plan is an action step in the implementation of the strategies defined by the Stoughton Master Plan to support the community's goals for Downtown Stoughton.

The first part of this document has been set up as a series of questions and answers that provide a primer of the process, implications, and recommendations of this plan. The remainder of this document are the components of this SDRP, including public input as to potential projects, recommendations for next steps, references to the work of other redevelopment authorities in Massachusetts, and the recommendations from the *Stoughton Master Plan* that include the SRA as a partner in implementation.

## Who is the Stoughton Redevelopment Authority?

The Stoughton Town Meeting voted to establish a Redevelopment Authority in March 1962. The Certificate of Organization was issued in February 1963. The SRA is authorized under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 121B, Section 4 to act as a Redevelopment Authority.<sup>1</sup> **The SRA was initially established to revitalize the Downtown**, at a time when federal money was available for urban renewal purposes. The proposed urban renewal plan was rejected by the Board of Selectmen in the 1970s. Subsequently, the SRA was charged with development of the Industrial Park in North Stoughton under an urban renewal plan.<sup>2</sup>

Four of the five members of the SRA are elected by residents of the Town. The fifth member is appointed by the Department of Housing and Community Development.

The current members are as follows:

- Michael Barrett, Chairman (term expires April 2019)
- Carlos Vargas (term expires April 2017)
- Forrest Lindwall (term expires April 2018)
- Louis F. Gitto (term expires April 2020)
- Member appointed by DHCD (Open Seat)

## What was the purpose of this process for the study?

The original purpose of this planning study included the following goals:

- To identify and clarify the role of the Stoughton Redevelopment Authority (SRA) as an effective partner with other Town Boards and Committees in the revitalization of the Downtown
- To identify specific actions that could be undertaken by the SRA to address existing conditions in the Downtown in terms of redevelopment of land and buildings

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Patrick J. Costello, Merrick, Louison & Costello, LLP to Deborah J. Sovinee, Stoughton Redevelopment Authority, dated October 1, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Note from Lou Gitto, July 2015.

## Was there a public process?

Yes! This effort involved the establishment of a Citizens Advisory Group (CAG), three public workshops, and numerous discussions with stakeholders and Town Officials.

3 Public Meetings

4 Meetings with Town Officials

5 Citizens Advisory Group Meetings

Meetings with  
17 Stakeholders



either the public forums, interviews with the stakeholders, or background research undertaken as part of this process.

**This SDRP in its current format is therefore not intended to be approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development as an Urban Renewal Plan.**

If the Town and the SRA identify a specific project, the SDRP would need to be amended in order to become an urban renewal plan. The urban renewal plan would require that the proposed urban renewal project be supported with the following information:

- Purpose of the project
- Specific properties to be acquired
- Cost of the project and funding sources
- Timeline for project completion
- Site improvements required by the project
- Relocation plan for existing tenants (businesses and/or residents)

## Should I be worried about eminent domain?

No! There has been some confusion around the concept of eminent domain during this process. A redevelopment authority may only acquire properties using the process of eminent domain for the public purpose(s) stated in an urban renewal plan approved by DHCD.

Eminent domain may be used to acquire properties for redevelopment or the creation of public infrastructure. It may also be used to clear titles to property that are uncertain – for example, if the ownership of a property is unclear.

**Because this SDRP is not an approved urban renewal plan, the SRA cannot acquire properties by eminent domain. The ability to use eminent domain is governed by an urban renewal plan approved by DHCD and by a public process for each property to be acquired.**

## What is a redevelopment authority and what authority could it exercise if it had a full urban renewal plan?

At the most basic level, a redevelopment agency develops land. A redevelopment agency does not answer to the executive body of the municipality – by intent of the statute (M.G.L. Chapter 121 A), it is "an independent body politic and corporate." In cities, four of the five members of the redevelopment authority are appointed, but in towns, four of the five members are elected. In both cases,







the state appoints the fifth member. Chapter 121A governs the establishment of a redevelopment agency. Chapter 121B (Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) 121B) is the enabling legislation for housing and urban renewal. It describes the powers of a redevelopment authority, the actions they are allowed to take, and the limitations on those actions and powers.

## Actions of a Redevelopment Authority

A local redevelopment authority has the ability to undertake certain actions with regard to the development of land within its municipality. A redevelopment authority may:

- Acquire, lease, and dispose of land
- Issue bonds, borrow money, and invest funds
- Receive grants and loans
- Accept gifts or requests
- Conduct additional planning studies to identify a specific project or projects

## Additional Actions under an Urban Renewal Plan

A redevelopment authority may also act as an urban renewal agency, which gives them additional powers when used in conjunction with an urban renewal plan. The public purpose of an urban renewal plan is to address issues of physical or economic blight that prevent the private market from investing in an economically distressed area. Redevelopment authorities address these blighted conditions by developing land that the private market cannot develop. Blight may include the presence of hazardous materials from previous uses; parcels that are too small or too irregular in shape for consistent development; or buildings that are so significantly deteriorated that the private market is unable to address the conditions.

A redevelopment authority may address those conditions by:

- Undertaking specific development projects itself
- Creating the conditions under which the private market will undertake those projects

Tools a redevelopment authority may use to encourage private investment include the following:

- Establishing regulatory controls that guide development under the goals and objectives of the plan
- Undertaking public infrastructure improvements that create incentives for the private market to invest
- Assembling parcels that are too small to be economically developed into a larger parcel that can be developed under the regulatory requirements for the area

Within an urban renewal plan that has received approval from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), a redevelopment authority may also do the following:

- Acquire real estate through the eminent domain process for the purposes identified in the urban renewal plan
- Establish obligations for developers of properties within the urban renewal area
- Relocate businesses and residents occupying urban renewal sites
- Engage in the development and disposition of land while exempt from M.G.L. Chapter 30(b), the Uniform Procurement Act

DHCD states the following: “Note that the development and approval of an urban renewal plan is necessary for a Redevelopment Authority to undertake specific projects.”<sup>3</sup> An urban renewal plan must comply with 760 CMR 12.00, which is DHCD’s requirement for the format and content of an urban renewal plan.

## What are the advantages in having a redevelopment authority undertake real estate development?

A redevelopment authority has certain advantages over a Board of Selectmen in the redevelopment of property. The specific purpose of a redevelopment authority is land development to correct conditions of blight – all of its powers are directed to that purpose. Once an urban renewal plan has been approved by the municipality’s executive authority (in Stoughton, the Board of Selectmen), the redevelopment agency is an independent body, able to exercise the powers identified above, under the restrictions laid out in the urban renewal plan, without further recourse to the executive or legislative bodies of the municipality unless the plan requires an update or amendment.

A redevelopment authority is also exempt from M.G.L. Chapter 30(b), the Uniform Procurement Act, for the acquisition, lease, sale of residential, institutional, industrial or commercial real property (see M.G.L. Chapter 30B, Section 1(b)(25). This exemption is only available if the action is taken under an urban renewal plan approved by DHCD.



<sup>3</sup> *What is Urban Renewal?*, Department of Housing and Community Development, undated

### Downtown Assets

- Easy access to public transit and commuter rail service to Boston
- Walkable downtown
- Anchor services (Town Hall, Post Office)
- Grocery within walking distance of downtown
- Historic buildings that could be redeveloped as draws for residents and visitors
- Concentration of restaurants
- Increasing residential population within the core downtown

## What are the roles and responsibilities of the various Town bodies in terms of redevelopment?

The revitalization of Downtown Stoughton depends on the actions of several groups. The Town of Stoughton (elected officials and professional staff), property owners, local businesses, and local institutions all have roles in the ultimate success of the area.

Within the umbrella of the Town of Stoughton, the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board, the SRA, and Town Meeting have important roles and responsibilities.

- The **Board of Selectmen** sets Town policies and develops the budget related to its jurisdiction, including infrastructure improvements.
- The **Planning Board** approves the Town's master plan. The members review and vote on applications for special permits and subdivisions. It also oversees changes to the zoning regulations and has review authority for design guidelines in certain zoning districts.
- The **Stoughton Redevelopment Authority** is able to undertake planning and purchase, lease, sell, or redevelop land and buildings. It could also have a regulatory role, including design review within a defined area, if these are included within an approved urban renewal plan.
- **Town Meeting** is the legislative branch. It approves the Town's budget, authorizes changes to the zoning regulations and supports or denies Town initiatives that require municipal funding.

