

Enhancing Route 7 Strategy

Background:

The Planning Commission has begun preliminary discussions on how to improve the appearance, accessibility, and safety of Route 7 and the adjacent areas of the Town Core. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan includes numerous goals that aim to improve the appearance, accessibility, and safety of Route 7 and create a sense of place in the center of Milton. Before the Planning Commission delves into the Comprehensive Plan update this winter/spring, they would like to address some of these goals and they would appreciate your assistance.

The Planning Commission would like your input on these specific topics:

1. Landscaping
2. Signage
3. Lighting
4. Other Streetscape Elements (e.g. crosswalks)

In preparation for this, the Planning Commission would like to take you back to the New Millennium, when a planning process was undertaken to establish a vision for the Town Core. The following Issues and Opportunities were identified in the Town Core Master Plan at that time:

Issues:

- Lack of municipal sewer within the area
- Areas of open land within core area
- Lack of pedestrian connections within and to surrounding residential areas
- Inadequate stormwater drainage system
- Presence of large electric transmission lines through MCMP [Milton Crossroads Marketplace] creates poor visual image
- Class II wetlands and surface waters may constrict development in some locations
- Poor east-west connections and circulation from the area

Opportunities:

- Large areas of open and undeveloped land
- Few natural resource restrictions
- New sidewalk improvement project is focused on much of the MCMP and Downtown
- Recent construction reflects more urbanized forms (taller, more detail)
- Proximity to Route 7 traffic – ability to capture traffic with retail
- Central location within town
- Proximity to residential areas
- Existing and planned infrastructure will support higher density
- Proximity to recreational amenities of the town
- Existing local businesses located in the MCMP

The Key Vision Elements identified in the Town Core Master Plan are:

1. Overall: To create a fully livable, accessible, vibrant, and attractive downtown.
2. To promote higher density, mixed uses in the Downtown area – including retail businesses that provide basic necessities, multi-family and affordable housing, and recreational and cultural facilities.
3. To establish a pedestrian and bicycle friendly downtown that safely connects businesses, schools, and residences within the downtown and that connects to other areas within the town.
4. To establish a supportive environment for businesses, especially independent businesses, that includes essential services such as police, fire, sewer, water, telecommunications, and transportation infrastructure.
5. To improve traffic flows within the town, including more east-west links and better access to schools, and to promote alternative transportation.
6. To promote land-use designs that emphasize buildings close to street fronts and parking behind buildings; integrate building design, lighting, and landscaping; and establish green areas.

The following are a few statements from the 2008 Comprehensive Plan that first describe strengths of the Town Core and Route 7, followed by weaknesses of the Town Core and Route 7. Specific goals from the 2008 Comprehensive Plan are listed as well. Combined they provide a clear picture of the Town's efforts to encourage downtown-style growth in this area and to create a sense of place. The Town has done a great deal within the Zoning Regulations to help encourage this type of growth by allowing mixed-uses and higher densities. However, more work needs to be done on the streetscape itself: landscaping, signage, lighting, and some minor land use adjustments.

Strengths:

- “The Town Core Area is the most densely settled part of Milton. The full range of municipal services, including water and wastewater, sidewalks, and streetlights are available in most of this area. In general, this area is physically well suited for development. The soils are predominantly sandy and the topography is relatively flat. While groundwater is plentiful in this area, much of the area is served by the municipal water system.”
- “In 2000, through the public process that led to the development of the Town Core Master Plan, it became apparent that the Town's residents desired a downtown with higher densities and mixed-uses that would be supportive of and attractive to businesses, among other things. As a result of this study, the Town made major changes to its Zoning Regulations in 2001 to begin implementing the vision contained in the Town Core Master Plan: densities were increased, height-limitations were relaxed, and a mix-of-uses were encouraged within the Town Core.”

Weaknesses:

- “Route 7 suffers from a variety of historic land use problems: uses along this road are scattered and lack a cohesive sense of place.”
- “Due to a large Class II wetland located south of Route 7 and other natural resource limitations, the Checkerberry sub-area has the most limitations to development in the Town Core area. Reflecting its role as an important gateway into the Milton Crossroads Marketplace, uses in the Checkerberry sub-area should be mixed and careful site planning and access control will be necessary.”

Streetscape-Related Goals (Route 7 Corridor within the Town Core):

- Goal 6.1.7: “Enhance pedestrian friendly environments incorporating streetlights, street trees, signage and public spaces and develop guidelines for these streetscape elements.”
- Goals 8.1.1 & 8.4.1: “Require structures be placed close to the roads with parking areas on the side or rear of lots to improve aesthetics and enhance pedestrian connections. These requirements should be incorporated into the Zoning Regulations.”
- Goals 8.1.2, 8.3.3: “Enhance streetscape elements by incorporating streetlights, street trees, and signage.”
- Goals 8.3.6.b, 8.4.2, 8.5.1: “Encourage public green spaces and small parks throughout this planning area (such as neighborhood parks as recommended in the 2007-2027 Recreation Plan).”
- Goal 8.4.4: “Promote a positive image and guidelines for enhancing the southern gateway into the Town of Milton.”
- Objective 8.6.1.b: “Develop fully linked systems to include sidewalks, bike paths, and bus and rail service.”
- Objective 8.6.1.c: “Enhance pedestrian friendly environments incorporating streetlights, street trees, signage and public spaces. Incorporate appropriate recommendations from the proposed 2007 Streetscape Study into the Zoning Regulations.”

