

Results of the Placemaking Workshop New Boston Town Center November 17, 2007

On November 17th, 2007 approximately 25 people gathered at the New Boston Town Hall for a Placemaking Workshop facilitated by Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). The intent was for New Boston residents to evaluate how well the roadway corridors leading to the Town Center perform and to identify opportunities that exist along those corridors. The ideas generated will help define the context of the area and guide the development of options to improve the transportation system in New Boston.

After a presentation by Tim White of the SNHPC and Bill Oldenburg of NHDOT, participants went outside to conduct a Place Audit exercise around four locations, shown below. The Place Audit form is shown on the following two pages.

Participants were asked to evaluate how the places currently performed in terms of Access & Linkages, Uses & Activities, Comfort & Image and Sociability. They interviewed people who they encountered in the area and then came up with opportunities for improvements in the short and long term. Finally each group was tasked to write a problem statement for their site.



Placemaking through Transportation



New Hampshire Department of Transportation

This exercise is intended to be used as a tool to evaluate how well streets and adjacent land uses are performing as Places, and identify opportunities for enhancing them in the future.



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COMFORT & IMAGE	←	DISAGREE	AGREE	→
The road is attractive and fits its surroundings.	1	2	3	4
Amenities are operable, well located, and consistent in design:				
- Seating;	1	2	3	4
- Telephones;	1	2	3	4
- Waste receptacles;	1	2	3	4
- Lighting fixtures;	1	2	3	4
- Restrooms.	1	2	3	4
The road respects and highlights important natural and scenic features (parks, rivers, wetlands, agricultural land, forests, mountains, etc).	1	2	3	4
It respects and highlights important community features (skylines, boulevards, historic places, etc.).	1	2	3	4
It feels safe and well cared for:	1	2	3	4

SUM of ANSWERS = _____

AVERAGE ANSWER (Sum: _____ /9) =

LOCATION: _____

A EVALUATE THE PLACE (10 minutes)

Evaluate how well this site performs as a place.

ACCESS, LINKAGES & INFORMATION	←	DISAGREE	AGREE	→
Pedestrians can easily walk to and through the place.	1	2	3	4
Pedestrian access is safe and convenient:				
- Sidewalks connect to adjacent areas;	1	2	3	4
- Crosswalks are well marked;	1	2	3	4
- Crossing distances are minimal.	1	2	3	4
Taking transit is easy:				
- Stops and stations are easy to find;	1	2	3	4
- Stops and stations are easy to get to on foot;	1	2	3	4
- Maps and schedules are readily available.	1	2	3	4
Bicycling is easy:				
- Routes are safe and convenient;	1	2	3	4
- Routes are well marked;	1	2	3	4
- Storage is adequate.	1	2	3	4
Automobiles do not detract from the pedestrian experience.	1	2	3	4
There is adequate directional signage, maps and location information.	1	2	3	4
Autos are able to use the facility safely and efficiently.	1	2	3	4

SUM of ANSWERS = _____

AVERAGE ANSWER (Sum: _____ /13) =

USES & ACTIVITIES	←	DISAGREE	AGREE	→
There are opportunities to use the place for active recreational experiences (e.g. walking, shopping, access to boating, fishing, hiking).	1	2	3	4
Uses are easily visible and inviting for drivers and pedestrians.	1	2	3	4
Populated areas (a commercial street or residential area) have many different activities occurring.	1	2	3	4
The road enhances the setting of and access to local businesses and cultural institutions.	1	2	3	4
Continuity of street-level uses makes for a pleasant walking experience.	1	2	3	4

SUM of ANSWERS = _____

AVERAGE ANSWER (Sum: _____ /5) =

SOCIABILITY ← DISAGREE AGREE →

People use the place regularly by choice.	1	2	3	4
There are places to gather / there is evidence of people in groups.	1	2	3	4
Strangers make eye contact; people smile and display affection.	1	2	3	4
Chance encounters happen frequently, as people tend to run into someone they know.	1	2	3	4
There is a mix of ages, sexes and ethnic groups which generally reflects the community at large.	1	2	3	4
People bring their friends and relatives to see the Place or they point to key elements with pride.	1	2	3	4