If the Town determines that a completed urban renewal plan is necessary or desirable to address the revitalization of the Downtown, each of these three bodies has a specific role to play:

- The **SRA** must complete the remaining portions of the draft urban renewal plan and vote to send it to the Planning Board, Town Counsel, and Board of Selectmen.
- The **Planning Board** must find that the urban renewal plan is consistent with the requirements of the municipality's comprehensive plan, in this case, the *Stoughton Master Plan*.
- The Town Counsel must determine that the plan conforms with all applicable laws.
- The **Board of Selectmen** must approve a draft urban renewal plan for submission to DHCD.
- DHCD must review and approve the plan. The SRA cannot undertake actions under an urban renewal plan that has not been approved by DHCD.



## Hasn't the Town done a lot of planning already?

Downtown Stoughton has been the focus of several planning studies by local Boards and state agencies over the past few years:

- The **Massachusetts Department of Transportation** undertook a planning study for the expansion of the Stoughton commuter rail line (South Coast Rail) that looked at the impacts of the expansion of the commuter rail through the downtown and the related relocation of the train platform and commuter parking.
- The **Board of Selectmen** undertook two studies of the traffic circulation downtown – the first was a short-term study led by Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. and the second was an intermediate to mid-term study led by Howard Stein Hudson.
- The **Planning Board** approved the *Stoughton Master Plan*, a comprehensive master plan under Chapter 81D, in June 2015. This process was led by Brown Walker Planners, Inc. As part of this process, the Planning Board undertook separate economic studies of both the Town as a whole and of the downtown. Both of these were led by McCabe Enterprises.
- As part of the implementation strategy for the *Stoughton Master Plan*, the **Stoughton Redevelopment Authority** undertook a redevelopment plan for the downtown area. This process was led by The Cecil Group, and this SDRP and the two companion volumes are the result of this study.

While it seems as though the Town has done plan after plan, each of these plans has a different function and viewpoint. For example, the Master Plan provides a comprehensive view of the entire Town, and examines relationships among various elements related to community vision, land use, town services, and the related impacts over a period of about five to ten years.

A redevelopment plan is specific to a single area and has a much narrower focus. Its purpose is limited to addressing conditions of blight over a longer period of time – up to thirty years.

## How is the Downtown likely to change over time?

Town Meeting amended the SCMUOD (Stoughton Center Mixed Use Overlay District) in November 2015 to reduce requirements for parking and to make requirements for affordable housing consistent in the Downtown with the rest of the Town. The Planning Board voted in February 2016 to approve the proposal for the mixed-use redevelopment of the Malcolm & Parsons site, and the project should start soon. Other sites are likely to follow – Fraga's Brother Market<sup>4</sup> is another site where a mix of residential and commercial uses has been proposed

<sup>4</sup> <http://plymouth.wickedlocal.com/article/20160303/NEWS/160308307/?Start=4>

### Downtown Liabilities

- Little coordination among boards and agencies active in the area
- Uncertainty about timing of South Coast Rail expansion
- Uncertainty over location of new train station
- Few day-to-evening uses
- Concerns about pedestrian safety with respect to current traffic patterns
- Concerns about parking available for commercial clients and retail customers (not commuters)



recently. As property owners capitalize on the significant assets in the downtown area, other developments may take advantage of the revised zoning.

Adding residents to the downtown should increase activity in the evening and spur demand for goods and services that will be attractive to residents. Town Meeting recently approved six liquor licenses exclusively for the Downtown and these have been approved by the state legislature. This increase in allowable liquor licenses for the downtown will also help to spur evening activity. Synergies between additional restaurants and the proposed redevelopment of State Theatre could create a draw for both residents and visitors.

In the short-term, the look of, and activity within, the downtown will be changed by redevelopment at the Malcolm & Parsons site and The Drake on the corner of Monk and Washington Streets, and by renovations such as the improvements to the façade of the Pacheco Hardware building.

Over the long-term, additional changes could occur as a result of two major initiatives: the expansion of the commuter rail and the implementation of recommended traffic improvements. However, uncertainty as to the timing and extent of these changes could delay reinvestment in the area.

## Is there a role for the SRA in the revitalization of Downtown Stoughton?

Although no urban renewal projects requiring the use of eminent domain were identified, there are possible development or redevelopment projects within the Downtown that could benefit from coordinated action by the Board of Selectmen, the SRA, and the Planning Board. These potential projects are summarized below and discussed in detail in the next section.

- The United States Post Office – The USPO parcel is a significant part of the core block of the Downtown. Members of the SRA and public have expressed an interest in working with the U. S. Postal Service to relocate the distribution services of the facility outside the Downtown. Such a relocation could allow the retail services of the facility to be relocated within the Downtown and the parcel to be redeveloped.
- The historic train depot – The Town Meeting vote in November 2015 to purchase the train station completes a process that the SRA had been involved with at an earlier stage. As with the State Theatre, the restoration and active use of this historic building could act as a draw to the downtown for both residents and visitors. The United States Post Office is within this same block; should that property become available for redevelopment, a coordinated strategy for the block would be critical.
- The fire station on Freeman Street – With the creation of a public safety complex for the Town, the Board of Selectmen could transfer the fire station to the SRA for parcel assembly and development. Conceptual studies done as

part of this study process indicate that this property, in combination with one or more adjacent parcels, could contribute to the trend of mixed residential/commercial development in the downtown core.

- The police station on Rose Street – The Town has identified this location as the preferred site for a new train station and associated parking garage. The Town could transfer this property to the SRA for development; some redevelopment authorities in Massachusetts act as the municipal parking authority. Funding the construction of the facility could be accomplished by a bond issue through the SRA, supported by the revenue from parking fees and permits over time. Bonding the construction costs allows the payments to be matched to the revenues received from the garage and would not require additional funds under the town's tax levy. Once the bond is paid in full, the parking revenues can be used to support maintenance of the garage and additional development activities in the downtown.
- The municipal parking lot on Freeman Street – Throughout the development of the *Stoughton Master Plan* and again during the process of developing this SDRP, residents of Stoughton have consistently expressed a desire for more green space – and community gathering space – in the Downtown. One option would be to convert some or all of this municipal parking lot to green space and link it to the green space in front of the First Parish Church. With coordinated pedestrian paths and furnishings (benches, trash receptacles, lighting), the combination of the two spaces could create a gathering space – similar to a town green or common – that is consistent with community preferences.

In the long term, the SRA could be a partner in implementing the infrastructure recommendations from the long-term traffic study led by Howard Stein Hudson. The long-term strategy recommended the creation of connecting roads. In order to accomplish the plan, parcels must be acquired, buildings demolished, roads constructed, and the land not needed for roads developed. The powers of a redevelopment agency are appropriate for such an undertaking; an urban renewal plan approved by DHCD would be required if the Town determined that the SRA were the appropriate body to use the power of eminent domain to accomplish this project.

The implementation of the South Coast Rail expansion is affected by two uncertainties – the pace of funding for the program by the state and the differences over the location of a new train station and related parking. Although the project is in the design phase, annual funding from the state is being phased in over ten years.<sup>5</sup> The timing of work in Stoughton is not clear. In addition, the Town's preferred location for the passenger platform and commuter parking garage is not consistent with the location preferred by South Coast Rail. For additional development to occur, this difference will need to be resolved so that potential developers have a settled direction for their investment decisions.

The implementation of the proposed traffic improvements is subject to the Town's willingness and ability to fund the improvements, the relationship with

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.heraldnews.com/article/20160121/NEWS/160128409/?Start=2>

projected improvements related to the South Coast Rail expansion, the ability of the Town to acquire the land necessary to reroute the existing streets, and the related permission from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation with respect to the impact on the state highways.

In the long term, land left over from rerouting the roads may be usable as pocket parks or public plazas to add public gathering space and/or green space that has been identified as a priority in public meetings.

## Is having a redevelopment authority in Stoughton helpful, useful, and/or necessary?

It is clear from recent activity that the private market is able to address some of the existing buildings and sites that are not currently at the highest and best uses within the downtown. One implication is that a redevelopment authority may not be needed as the private market is active. However, the Town's mid-term and long-term plans for the Downtown, as described in the *Stoughton Master Plan*, indicate the need for the types of activities for which the state enables redevelopment authorities. Both potential development possibilities, discussed in more detail later in this report, and planned improvements to the public infrastructure suggest possible uses for the SRA's powers under Chapter 121B. As economic conditions change over time, a strong redevelopment authority would be the appropriate lead agency for redevelopment of the Downtown.

**However, the ability of the SRA to be effective will require cooperation among the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board and the SRA. During the course of this study process, it became obvious that such cooperation does not now exist.** No blame attaches to any one entity or person, but the need for the office-holders to negotiate the roles and responsibilities of the three groups is clear. The lack of communication and coordination is a critical liability in the potential success of the downtown over time.

