

Commercial District Citizen-Based Vision Plan

Legacy

2002 Master Plan Vision

Harvard, Massachusetts
Master Plan

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Prepared for:

Harvard Master Plan Steering Committee & Harvard Planning Board

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A Sense of Place - *...with other thriving village centers further strengthening Harvard's economic and community base.*

A Sustainable Future - *Diverse commercial and residential bases* will enable the town to realize its vision and provide the flexibility to adjust to changes in the economy.

2002 Master Plan Goals and Actions

Economic Strategy – Broaden the sources of Town Revenue.

Housing - Provide an environment to significantly increase the retention of young and senior citizens.

Initiative 15A - The town needs to retain a qualified consultant to develop zoning regulations for the proposed Community Commercial Overlay District on Ayer Road.

Initiative 15B - The use, dimensional and site plan regulations for the remainder of the C-District on North Ayer Road must be revaluated and amended. Proposals to address a variety of issues in the C-District, especially site plan standards, appeared in one form or another in both the 1969 and 1988 master plans.

Initiative 15E - Harvard needs to initiate a corridor study for the entire length of Ayer Road from the Harvard/Ayer town line to the Route 2 interchange.

Harvard Master Plan Phase I Survey (3/3/12)

73% of respondents support commercial development if it increases tax revenue

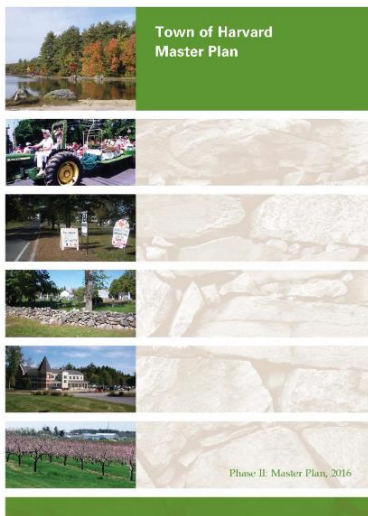
75.1% of respondents support a mix of uses in the C-District

87.4% of respondents felt commercial development in all parts of town should reflect the town's rural and historic character

65.6% of respondents are concerned about protection of natural resources, the watershed, and green spaces in the C-District

2016 Master Plan Goals

- Diversify and strengthen the town's revenue base
- Encourage retail and commercial activities of appropriate size and in appropriate locations as determined by residents and market
- Diversify Harvard's economy and tax base with an appropriate mix of residential and commercial development in the Commercial District
- Understand the relationship between economic development of the C-District and Devens, in terms of various factors such as transportation and circulation, conservation, and housing.



2016 Master Plan Actions

- Provide for mixed-use buildings as of right in the C District, e.g. retail on the first floor and housing above
- Modify the C District's dimensional regulations to achieve a more compact, pedestrian-scale and minimize the auto-dominated appearance of the district.
- Create a vision for the C District that encourages village or Main Street style development and establish Design Guidelines to achieve it
- Study opportunities for developing new wastewater treatment systems in the C district.

Summary of Legacy Actions & Statements

- ❖ **1969 Eliot Master Plan** – “Eliot envisioned compact villages surrounded by large, connected tracts of open space, and a planned business district...He (Eliot) also saw problems in Harvard’s C District zoning, namely that it promised a commercial strip replete with scattered, uncoordinated business and industrial development.”
- ❖ **1988 Harvard Town Plan** – “Commercial growth needs to be regulated so that the resulting activity is in keeping with the town’s needs and character.”
- ❖ **[2002 Master Plan](#)** - “The C District needs to be newly described and use and development regulations need to be tailored specifically to encourage uses consistent with the Town’s village identity. Warehouse and storage as a principal use should be discouraged, as should petroleum product storage and transfer. (See Section II for more detail on potential new regulations for the C District).
- ❖ **Fiscal Impact Analysis Team (FIAT)** – “Recognizing that over-reliance on residential tax base was an obvious driver of the deficit, the FIAT recommended the creation of an Economic Development Analysis Team (EDAT) and proposed a warrant article in 2009 Annual Town Meeting in support of that recommendation.
- ❖ **2010 Economic Development Analysis Team (EDAT) Report** – Purpose of report was to analyze opportunities to increase commercial tax revenue. See full report or a summary of findings in “[Ayer Road Corridor Vision Plan Framework](#)” (2021).
- ❖ **[2016 Master Plan](#)** – Provides numerous references to the need to increase the commercial tax base and also to find a comprehensive and cohesive zoning and urban design solution for the C-District.

“To develop a town with a balanced distribution of land uses, attractive and walkable villages, and an economic base that generates tax revenue, Harvard must be open to zoning that encourages quality design and compact form.”

~ 2002 Master Plan (p 3.4)