SUM of ANSWERS = _____

AVERAGE ANSWER (Sum: _____ /6) =

AVERAGE ANSWER OF ALL AREAS

AVERAGE ACCESS, LINKAGES & INFO _____
 AVERAGE COMFORT & IMAGE _____
 AVERAGE USES & ACTIVITIES _____
 AVERAGE SOCIABILITY _____

SUM of ANSWERS = _____

AVERAGE of ALL (Sum: _____ /4) =

C INTERVIEW (5 minutes)

Ask one or two people in the place you evaluated what they like about the place and what they would do to improve it. If a particular issue from the ratings above has emerged, ask them their opinion about it.

THEIR ANSWER(S):

D PROBLEM STATEMENT

Return to the workshop room, sit with your group, and reach consensus on a Problem Statement that:

- is 2 to 3 sentences;
- includes problems & needs related to transportation, community and environmental concerns;
- does not pre-figure solutions;
- is not mode-specific.

B Identify the Opportunities of this Place

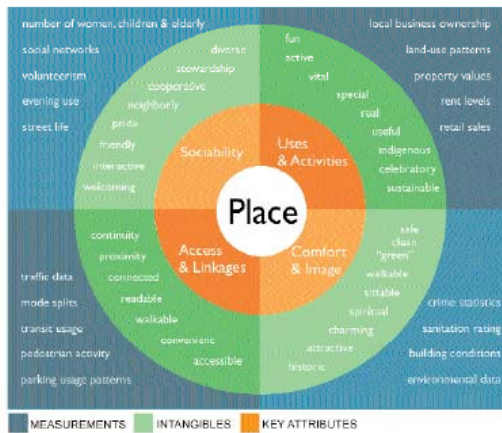
(25 minutes)

List below, by category, the opportunities that exist in this place. Add others not mentioned. Include both short-term, low-cost opportunities and long-term changes.

1. What do you like best about this place as a whole?
2. List a few things that you would do to improve this place that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot.
3. What 3 changes would you make to this place in the long term that would have the biggest impact?
4. What local partnerships or local talent can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed improvements? Please be as specific as possible.

What Makes a Great Place?

In evaluating more than 1,500 public spaces around the world, Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has found that successful ones have four key qualities: they are accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good image; and finally, it is a sodable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit. PPS developed The Place Diagram as a tool to help people in judging any place, good or bad:



Imagine that the center circle on the diagram is a specific place that you know: a street corner, a playground, a plaza outside a building. You can evaluate that place according to four criteria in the red ring. In the ring outside these main crite-

ria are a number of intuitive or qualitative aspects by which to judge a place; the next outer ring shows the quantitative aspects that can be measured by statistics or research.

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Location 1: Intersection of High Street/Mont Vernon Road/Clark Hill Road and Old Coach Road

Evaluation

Access & Linkages	1.6
Comfort & Image	2.1
Uses & Activities	3.2
<u>Sociability</u>	<u>2.5</u>
Average	2.0

Opportunities

What do you like best about this place as a whole?

Monument, flowers, houses, barns, shops, view into Village, trees & bank

What few things could be done now at low cost to improve this place?

- No Entry sign at bank exit
- Clean brush at foot of Old Coach Road
- Place flowers around New Boston sign
- Stop sign or other traffic calming measure at bottom of High Street
- Police enforcement of speed & noise on 13 approaching town
- Mirror

What changes would you make in the long term?

- Move utility poles at foot of Old Coach Road
- Change Old Coach Road away from through traffic (realignment)
- Sidewalks & crosswalks connecting Clark Hill & Old Coach Road
- More attractive vintage lighting
- Fix dip at bottom of Old Coach
- Switch sidewalk inside green strip at bank and make small park at bridge
- Bike shoulders

What local partnerships could be used to help implement these changes?