## Are There Alternatives to Having a Redevelopment Authority?

M.G.L. 43C Section 12 states the following:

*Section twelve of chapter forty-three C of the General Laws authorizes the legislative body to provide, by ordinance or by-law, for a consolidated department of community development which may include the redevelopment authority, the planning board, the industrial development commission, industrial development financing authority or any other municipal office or agency exercising or authorized to exercise any community or economic development activities.*

The Town may consolidate the functions of the Planning Board and the Stoughton Redevelopment Authority into a single body, through a vote of Town Meeting. The Town would also have to either authorize the position of director of community development, who would report to the chief executive officer of the Town (in Stoughton's case, the Town Manager) or a community development board which would have the combined functions of Planning Board and redevelopment authority.

M.G.L. Chapters 40D, 41, 41A, 121A, and 121B would apply to the new community development board or department of community development.

It may also be possible to consolidate the redevelopment authority within the Board of Selectmen with a special act of the legislature.

## Should the SRA be consolidated into a different body?

As noted above, the Board of Selectmen, SRA, and Planning Board need to discuss their current roles and responsibilities and how those may need to change given future expectations and plans for the downtown.

## Final Thoughts

**The *Stoughton Master Plan* identifies the SRA as a partner in a number of improvements envisioned for the downtown area. A redevelopment authority can be an effective agent for a community facing economic and land use challenges; it is up to the Town as to how the SRA can best be this agent.**





# Vision for the Downtown

**T**he revitalization of Downtown Stoughton will happen when people have a reason to be there – shops, amenities, and a walkable environment. The focus of change should be the central core of the Downtown: the block bounded by Washington, Porter, and Wyman Streets.

It is difficult to bring office uses into the downtown. The commuter rail schedule favors people commuting from Stoughton Center, not to it, and office buildings along the Route 24 corridor have an advantage in terms of access. The real opportunity is for multifamily residential development, both in rehabilitated structures and new construction. Development near commuter rail that links housing to jobs (also known as Transit Oriented Development) is in demand and has synergy between residential and retail/restaurant/entertainment. These recommendations are consistent with the market evaluation conducted as part of *Volume III: Existing Conditions Memorandum*.

The Stoughton Downtown needs to develop amenities that reinforce a mix of residential, retail, restaurant, and one or more small but well-designed activated plazas or green spaces. These amenities would attract new residents to the Downtown while creating an environment that would also attract visitors from other areas – converting vehicular “drive-through traffic” to pedestrian “stop-and-spend” traffic.

This section examines the result of a public presentation and interactive exercises conducted on April 25, 2016 on conceptual scenarios for different sites throughout the core of the Downtown, and presents the results of those exercises in terms of potential physical projects and actions by the SRA.

"The Stoughton Downtown should be the municipal, social, and cultural heart of the community, with a strong sense of place and belonging for residents, employees, and business owners."

*Stoughton Master Plan*



# Evaluation of Concepts

One of the reasons the SDRP is not eligible to be approved as an urban renewal plan is the lack of a specific development project that can be accomplished within the next five to ten years. In the discussions with the SRA, the CAG, and stakeholders, various people had very specific ideas about what could be done with specific properties, but there was no consensus on a single project that the SRA could undertake as a catalyst project that would encourage additional investment in the Downtown.

In order to test this observation, the presentation and interactive exercises at both the public forum in January 2015 and the public forum in April 2016 were designed to elicit opinions about the types of projects that would contribute to a revitalized Downtown.

The exercise at the January forum required participants to balance development (residential and retail), parking, and open space. The results of the exercise identified three key points:

- Parking is a limiting factor
- Green space downtown was a priority for many groups, but was balanced by a desire for increased retail and residential uses
- Infill development can be accomplished in many different ways

The April exercises were designed to build on these points, and identified four sites within the core of the Downtown that could be used both to test the balance among these three elements and to examine two other critical factors in the redevelopment of the Downtown.

- Assembly of smaller, adjacent parcels
- Changes over time as a result of development on other sites

A full explanation of these forums and results are found within the appendices to the draft urban renewal plan. The results indicated that while there was a clear preference for adding additional green open space for public use within the Downtown, there is still some uncertainty as to how much of this type of space should be added.

The scenarios for the four test sites preferred by the participants at the April 2016 public meeting are shown on the following pages.





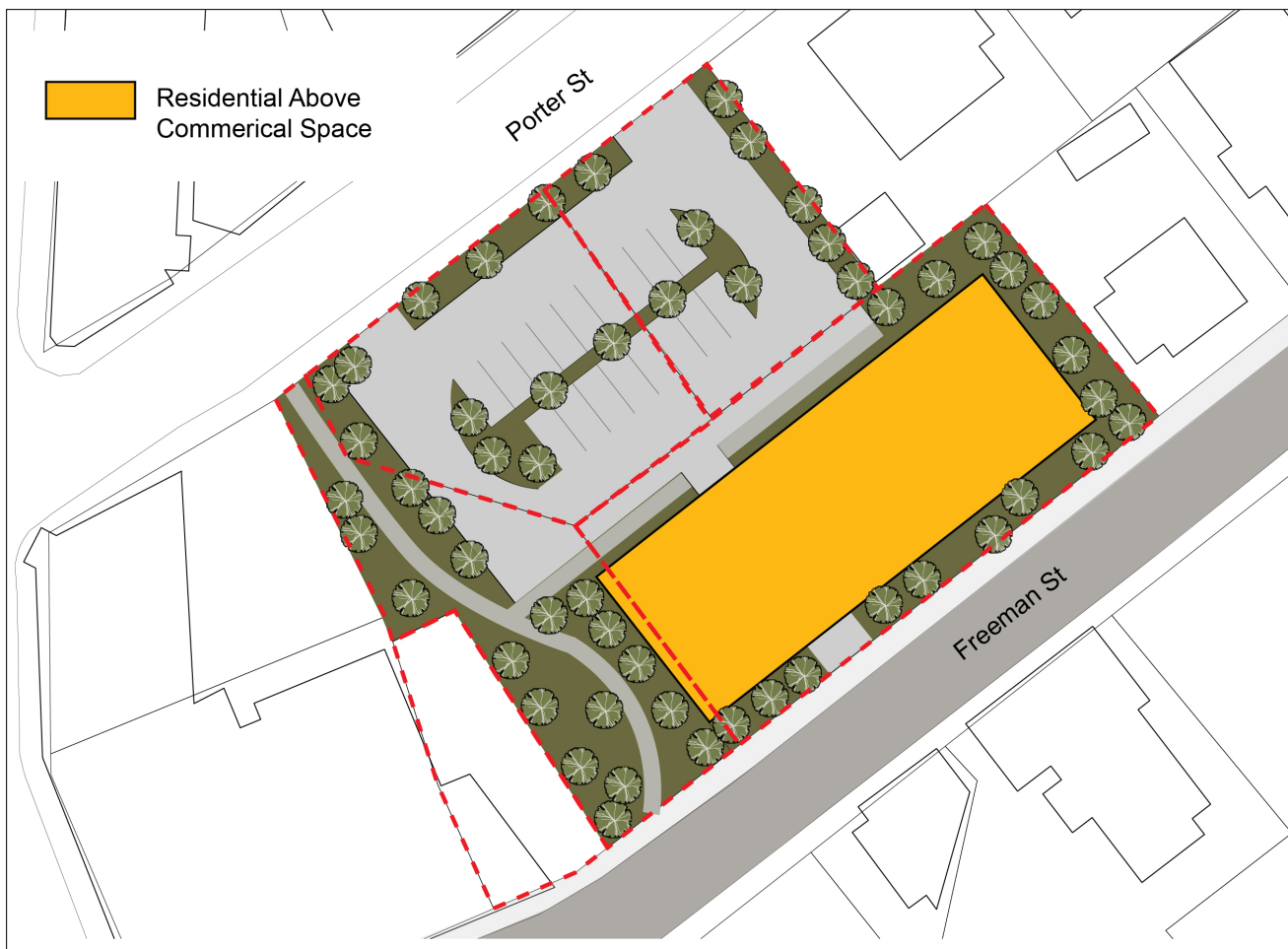
### **Preferred Concept Site 2 Alternative 1: Freeman Street Parking Lot**

This concept was the clear favorite and the only one to have received a majority of the votes. The test site is the municipal parking lot on Freeman Street. The preferred alternative removes some of the existing parking in order to add pedestrian access to both Freeman and Washington Streets and additional green space to extend the open area in front of the First Parish Church.