Please keep the aforementioned goals, objectives, visions, etc. from the Town Core Master Plan and the 2008 Comprehensive Plan in mind as you answer the survey questions. These plans, as well as the Zoning Regulations and the “A Town Core Streetscape and Accessibility Design Study,” are all available for viewing on the Town of Milton’s website if you would like to refer to any of them as you answer the survey questions.

http://milton.govoffice2.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={79384102-F841-4A41-8D57-45D0C6CFDDC2}

Enhancing Route 7 Survey

The completed survey may be mailed or dropped off to Carrie Violette, Planning Director, 43 Bombardier Road, Milton, VT 05468, or may be emailed to cviolette@town.milton.vt.us

Name (optional):

Representing:

Landscaping

1. Regarding commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family development, do you feel that the current landscaping along the Route 7 Corridor and adjacent Town Core is adequate or do you feel that more landscaping is warranted when new development occurs?

2. a) If you feel that more landscaping is warranted, do you believe this could be best accomplished by requiring more landscaping (plants), requiring larger plant sizes at time of planting, requiring that the landscaping plan is designed by a landscape architect, or a combination thereof?

b) How do you feel about requiring a minimum amount of landscaping and providing incentives for going above and beyond? Do you have any ideas about how to accomplish this?

c) Do you have any other suggestions?

3. The following goal is from the 2008 Comprehensive Plan: "Encourage public green spaces and small parks throughout this planning area (such as neighborhood parks as recommended in the 2007-2027 Recreation Plan)."

a) Do you feel that this goal is still relevant and applicable to the Route 7 Corridor and the adjacent Town Core?

b) Why or Why not?

Signage

7. The Town Core Master Plan Key Vision Elements include language that discusses establishing a supportive environment for businesses and promoting land-use designs that emphasize buildings close to street fronts and parking behind buildings.

a) Have you heard any complaints from businesses that the current sign regulations are unworkable?

b) Do you have any suggestions for how the current sign regulations (Section 830 of the Zoning Regulations) could be modified so that they are more business-friendly but still maintain the character of the area regarding size, height, placement, and lighting, especially considering the land-use designs that are noted above?

8. The 2008 Comprehensive Plan includes goals that discuss enhancing pedestrian friendly environments. There have been discussions about Route 7 Corridor and adjacent Town Core wayfinding signage (e.g. banners on light posts, designs on street signs, flags).

a) Do you feel that the Town should establish a plan for Route 7 Corridor and adjacent Town Core wayfinding signage?

b) If so, do you have any suggestions as to what type of signage would be most appropriate for Milton, what message should be conveyed on the signage, and where it would be best implemented?

9. Do you have any other suggestions or are there any other criteria that should be considered for improving the sign regulations?

Lighting

On the following page, there is a graphic that was prepared for the Village Lighting Study in 2002, which simulates a proposed teardrop lighting fixture near the dam on Route 7. This same style lighting fixture was chosen by residents during the 2005 design charette. The main issue with establishing street lights in Town is finding the funding for it.

The Key Vision Elements from the Town Core Master Plan include the integration of building design, lighting, and landscaping. Goals in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan include enhancing a pedestrian friendly environment and streetscape by incorporating streetlights and other design elements into the streetscape.

10. Do you feel that the goal of enhancing a pedestrian friendly environment has been met, especially with regards to the incorporation of streetlights?

11. a) Do you feel that street lighting along Route 7 is necessary?

b) What about in other areas of the Town Core?

12. a) Do you feel that the teardrop design lighting fixture shown in the graphic on the next page is still desired for street lighting in the Town Core, regardless of cost?

b) Should developers be required to use this or similar-style lighting for pole-mounted lighting within their parking lots and developments, regardless of cost?



Preferred teardrop style light fixture from the “A Town Core Streetscape and Accessibility Design Study.”

13. Are there any other criteria that should be considered when evaluating lighting?

Other Streetscape Elements (e.g. Crosswalks)

One of the Key Vision Elements from the Town Core Master Plan is, “To establish a pedestrian and bicycle friendly downtown that safely connects businesses, schools, and residences within the downtown and that connects to other areas within the town.” Goals in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan include enhancing a pedestrian friendly environment.

14. In order to meet the above vision element and goals, where do you think Route 7 crosswalks are needed?

15. What type of crosswalks would you prefer (e.g. colored and textured stamped asphalt, thermoplastic and inlay tape, or asphalt paint – see page 34 of the Streetscape Study online for descriptions), and what color scheme would you prefer?

16. What other criteria should be considered when evaluating crosswalks?

17. Which of the streetscape elements covered in this survey are most important to you?

Land Use & Density

Both the Key Vision Elements from the Town Core Master Plan and the goals within the 2008 Town Core Master Plan include the encouragement of higher density, mixed-uses in the Town Core and land use designs that emphasize buildings places close to street fronts and parking behind buildings.

18. a) Do you feel that the above vision and goals are being met?

b) Do you feel the above vision and goals are still appropriate for the Town Core?

c) Do you feel any changes are needed to the vision and goals for the Town Core; if so, please describe what changes you feel are necessary (e.g. regarding density, uses, land use design)?

Final Comments/Suggestions

19. Please describe any other thoughts, ideas, or suggestions you have regarding the enhancement, appearance, accessibility, safety, and land uses of the Route 7 Corridor and the adjacent Town Core:

Thank you for your input and for taking the time to complete this survey! Please come to the public forum on February 21 to further discuss these issues.

The completed survey may be mailed or dropped off to Carrie Violette, Planning Director, 43 Bombardier Road, Milton, VT 05468, or may be emailed to cviolette@town.milton.vt.us.