- Bank & other businesses
- Historical Society
- Garden Club
- Road Committee

Problem Statement

The design is no longer viable for the increased volume, range of users and modes of transportation. In an attempt to support vehicular traffic we've compromised rural character, the environment, sociability and aesthetics (viewsapes, lighting, green space) and have increased noise, speed, asphalt and danger.

Location 2: River Road in and Around the Bridge over the Piscatuog River

Evaluation

Access & Linkages	1.2
Comfort & Image	2.5
Uses & Activities	3.0
<u>Sociability</u>	<u>4.0</u>
Average	2.7

Opportunities

What do you like best about this place as a whole?

- Small town community atmosphere and the river

What few things could be done now at low cost to improve this place?

- Crosswalks (2) one at each end of bridge under street lights
- Landscape
- ADA compliant
- Signs-parking

What changes would you make in the long term?

- Road design/includes new bridge, traffic light, parking

What local partnerships could be used to help implement these changes?

- Local businesses

Interviews

- Crosswalk to bank from library
- Crosswalk to bank from Dodge's Store
- Bridge sidewalk ok, not in winter though, not handicap accessible
- Visitor from California had a hard time finding parking
- Resident – confusing traffic pattern
- Totes Jewelry – paint the lines in spring not in fall

Problem Statement

There is a limited or constrained access to safe and contiguous facilities for vehicular, pedestrians and cyclists connectivity. There is limited access to public parking for recreation and business resources.

Location 3: Intersection Area of River Road and Meetinghouse Hill Road

Evaluation

Access & Linkages	1.6
Comfort & Image	3.8
Uses & Activities	2.8
<u>Sociability</u>	<u>4.0</u>
Average	3.1

Opportunities

What do you like best about this place as a whole?

- Appearance, sociability

What few things could be done now at low cost to improve this place?

- Benches, trash receptacles

What changes would you make in the long term?

- Crosswalks, intersections, signage

What local partnerships could be used to help implement these changes?

- Community
- School partnerships
- Local professionals

Interviews

- Atmosphere (comfortable)
- Driving/walking – difficult to maneuver
- Need signage to let people know they're entering a thickly settled village

Problem Statement

New Boston Village is compact with multiple destinations, used, and through travel. There is a lack of pathway definition of all movement.

Location 4: Area of Meetinghouse Hill Road and Mill Street intersection

Evaluation

Access & Linkages	1.2
Comfort & Image	1.3
Uses & Activities	2.2
<u>Sociability</u>	<u>3.8</u>
Average	2.1

Opportunities

What do you like best about this place as a whole?

- Town services
- Historical interest
- Quintessential town
- Firemen's breakfast
- Mill Street (walkable)

What few things could be done now at low cost to improve this place?

- Crosswalk near firehouse
- Control speed on Meeting House Road
- Sidewalks past/present/future
- Signage
- Info "kiosk"
- Restrooms
- Improve town hall park
 - Greener
 - One way east
 - Move handicap parking space

What changes would you make in the long term?

- Firehouse change
 - move?
 - Re-use?
 - Timeframe?
- Meetinghouse Road
 - relocate 10-30' south

What local partnerships could be used to help implement these changes?

- Local businesses
- Civic Groups
- New Boston Road Committee
- Garden
- Grange
- Artist in-put
- Children
- Livable Walkable Group

Interviews

6 people interviewed – Asked what the speed limit is and their thoughts on road.

- What is speed limit?
 - 6 did not know 20-35
- Easy to drive?
 - Confusing
 - Too fast

Firehouse

- Depend on staff for safety
- No sign for breakfast
- Speed

Problem Statement

This area lacks available info about community activities, historical features, and recreational opportunities. The area is not esthetically pleasing. Vehicles and pedestrians compete for available space in area of high speed and visibility.