The other alternative for this site was a more extensive greening of the area that removed all of the municipal parking and replaced it with green space fully integrated with the space in front of First Parish into a "Town Green." This scenario was mentioned in the *Stoughton Master Plan* as a possible action.

As with the other alternatives, this is just a conceptual plan. However, if the community is interested in pursuing this option, next steps would include discussions between the Town and First Parish and an evaluation of the preferred strategy.

**This could be a good initial test project for joint action between the SRA and the Board of Selectmen.**



#### Preferred Concept Site 1 Alternative 4B: Freeman Street Fire Station

This concept tested how the assembly of smaller parcels could create a better project for both the Town and a preferred developer.

The test site is the fire station on Freeman Street and the adjacent parcels, both to the side and to the rear, with frontage on Porter Street. There are no immediate next steps associated with this scenario as there are existing businesses behind the fire station. However, the choice of this alternative demonstrates a clear preference for public green space around new development – the other alternatives for this site had more parking and less green space.

Again, this is an illustrative concept: the fire station will remain operational until the Town constructs a new public safety complex. **Once the fire station is no longer necessary, the Board of Selectmen could transfer the site to the SRA for development.**



### Preferred Concept Site 3 Alternative 2: Rose Street Police Station

The Town has identified the site of the current police station and the adjacent municipal parking lot as the preferred location of a new train station and associated parking garage. The Town's scenario includes depressing the rail line before the intersection of School Street and Summer Street and through the Downtown, past the intersection of Wyman and Morton Streets.

The alternatives tested the existing condition, a parking structure with ground floor retail, and a parking structure with ground floor retail and additional surface parking. Alternative 2, which includes more green space and less surface parking, received the most votes. This concept was developed by the Town and was presented to MassDOT as part of the discussion related to the design of the South Coast Rail project. **The SRA could have a role in the development process and in the operations of both parking management and management of the retail.**



### Preferred Concept Site 4 Alternative 3A: Post Office/Depot Block

The split choice on this site is the clearest indication that there is a difference of opinion as to how much green space should be present in the Downtown. This is the central block of the Downtown, currently anchored by the U.S. Post Office, the historic development block along Washington Street, and the historic train depot.

The existing train platform has been removed on the assumption that it will be moved elsewhere in the Downtown as part of the South Coast Rail project. Both alternatives also assume that the small building on the corner of Washington and Wyman Streets is available for redevelopment. **This alternative assumes that some of the land owned by the U.S. Post Office is also for redevelopment.** (See yellow dotted border indicating USPO boundary line.)

This alternative provides some green space and allows for the creation of two new buildings (yellow-orange) and related parking. Employee parking for existing businesses has been retained and reorganized on the site.





#### Preferred Concept Site 4 Alternative 4: Post Office/Depot Block

In contrast to Alternative 3A, this alternative significantly expands the amount of green space and reduces the amount of development in this central block. Parking for the employees of existing businesses remains, but the additional green space reduces the amount of parking available for customers. Such parking could be provided elsewhere, for example, in the parking structure proposed for Rose Street. **This alternative assumes that the current post office building is gone and that the entire parcel is available for redevelopment.** (See yellow dotted border indicating USPO boundary line.)

Either of these concepts is significantly more complex than the ones shown on the previous pages. Development in this core block would require discussions between Town bodies, the U.S. Post Office, MassDOT, and individual property owners.

**The abilities of a redevelopment authority to take action under Chapter 121B are precisely suited to this type of complex development, and either of these scenarios could be an appropriate project for the completion of the draft urban renewal plan. Further discussion between the SRA and the Board of Selectmen would be required before either of these alternatives are explored at the level of detail needed to complete the draft urban renewal plan.**

# Identification of Actions

**T**he other reason the SDRP is not eligible to be approved as an urban renewal plan is that the plan requires a public action by the SRA. A public action includes a development project, as noted above, but may also include regulatory activities, such as changes to the zoning or design review.

The second survey at the April public forum asked participants to identify those actions they thought the SRA should undertake and also asked participants to prioritize those actions. The question was "what should the SRA do in the Downtown over the next 3-5 years?"

- Under the draft SDRP:
  - \* Assemble land for private developers to redevelop?
  - \* Assemble land and redevelop it?
  - \* Redevelop land owned by the Town of Stoughton?
  - \* Borrow money to fund development projects?
  - \* Conduct additional planning studies to identify a specific project or projects?
  - \* Act as the Town's parking authority?
  - \* Provide funding for storefront and façade improvements?
- Under an Urban Renewal Plan Approved by DHCD:
  - \* Develop regulatory controls, such as design guidelines, in partnership with the Planning Board?
  - \* Conduct design review of projects in the downtown area as part of the permitting process?
  - \* Acquire parcels by eminent domain in order to redevelop them?

## ACTIONS

The top six actions, based on the percentage of votes by total respondents, are as follows:

- Redevelop land owned by the Town of Stoughton (78%)
- Provide funding for storefront and façade improvements (70%)
- Assemble land for private developers to redevelop (67%)
- Assemble land and redevelop it/Borrow money to fund development projects/Conduct additional planning studies to identify a specific project or projects (three-way tie at 59%)

Actions that would require a full urban renewal plan split the respondents, with a small majority favoring regulatory controls and design review, and little appetite for the use of eminent domain. **These results, combined with the results of the prioritization exercise discussed below, are an indication that much more effort is needed to achieve the consensus of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and SRA to complete the remaining elements needed for a full urban renewal plan.**

## PRIORITIES

Because of the differing methods respondents used to indicate their preferences, the results here should be considered as opening topics for conversation rather than specific direction. The items that were identified as the number one priority by the most respondents were as follows:

- Assemble land for private developers to redevelop/Redevelop land owned by the Town of Stoughton (Each action was identified as the number one priority by five respondents. Both were also identified as priority number two by three respondents each.)
- Develop regulatory controls, such as design guidelines, in partnership with the Planning Board (Identified as the number one priority by four respondents; identified as the number two priority by three respondents.)
- Provide funding for storefront and façade improvements/Acquire parcels by eminent domain in order to redevelop them (Each action was identified as the number one priority by three respondents, identified as the number two priority by only one respondent each)

The identification of the use of eminent domain as a number one priority is in contrast with the low vote on this same question in the first set of responses. The low priority for borrowing funds is also inconsistent with the votes for that action in the first set of responses. **As the ability to acquire key parcels and fund those acquisitions is critical to land development, these discrepancies suggest a need for additional education by the SRA of what its role can be and discussions within the Town of what its role should be.** This SDRP is part of that education and is intended to spur additional discussion.

...much more effort is needed to achieve the consensus of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and SRA to complete the remaining elements needed for a full urban renewal plan.





# Next Steps

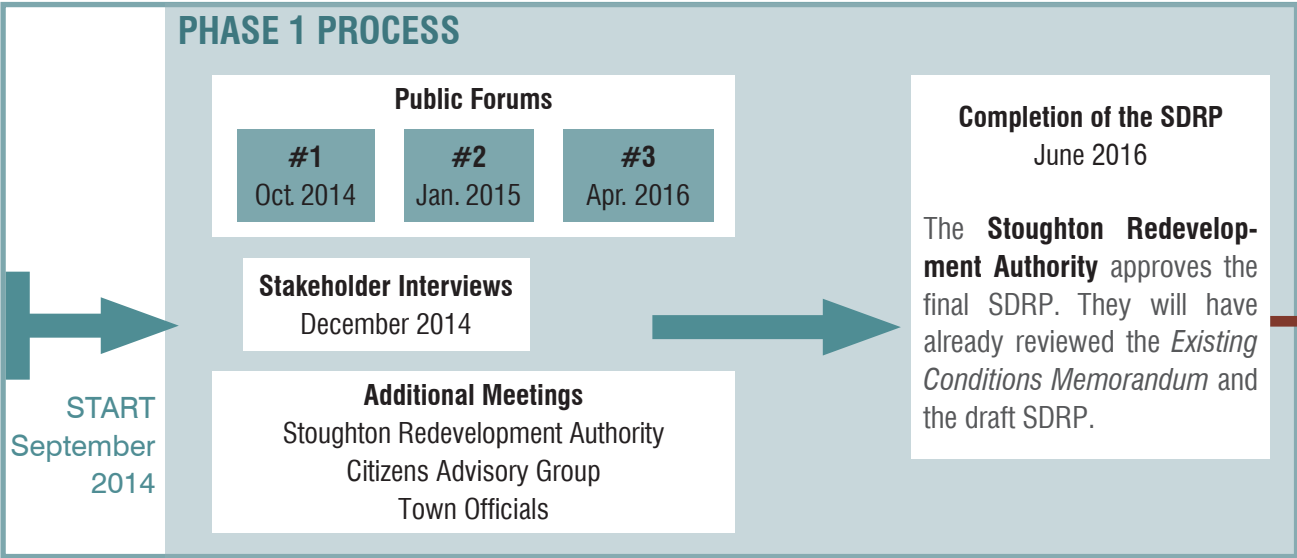
In the absence of an urban renewal plan, the next steps for the SRA revolve around how to move forward in contributing to the revitalization of the Downtown.

This section examines potential actions the SRA can take, both by itself and in partnership with other groups in the town – the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board are the most obvious initial partners. The implementation plan provided in this section identifies those immediate and near-term actions the SRA should consider as they move forward.

The public forum on April 25, 2016 provided a snapshot of input from those who participated and identified topics for initial conversations among the three boards in terms of both potential projects to explore and possible roles for the SRA. If the conversations are successful, the SRA would have the direction they need to complete the remaining portions of the draft urban renewal plan, as noted in the process diagram in this section.

# Planning Process and Next Steps

The illustration below shows the public input process that supported the underlying planning work for this SDRP and the subsequent approval process at both the municipal and state levels.



## PHASE 2A PROCESS

The **SRA** implements the recommendations for staffing within its own organization and establishing working relationships with the **Board of Selectmen** and the **Planning Board**.

The **SRA** undertakes some of the actions identified in the implementation plan for the SDRP, including those development projects that do not require the tools provided by an approved urban renewal plan.

The **SRA** works with the **other Town boards** to identify a specific project or projects requiring an urban renewal plan, and follows the process in Phase 2B.

## PHASE 2B PROCESS

If the **SRA** and the **other Town boards** immediately identify a specific project or projects from the SDRP that require an urban renewal plan, then the SRA will complete the related missing pieces of the SDRP and submit the full draft urban renewal plan to the following public process.

The **Planning Board** provides written determination that the SDRP is consistent with the Master Plan, which was approved in June 2015.

**Town Counsel** provides written determination that the SDRP is consistent with applicable laws.

The **Board of Selectmen** hold a **public hearing** and vote to approve the SDRP.

The **Board of Selectmen** and the **SRA** send the approved SDRP to the **Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)** for their approval.

Once approved by **DHCD**, the SDRP is active and the **SRA** is authorized to take action under the plan.

# Implementation Plan

Successful implementation of this SDRP rests on a solid working relationship between the SRA and its counterparts at Town Hall.

The intent of this implementation plan is to guide the SRA in their next steps to determine their role in the revitalization of the Downtown. The critical first step is to set up a conversation or series of conversations with the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board regarding the roles and responsibilities of each body in terms of further work in the Downtown.

In order to achieve the community's vision, the SRA must identify strategies and supporting actions to fulfill the goals that are the purpose of this SDRP. These goals are as follows:

- Build relationships with the community and other Town entities that have a role in the Downtown.
- Address staffing needs for the SRA so that the organization can react effectively to changes in the economic and physical environment of the Downtown.
- Identify, plan for, and undertake a project or projects that act as a catalyst for the revitalization of the Downtown.
- Address existing conditions that prevent the private market from investing in the Downtown.

The SRA has identified certain initial strategies, based on the recommendations of the *Stoughton Master Plan* and the results of the SRA's study process that would fulfill these goals.

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

**Successful implementation of this SDRP rests on a solid working relationship between the SRA and its counterparts at Town Hall – the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board, and Town staff.** The SRA should also develop relationships with community groups that have an interest in the future of the Downtown, such as the Friends of State Theatre, the Friends of Stoughton Center, the Stoughton Historical Society, and the various social organizations and clubs.

## ADDRESSING STAFFING NEEDS

The SRA has been identified as a partner in many of the strategies developed for both the *Stoughton Master Plan* and the *Economic Development Master Plan: Downtown Stoughton*. However, the SRA does not currently have staff to supplement the volunteer board members and undertake the more complex projects identified in these two plans and during the SRA's study process. A primary goal for the SRA

in this SDRP is to work with the Town to address staffing needs that would allow them to be effective partners with other Town bodies over time.

## IDENTIFYING PROJECTS

The conceptual diagrams in the previous section provide a starting point for conversation between the SRA and other relevant bodies in the Town and in the community at large. Within the next three to five years, a project such as the greening of the municipal parking lot on Washington Street could be completed. Longer term projects include the development of a parking structure with ground-floor retail or the redevelopment of the US Post Office/Train Depot block. Any of these scenarios would require additional conversations, tests of concepts, and additional technical work in order to complete the draft urban renewal plan.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

The conditions that prevent the private market from fully participating in the revitalization of the Downtown are summarized in the draft urban renewal plan and fully discussed in the *Existing Conditions Memorandum*. The extensive amount of land devoted to commuter parking, the odd parcelization of the area due to the road and rail junctions, and the ownership patterns create difficulties for any one project, whether private or public, to act as a catalyst for further development.

The underlying purpose of a redevelopment authority is to address these conditions, but the SRA cannot be effective in this goal until it has addressed the previous three.

The implementation plan below identifies the objectives and supporting actions that will allow the SRA to move forward in meeting both its organizational goals and the larger goal of revitalizing the Downtown in accordance with the community's vision.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

GOALS		OBJECTIVES	
1	<b>Build relationships with the community and other Town entities that have a role in the SDRP area.</b>	Establish a public presence in the community.	
		Establish a working relationship with the Board of Selectmen.	
		Partner with the Planning Board on regulatory matters within the SDRP.	
		Partner with the Economic Development Coordinator to promote projects in the Downtown.	
2	<b>Address staffing the SRA so that it can pro-actively effect changes in the economic and physical environment of the SDRP area.</b>	Add staffing to manage planning and projects.	
		Generate a revenue stream to support ongoing operations.	
3	<b>Identify, plan for, and undertake a project or projects that act as a catalyst for the revitalization of the Downtown.</b>	Identify possible project(s) and conduct planning studies to evaluate the feasibility of SRA involvement. Such projects could include the following:	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in the redevelopment of “left-over” land from infrastructure and/or transportation projects.</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote adaptive reuse of historic buildings.</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assemble small and/or irregular parcels for redevelopment.</li> </ul>	
4	<b>Address existing conditions that prevent the private market from investing in the Stoughton Downtown.</b>	Create additional parking for local business.	
		Support infrastructure improvements.	

ACTION STEPS		REDEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES
	Manage the website and undertake outreach to inform the community about the SRA's role, and engage people in its actions.	Operational
	Establish quarterly meetings to create better communication and establish joint initiatives.	Operational
	Investigate the redevelopment/reuse of the police station on Rose Street or the fire station on Freeman Street if the Town builds a new a public safety building.	Clearance and Redevelopment Rehabilitation Public Improvements
	Revise existing design guidelines and review process for the SDRP	Design Review
	Participate in current review of zoning regulations for the SDRP.	Other Regulatory Mechanisms
	Fund or partially fund a sign and/or façade improvement program.	Grants and Loans; Design Review
	Investigate a micro-loan program to help small businesses with immediate needs.	Grants and Loans
	Identify staffing needs and explore options (full-time, part-time, project-based, consultant).	Operational
	Develop a budget to support planned activities.	
	Evaluate current revenue and resources.	
	Identify projects – redevelopment and leasing of buildings, parking management — that would contribute to ongoing revenue stream to fund operations.	Planning Activities
	Investigate initial funding sources, such as grants or loans, to “kick-start” initial projects.	Planning Activities Grants and Loans
	Identify funding sources, such as grants, that would support planning and initial projects.	Planning Activities Grants and Loans
	Amend SDRP to allow for projects; must include plans for financing, phasing, site preparation and relocation. (See Section 7).	Redevelopment Rehabilitation
	Work with the Board of Selectmen to establish which parcels will be available for redevelopment.	Planning Activities
	Work with the Planning Board to evaluate uses for specific parcels that would enhance the Downtown.	Planning Activities Other Regulatory Mechanisms
	Investigate ability to assist Friends of State Theatre.	Historic and Architectural Preservation
	Apply for grants, loans, tax credits, or other funding sources or programs appropriate for historic buildings.	Grants and Loans Historic and Architectural Preservation
	Work with property owners to evaluate potential for assembling smaller parcels into larger ones that would allow mixed-use development in the Downtown.	Redevelopment Rehabilitation
	Initiate a study of the need of businesses for more parking; identify specific locations and amount of parking required.	Planning Activities
	Work with Board of Selectmen to evaluate appropriateness of SRA acting as the Town's Parking Authority.	Public Improvements
	Manage on-street and off-street parking.	
	Evaluate the role(s) for the SRA in the proposed circulation improvements and in ongoing efforts to address the needs and safety of pedestrian and bicyclists.	





# Appendices

**F**unding strategies are critical as the SRA contemplates its next steps. Limited funds are available for operating expenses at present. The SRA has four current options that could be implemented either as individual steps or in combination to implement its next steps:

- (1) Use a portion of its present limited revenue stream to hire a part-time Executive Director or other staff**
- (2) Spend down capital**
- (3) Use capital to create an ongoing source of funds (such as a building with tenants)**
- (4) Work with the Town to incorporate the SRA's operations into the municipal budget**

Funding sources are more readily available for specific projects and include state and federal grant and loan programs.

Other redevelopment authorities in Massachusetts provide guidance as to interactions with the municipality and the larger community. These short case studies provide information about programs, organizational structures, and actions of other redevelopment authorities that are similar to those contemplated by this SDRP.

The *Stoughton Master Plan* identified a number of action steps in which the SRA could be an effective partner. These steps are included in this Appendix.

# Funding Strategies

This section provides possible funding sources for the SRA to explore as it undertakes the implementation strategies within this plan and evaluates a potential project or project for inclusion within the draft urban renewal plan.

## FUNDING FOR OPERATIONS

Funding sources exist for projects, infrastructure and other physical improvements (see below), but funding for capacity building and staffing is more difficult. Possibilities include:

- Community Development Block Grants
- 40R (with the establishment of a related zoning district)
- Priority Development Funds

## PARKING MANAGEMENT

The SRA could become the Town's Parking Authority, and investigation of this possibility is one of the action steps listed in the implementation plan. A parking authority can fund the purchase and development of land or structures through revenue bonds. In order to project sufficient revenue to repay the bonds, the SRA would need to charge a fee for all parking in the Downtown – this may be difficult now because of the competition from local strip development and the lack of strong demand within the current Downtown. As part of a phased revitalization strategy, parking management may become more feasible.

## FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

The SRA will require funding to acquire parcels, fund infrastructure improvements, provide parking, and undertake other projects. The SRA may be able to fund some activities through the sale or lease of parcels but that is dependent on other changes in the Downtown – discussed earlier as potential projects – and the timing of those changes is uncertain.

Some funding sources for development projects will require partnership among the SRA, the Town, and developers. Developers can obtain funding from sources such as New Market Tax Credits. Developers are also eligible for Federal and State Historic Tax credits for properties that are on the National or State Register of Historic Places or are within a Historic District.

Programs such as MassWorks, DIF, 40R, and CDBG grants must also go through the Town. The SRA and the Town should work together to identify which program or programs are most appropriate for the type of project to be undertaken.

Programs that can be used for funding infrastructure and the core amenities include:

- District Improvement Financing (DIF)
- Local Infrastructure Development Program
- Business Improvement District (BID)
- MassWorks
- Community Preservation Act (CPA)
- Park Acquisition and Renovations for Communities (PARC)
- I-Cubed (the project would need to be of sufficient scale and appropriate use mix to be able to take advantage of this complex program)

Funding that might be used for development projects:

- Economic Development Incentive Program
- Urban Housing Center TIF Program
- New Markets Tax Credits
- Federal Historic Tax credits
- State Historic Tax Credits

# Case Studies

## REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES

Four redevelopment authorities in Massachusetts are applicable case studies for the SRA. These authorities are as follows:

- Ashland
- Brockton
- Fitchburg
- Hull
- Salem
- Springfield

These authorities have more capacity than the SRA, however, they provide useful models as the SRA builds their capacity as the first steps in achieving the goals of this plan.

The websites of these redevelopment authorities are guides to how the SRA could more effectively interact with the community and provide an ongoing record of its mission, goals, and accomplishments. A process of informing and engaging the community is critical to the efforts of the SRA in building capacity and support for undertaking the larger projects that are a part of the implementation of this SDRP.

### Ashland

**<http://www.ashlandredevelopment.com/>**

The Ashland Redevelopment Authority (ARA) does not have an approved urban renewal plan. They have two subgroups – an active Downtown Collaborative with a focus on the appearance and the economy of their downtown and a marketing group for whom they are soliciting members to create a marketing plan for the entire town.

The website is a good model for the SRA. It is a stand-alone web page, unlike the current site for the SRA. The home page states the mission of the ARA, defines what it is and does, and provides information about the meeting schedule. Other pages contain the following information:

- The members and their e-mail addresses; a call for volunteers
- The accomplishments of the ARA
- Updates on current planning projects in town
- The goals of the urban renewal plan and a definition of an urban renewal plan

## Brockton

**<http://www.brockton.ma.us/Business/Economic/BRA.aspx>**

**<https://brocktonredevelopmentauthority.wordpress.com/>**

The Brockton Redevelopment Authority (BRA) is the management agency for the housing and community development funds, under contract to the City of Brockton. Programs it administers include a Homeowner Rehabilitation Program and Façade Improvement Program.

There are two websites for the Brockton Redevelopment Authority (BRA) The first is hosted by the City of Brockton. This home page both defines their mission and lists the City departments and local organizations with whom the Redevelopment Authority collaborates to achieve its mission.

A link on the page for the Homeowner Rehabilitation Program leads to the second website, which provides much more information about the BRA and its work. In addition, the site contains the following information:

- More detailed information about the purpose and objectives of the BRA; the members and staff
- News feed
- Calendar of meetings and event
- Current projects
- More detailed list of programs
- Links to other resources
- Relevant documents
- Current bids and RFPs

## Fitchburg

**<http://www.discoverfitchburg.com/>**

The Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority (FRA) is both the owner and manager of Putnam Place. This is a mixed-use development of office and manufacturing space. Their urban renewal plan dates to 2000, and has been used to revitalize the Downtown area.

The website is a stand-alone site that promotes Putnam Place, and also describes the mission and accomplishments of the FRA, the goals and accomplishments of the urban renewal plan, and links to City Hall.

## Hull

<http://www.hra02045.com/>

The Hull Redevelopment Authority (HRA) manages a parking lot on land it owns next to a beach owned by the DCR. This is a short-term use for the lot – the HRA is planning to develop the land. Revenue from the lease of the land for a parking lot and from the sale of the land belongs to the HRA. Food vendors also lease part of the land.

The HRA also sponsors public forums, including a recent one on flood insurance.

The home page of the stand-alone site contains the mission of the HRA and short bios of each of its members. Other information includes the following:

- Invitation to join the HRA's mailing list
- Schedule of meetings and events
- News feed
- A FAQ sheet for the HRA and its property
- Easy access to the posted minutes of HRA meetings
- Contact information and comment form

## Salem

<http://www.salem.com/salem-redevelopment-authority>

The Salem Redevelopment Authority (SRA) is fully integrated into the Planning and Community Development Department. The Director of that department is also the Executive Director of the SRA and the budget is incorporated into the overall budget of the department and the various boards and committees that are served by that department.

The *Salem Downtown Renewal Plan* is a combination of two existing urban renewal plans and an update to those plans. While the plan does not contain a project, it does have public action in terms of the design guidelines that govern all development within the urban renewal district. The SRA has a design review board that evaluates each application as part of the permitting process.

## PARKING AUTHORITIES

Brockton and Springfield are examples of parking authorities that manage parking structures and on-street parking. While both of these operate at a larger scale than the SRA would achieve in the short-term, the two authorities could be useful resources for the SRA's initial investigation of feasibility.

### Springfield

**<http://springfieldparkingauthority.com>**

The Springfield Parking Authority (SPA) was created by the City Council and act of the Massachusetts Legislature. The SPA uses fees to cover operating costs and debt service, and issues bonds with the approval of the City Council. It also has the authority to issue parking tickets on its sites.

### Brockton

**<http://www.brockton.ma.us/government/departments/parking.aspx>**

The mission of the Brockton Parking Authority (BPA) is to ease congestion and promote the economic development of the downtown business district. The BPA manages a parking garage, parking lots and on-street parking.



# The Stoughton Master Plan

This appendix summarizes the goals and implementation strategies identified by Brown Walker during the Master Plan process that are relevant to the SDRP Study Area. These strategies and recommendations are summarized here because of their importance to the process of creating the draft SDRP; the final Redevelopment Plan must be consistent with the approved master plan for the Town. The text has been taken directly from the text Brown Walker wrote in *Stoughton Master Plan: Implementation*; the goals that are not specific to the Downtown have not been included and the format has been changed.

Note that the Master Plan refers to the Town Center. The Stoughton Downtown Study Area is a larger area that includes the Town Center at its core.

## GENERAL

### I-1: Use the Stoughton Master Plan to guide decisions on land use and the management of public facilities, services and resources.

- **I-1.1:** Require concurrence with the Master Plan.
  - I-1.1.a Require that town policies, strategic plans, zoning, regulations, guidelines, budgets, and review discussions support the vision and goals of the Master Plan.

## LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

### L-1 Adopt a Sustainable Growth and Redevelopment Strategy.

- **L-1.1:** Improve the “public realm” as a framework for private investment in all land use transects.
  - \* Adopt Context-Based Street Design Standards and Complete Street policies.
  - \* Adopt Design Standards to create usable open space, community facilities, and civic amenities.
- **L-1.2:** Improving the “visitability” of Stoughton.

- \* Install gateway treatments and wayfinding system on main corridors leading into Stoughton, Town Center and other local centers in combination with Complete Street improvements, streetscape enhancements and removal of unattractive and unnecessary signage.

- **L-1.3:** Encourage compact development and mixed use.
  - \* Revise land use regulations, policies, and incentives to allow for and encourage compact development and mixed use to serve neighborhoods and employment centers.

### L-2 Revitalize Town Center.

- **L-2.1:** Foster public/private cooperation and commitment to revitalizing Town Center.
  - \* Establish a public/private cooperative partnership to work on revitalization involving a broad range of municipal departments, boards and committees, property owners, residents, business owners, and potential developers.
- **L-2.2:** Preserve and enhance traditional settlement patterns and design characteristics of Town Center.
  - \* Revise downtown design guidelines to address key traditional design characteristics in the center which are considered baseline vitality indicators and contribute to a positive mixed use and walkable environment.
- **L-2.3:** Improve the pedestrian environment through “Street Activation.”

Permit, encourage and incentivize “Street Activation” techniques such as the following:

- \* Active uses of private frontages between the buildings and the sidewalks (civic gathering areas, outdoor dining, store displays, etc.).
- \* Active uses of public frontages between the private frontage and the curb (banner, benches, lighting, and other sidewalk furnishings and streetscape treatments).
- \* Shopfront treatments to engage pedestrians including various façade, sign, and window treatments.
- **L-2.4:** Enhance streetscape and walkability in Town Center.

- \* L-2.4.a Continue to make streetscape improvements.
  - Reconsider the center boulevard along Washington Street in the square.
  - Extend pedestrian-level lighting beyond the square.
  - Add curb extensions with accent material approaching the square to calm traffic.
  - Plant more street trees with variable species and distribution patterns.
  - Provide additional bus shelters and pull outs where appropriate.
  - Install street furnishings such as benches, planters, window boxes, informational kiosks, and trash receptacles.
  - Install gateway treatments and directional signage.
- \* L-2.4.b Create a Murals Program.
- **L-2.5:** Expand and enhance community gathering areas in Town Center.
  - \* L-2.5.a Faxon Memorial Park:
    - Work with community to make landscape enhancements and program for regular civic events and activities to draw more people to Town Center.
  - \* L-2.5.b Potential Future Town Common:
    - Work with the First Parish Universalist Church to determine potential for joining and reorganizing town and church owned properties between Freeman and Pleasant Streets.
    - Also work with U.S. Postal Service to determine feasibility of public space between Porter and Wyman Streets.
  - \* L-2.5.c Create a Food Vendor Court as a Business Incubator.
- **L-2.6:** Create a parking management program to address customer as well as employee needs (see T-4.3).
- **L-2.7:** Work toward the revitalization, re-use, and redevelopment of targeted sites in Town Center. Targeted sites in the Town Center include:
  - \* Repurpose and rehabilitate the Stoughton Train Station Depot Building.
  - \* Rehabilitate the State Theatre.
- \* Redevelop the Malcolm and Parsons block for mixed use.
- \* Renovate the former IOOF/Pacheco Hardware Store.
- \* Redevelop the Post Office site (retain customer services but relocate distribution facilities) for mixed use and public parking.
- \* Encourage more housing and mixed use development around a new train station (Transit Oriented Development).
- \* Infill existing development with shops and restaurants and ground level and upper floor office and residential uses.
- \* Focus on strategic reuse, rehabilitation, and redevelopment along Wyman Street corridor.
- **L-2.8:** Create incentives for revitalization and reinvestment.
  - \* L-2.8.a Create a Town Center Façade and Sign Improvement Program.
  - \* L-2.8.b Initiate and strategically utilize a dedicated supplemental Town Center wine and malt licenses program.
  - \* L-2.8.c Allow and promote and facilitate outdoor dining.
  - \* L-2.8.d Prepare the urban renewal plan and district for Town Center.
- **L-2.9:** Revise zoning regulations in the Central Business District to align with the future vision of Stoughton Town Center.
  - \* Revise CBD base zoning requirements, Stoughton Center Mixed Use Overlay District bylaw (SMUOD) and Stoughton Center Design Review Guidelines.
    - Zoning district boundaries that reflect desired uses and development patterns.
    - Broad variety and mix of uses.
    - Provisions for desired density, placement, and vertical definition of buildings and uses.
    - Design guidelines and standards that complement and preserve the architectural characteristics and development patterns.
    - Flexible parking standards.
    - Street activation (such as signage, sidewalk displays, and outdoor dining).

- Build-to-zones (BTZ).
- Ground floor limitations for active commercial uses.

- **L-2.10:** Enhance commuter rail service and facilities (see T-3.2).

## L-4 Improve commercial/industrial parks and neighborhood business districts.

- **L-4.4:** Provide for business incubation.
  - \* Support local start-ups and entrepreneurship as an economic foundation for community building and generator of both financial and social capital.
    - Provide simple, modular, and flexible incubator space that is reasonably priced.
    - Identify suitable locations for business incubators in underutilized or vacant lots and buildings and work with property and business owners to establish the facilities for start-up businesses.
  - \* Small incubators could be established in Town Center while larger ones could be formed in various industrial parks around Stoughton.
- **L-4.5:** Develop craft businesses.
  - \* Seek out entrepreneurs looking for space and provide incentives for setting up small and home based businesses. Craft business development should be targeted for Town Center and Neighborhood Business Districts.
- **L-4.6:** Provide for artisan industrial space and live/work units.
  - \* L-4.6.a Develop zoning and regulations to allow artisan industrial space designed to accommodate a workshop and living quarters within one building where one mortgage covers both uses.
  - \* L-4.6.b Encourage artisan business development with incentives such as low cost incubator space as well as more permanent artisan industrial space.
- **L-4.7:** Encourage co-working and shared office spaces.
  - \* Facilitate the creation of co-working spaces to attract a broad range of business operators.
  - \* Co-working and shared offices may include meeting rooms, secretarial services, and copy services. This business format is suitable for Town Center,

Neighborhood Business Districts and older industrial parks.

## HOUSING

### H-1 Provide a variety of housing to meet the needs of Stoughton's existing and future residents.

- **H-1.1:** Support a mix of housing types at a range of price points.
  - \* H-1.1.a Adopt policies, bylaws and plans to support Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
    - Create a transit area plan that recommends infrastructure and utility improvements, the mix of land uses, incentives, redevelopment strategies, and a phasing plan.
    - Create transit area design guidelines to address the design of parking, pedestrian furniture, signage, street lighting, sidewalk, and ground level building façades.

### H-2 Support housing as a cornerstone for Town Center revitalization.

- **H-2.1:** Review and revise Town Center zoning.
  - \* H-2.1.a Adjust parking space requirements.
  - \* H-2.1.b Consider Incentive Zoning to promote desired development.
  - \* H-2.1.c Allow mixed-use by right.
- **H-2.3:** Identify and promote historic structures appropriate for residential development.
- **H-2.4:** Create public spaces that build community identity and spirit.
  - \* H-2.4.a Work with developers to provide public space as part of new and redevelopments.
  - \* H-2.4.b Improve town owned spaces to meet community needs. Include:
    - Utilities to support programs.
    - Seating, lighting, shelter, areas for play and other amenities to improve comfort, safety and social interaction.
    - Trees and plants.

### H-3 Support the maintenance, improvement and creation of distinctive neighborhoods that are interconnected with physical and social infrastructure.

- **H-3.4:** Require development projects to include sidewalks and public amenities consistent with neighborhood needs.
  - \* H-3.4.b Create regulations such as Incentive Zoning; guidelines including public space design guidelines and complete street standards; and neighborhood plans that support the creation of public amenities by private development.
  - \* H-3.4.c Establish a development review team and process that identifies appropriate public improvements to be provided by development.
- **H-3.5:** Evaluate and revise site and design standards for non-residential uses within or abutting residential districts.
- **H-3.6:** Identify opportunities for converting areas along and adjacent to business corridors into new mixed-use neighborhoods.

## TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

### T-1 Manage traffic throughout Stoughton to minimize congestion and maximize safety.

- **T-1.1:** Balance street capacity improvements with public safety.
  - \* Adopt a “Complete Streets” policy to encourage all modes of travel, and more walkable neighborhoods and business districts.

### T-2 Create a pedestrian and cyclist circulation system that provides safe and convenient access to schools, the library, shopping, activity centers, and neighborhoods.

- **T-2.1:** Continue to extend and enhance “walkability” throughout Stoughton.
  - \* Adopt new policies promoting walking and biking as a high priority that address the following walkability factors and indicators. These policies should inform future decisions regarding capital investments

as well as new development and rehabilitation of existing buildings:

- Access management.
  - Well placed pedestrian crossing and traffic calming devices.
  - Uniformity of crosswalk markings.
  - Attractive and diverse building elements.
  - Attractive and intuitive pedestrian level way-finding systems.
- **T-2.2:** Upgrade sidewalks and pedestrian connections.
    - \* T-2.2.a Adopt policy for standardized treatments for crosswalk, considering best practices such as:
      - Continental markings and signage both at and in advance of crosswalks, along arterial roadways on congested or high speed traffic areas.
      - Solar pedestrian activated rectangular rapid flashing beacons where there is high pedestrian activity.
      - Evaluate the need for improved street lighting at all pedestrian crosswalks in Town Center.
    - \* T-2.2.b Improve sidewalks and pedestrian facilitates at all crosswalks in high pedestrian areas:
      - On Washington Street from Plain Street to the Stop and Shop driveway.
      - At the crosswalk in Porter Street in front of the Post Office.
      - At the intersection of Canton Street and School Street.
  - **T-2.3:** Expand and enhance bicycle facilities throughout Stoughton.
    - \* T-2.3.a The recommended bicycle network for Stoughton will rely on designated bicycle routes on local streets and off-street, shared-use trails. Make pavement marking and signage improvements for on-street bicycle routes on the following corridors consistent with OCPC Regional Transportation Plan:
      - Washington Street/Route 138 (entire corridor in Stoughton).
      - Canton Street/Park Street/Route 27 (entire corridor in Stoughton).

- Pleasant Street from Central Street to Washington Street (Route 139).
- Grove Street and Lincoln Street between Washington and Pleasant Street.
- Morton Street between Plain Street and Town Center.
- Summer Street from Park Street to Brockton city line.
- \* T-2.3.b Install other bicycle facilities where appropriate including bike parking and storage and end-of-trip amenities.

### T-3 Improve mobility for all transportation modes and users, both motorized and non-motorized.

- **T-3.1:** Adopt Complete Streets policy, design standards, and capital improvement programs. Consider the following actions:
  - \* Review, revise and develop as needed appropriate planning policies, zoning bylaws, subdivision regulations, site plan review, design guidelines, and incentive programs that incorporate Complete Street design principles and design standards.
  - \* Re-evaluate capital improvement projects [to prioritize] Complete Streets implementation.
  - \* Seek appropriate funding and grants for implementation of Complete Streets policies and standards.
- **T-3.2:** Enhance commuter rail services and facilities.
  - \* Continue to work with MassDOT on a mitigation plan which strongly recommends that the rail lines be depressed below grade to improve access and circulation. Several factors must be considered in preparing final plans for expanded rail service including the following:
    - Expanded passenger and rail service will result in significantly more gate closings and crossings at each crossing throughout town.
    - Traffic congestion combined with reduced access and circulation will [become] increasingly problematic unless the [dual] rail system is depressed through Town Center.
    - Electrification poses safety and aesthetic concerns that must be adequately addressed.

- The additional train trips will increase noise (horn and velocity) and air pollution (hybrid diesel fuel).
- The station location and expansion of service must be consistent with the town's revitalization and economic development goals.
- Rail service expansion must maintain opportunities for Transit Oriented Development (TOD).
- Parking capacity and management must be able to accommodate expanded rail service.

### T-4 Improve the vitality of our Town Center through transportation, streetscape, and parking enhancements.

- **T-4.1:** Address traffic congestion in Town Center.
  - \* Carry out a traffic improvement plan that achieves the following objectives:
    - Efficiently disperse and distribute local traffic and through traffic.
    - Provide balance in the modes of transportation by accommodating personal vehicles, delivery vehicles, bus transit, pedestrians and bicyclists.
    - Improve access management and connectivity.
    - Provide convenient access to public and private parking areas.
    - Maintain and enhance exposure and visibility of local businesses.
    - Address intersection safety issues for all modes of transportation.
    - Control vehicle speed to enhance visibility and pedestrian safety.
- **T-4.2:** Implement streetscape improvements in Town Center to improve the pedestrian environment and as a tool for generating economic development and private investments.
  - \* Carry out a streetscape improvement plan that includes the following elements:
    - Sidewalk designed for outdoor activity.



- Street furniture including ornamental street-lights in commercial/retail corridors.
  - Plantings such as street trees that shade the sidewalk, flowering plant pots hung on light poles, and private landscaping such as flower boxes in front of stores.
  - Wayfinding signs, gateway treatments, and business directories.
  - Burying overhead utility poles (or relocating to the rear of buildings).
  - A thorough maintenance program.
- **T-4.3:** Manage and enhance parking supply and distribution in Town Center.
    - \* Develop and carry out a Parking Management Plan and evaluate and implement the following parking enhancements as appropriate:
      - Evaluate parking enforcement.
      - Evaluate time limits.
      - Establish a sticker permit program.
      - Improve lighting and landscaping.
      - Improve parking lot connectivity.
      - Allow and encourage shared parking.
      - Facilitate access easements and agreements between owners.
      - Consider establishing a public parking fund.
      - Consider long-term strategic parking expansion.

## PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

**PFS-5** Sustain a level of public service to ensure a clean, healthy, and safe environment.

- **PFS-5.6:** Support the Library expansion project.

## NATURAL, HISTORIC, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

**NHCR-2** Preserve and activate buildings and landscapes that help

tell Stoughton's history and promote understanding of its culture.

- **NHCR-2.1:** Establish a town policy to support the adaptive re-use of significant historic properties.
- **NHCR-2.4:** Create and implement re-use plans for municipally owned historic properties.
  - \* Conduct feasibility studies and a public process to determine appropriate re-use options for buildings and/or sites including:
    - Train station depot.
    - Freeman Street Fire Station.
    - Other municipal buildings that may change use.
- **NHCR-2.6:** Create zoning that supports the practical re-use of historic buildings.
- **NHCR-2.9:** Support private preservation initiatives.

**NHCR-3** Strengthen community character and sense of place through local events and initiatives that promote Stoughton's history and culture.

- **NHCR-3.4:** Activate public spaces with art and entertainment.
  - \* NHCR-3.4.b Work with developers, including the state, to include art as an integral part of buildings, infrastructure, and landscapes.
- **NHCR-3.7:** Assess the feasibility for positioning the arts to help in the revitalization of Town Center.

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

**OSR-2** Meet the growing recreational needs of Stoughton residents with well-maintained and managed facilities and programs.

- **OSR-2.5:** Request the inclusion of public open space and or recreation areas in any major redevelopment project where practical and needed.

### OSR-3 Develop parks to create community cohesion and build social capital.

- **OSR-3.1:** Develop design principles for parks and open spaces.
  - \* Assure principles consider:
    - Community events.
    - Public safety (crime prevention through environmental design or CPTDE strategies).
    - Ease of maintenance.
    - Connectivity.
    - Accessibility.
    - Other principles identified by the community.
- **OSR-3.2:** Create a park network that helps define and serve Town Center.
  - \* OSR-3.2.a Create a park in Town Center that can be a significant central gathering space and sets a design standard for future public space in Town Center.
  - \* OSR-3.2.b Work with residents to redesign, develop and program Faxon Park as a part of a Town Center system.
  - \* OST-3.2.c Work with residents to redesign, develop, and program Washington Street triangle as part of a Town Center park system.
  - \* OSR-3.2.d Link parks with great sidewalks and streetscape elements.

### ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- No recommendations specific to the Town Center.





